

Recovering Education

Using the Experiences and
Learning Acquired to Build New
and Better Education Systems

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Recovering Education: Using the Experiences and Learning Acquired to Build New and Better Education Systems

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Preface

This volume contains selected papers submitted to the 21st Annual International Conference of the Bulgarian Comparative Education Society (BCES), held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in June 2023. The Conference theme is *Recovering Education: Using the Experiences and Learning Acquired to Build New and Better Education Systems*.

The volume includes 41 papers – an introductory piece and 40 papers divided into 6 parts representing the BCES Conference thematic sections:

- 1) Comparative and International Education & History of Education (7 papers).
- 2) International Education Issues (12 papers).
- 3) School Education: Policies, Innovations, Practices & Entrepreneurship (6 papers).
- 4) Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training (2 papers).
- 5) Law and Education (6 papers).
- 6) Research Education & Research Practice (7 papers).

The authors of the papers included in this volume pose several interesting, provoking, and topical questions which they then address through theoretical and empirical methods, approaches, and techniques.

The papers of this volume provide evidence that this is a very good time for doing research in all aspects of education. The current post-pandemic period provides excellent opportunities for looking at the past three to four years, filled with disappointments, damages, and lessons learnt, and direct attention to hopes, efforts, and prospects to recover. Today's day gorgeously furnishes education researchers with a productive, chaotic, and stimulating mixture of failures, mistakes, problems, progresses, and achievements at all levels of national education systems. The current time of recovering education and building new and better education systems is a little 'golden age' of doing education studies.

Readers of this book can find attention-grabbing empirical data, reviews, analyses, conclusions, and recommendations. It is important to note that this volume brings the BCES Conference publications into their third decade as well as an ongoing tradition of cooperation, understanding, and support between researchers from all over the world.

May 2023

Prof. Dr.habil. Nikolay Popov
Sofia University, Bulgaria
BCES Chair

Introduction

Gillian L. S. Hilton & Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu

Recovering Education: Using the Experiences and Learning Acquired to Build New and Better Education Systems

Abstract

This paper addresses the challenges faced by global education systems, recovering and moving forward after the pandemic. Above all, in striving to achieve the equity of provision and inclusion of all students, which has been a UN global ambition not as yet achieved, despite UN Sustainable Development Goal 4. The paper addresses four specific areas of concern: financing education globally; adopting an inclusive philosophy for all learners at whatever level and age; examining the staffing issues affecting school and higher/tertiary education; and the need to consolidate hybrid methods of teaching and learning. The aim of institutions such as UNESCO is to bring the world together to move forward in educational provision at all levels, but at present the challenges faced globally are massive, due not only to the pandemic, but also to the previous lack of progress, in many educational areas. The paper raises many questions about the needs and some possible solutions in those four areas.

Keywords: equality, inclusion, finance of education, schools, universities, hybrid learning, staffing, training and development, teachers

Introduction

Recovering education is the theme for the 2023 BCES Conference, as the world is attempting to address the problems of the last few years, during which delivering education has been seriously affected. After the massive effects of the pandemic on learning at all ages and stages of education, systems worldwide are being challenged, by the urgent requirements for change in many areas and pressure to recover lost aims and abandoned actions. Some as a result of the pandemic, others, long standing concerns (such as equality of access, funding, shortage of teaching staff), all to date unresolved. The Setting Commitments' Report from UNESCO (2022a) raised the question of where education is at present and the need to set clear commitments to achieve the UN SD Goal 4 on educational equality. A separate report called for the need to transform education, including stronger commitment to lifelong learning for all and the establishment of a social contract, bringing nations together to 'provide the

knowledge and innovation needed to shape a better world, anchored in social, economic, and environmental justice' (UNESCO, 2022b, no page). It summarised the needed actions to improve global education systems, presenting five specific areas namely: schools that are inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy, providing learning and skills needed for life, work and sustainable development; better planning and execution in the provision of teachers, including the problems of under recruitment; better training and increased support for the profession, to increase social status; the pedagogical challenges of new ways of learning and teaching; the implications presented by the use of digital and hybrid learning; plus, possibly the most urgent, how education for the future is to be financed. These though, are merely a small selection of the questions being asked about how world education is to recover from the effects of the pandemic and the failure to move forward on achieving the UN SD Goal 4, 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (UN, 2022, p. 11) by the set date of 2030.

The resulting concerns for all those involved in education, whether politicians, educationalists or learners are immense, if the world is to recover and move forward by embracing new ways of organising and supporting learning. These needs require governmental and social attitude changes world-wide, in order to cope with the challenges faced presently in education and those which may arise in the future. Schleicher (2022) pointed out some of these problems: inequality in provision; unequal rewards for working in that sphere; and the possible automation of jobs many young people are aspiring to attain; labour markets undergoing massive reorganisation, requiring additional digital skills. Education must take account of these future needs and the constant changes facing the employment sector.

However, these are just some of the areas requiring consideration. The opinions of those who receive and use education, the learners and for children, their parents/carers, need involvement. In addition, we must contemplate how education systems in various countries are organised and run, with such varied structures in place across the world, for example, selective or non-selective schools, independent schools; those run from a particular religious viewpoint, or the so called 'free' or parent-led schools and home schooling. In addition, there are a variety of tertiary opportunities available including old and new universities, apprenticeships and colleges of all kinds, offering a variety of education/training opportunities. However, access to education is often limited, due to costs, poor provision, bias against particular groups, or inadequate initial education at school. Those who organise and support the education systems and also the financiers must be involved. All of these bodies have a part to play and deserve consultation. Employers who eventually hire students after education need discussion on their requirements, before any decisions are made. In tertiary education, those in charge of colleges specialising in applied skills and all universities need to be included in negotiations about their provision.

Quality controllers of various types including exam boards, responsible for setting test papers, the groups who assess the quality of the learning offered at the different levels, either local or national, must be consulted. Many countries' government departments running education, have at their head a Minister and employ civil servants, who have little knowledge of, or experience of delivering education in any formal way, but have merely attended schools and possibly graduated from university. This does not help in decision making, where intensely practical needs have to be addressed on how the administration of education should occur, in so many diverse conditions.

Planners/designers of educational buildings and the organisers of provision in particular areas to suit the population and cope with day to day fluctuations in need, must be involved. Finally, the world outlook summarised by UN suggestions for education, must be taken into account, particularly its ambition for sustainable development globally. All of these, in a world where many children, have no chance of attending even primary school on a regular basis, particularly if they are female (Hilton, 2022a). The quality of education offered globally is, from all figures supplied, extremely variable between nations, such as differences in the numbers of school/university places available and whether education is free or fee paying. Physical environments and equipment supplied differ widely, depending on local and national conditions. This was noted during the pandemic, where some children had no formal schooling for over two years, whilst others were offered online lessons, particularly those in developed countries. However, students at any level of education are still affected in how possible it is to continue their education, by their family's financial status and the costs of equipment and provision of internet connections. If globally we ignore these problems, our prospects to achieve the UN goals are poor and the whole world will suffer.

This paper cannot cover this multitude of concerns, which need to be addressed globally in order to recover education systems worldwide, so attempts to examine the following issues which lie at the heart of the problems faced, namely: funding of education at all levels; the challenges of providing inclusive education; solving ongoing and serious staffing issues, such as recruitment, working conditions and remuneration; and the training and development of those in the forefront of delivering education to others, to help them adjust to widening approaches to teaching and learning, including hybrid methods of delivery.

Funding education

The first question to be raised here is when should formal education begin, with funding provided and when should it end? Should it be from cradle to the grave; what part should the state provide financially; should so called private education in schools and colleges be allowed to exist; what is the role of commercial enterprises/charities, religious organisations; what should those who enjoy education be expected to contribute financially, whether for nursery care, school attendance, degrees or technical level studies and lifelong learning? So, to support equality of access should be one system for financing education, that is, from the state, or should others, be permitted? Are these sources a help or a hindrance, favouring the rich or the knowing, or those prepared to sacrifice themselves to a particular creed or belief pattern? Is it possible to have a world view on what is required and ignore cultural differences and the widely varying needs of citizens? Is globalisation the answer or itself the problem? Whatever the conclusion, there is no equality of access to many types of educational provision. Governments globally have to make the choice between state, or multiple sources of funding and removal of choice could be very difficult to enforce in some countries. Certainly, it appears that privately funding education for one's own children is viewed in many nations as a sign of ambition and success and this phenomenon is highly popular in countries such as China, despite appearing to be rather against communist philosophical beliefs.

Carney (2022) examined how technology is taking over education creating sociological and philosophical changes, moving towards instrumentalism and

sentimentality as opposed to critical and aesthetic enquiry. Education is often seen as the solution to problems, for example, educate a woman and you educate a family and the GDP of the nation rises (Elks, 2020). Now however, it is often viewed as the cause of conflict and division, creating as many problems as it solves. Education is not a solution if it is not funded correctly and results, at the end of study, fail to lead to relevant employment, or a successful life. This scenario was apparent as a cause of the Somalian civil war (Carney, 2022).

Funding of education is a major concern for all nations, especially those whose national income levels are low and we have to question if the northern hemisphere/western perceptions of what is good education, is the only way to success. Some states may not have the requisite money to fund education at all levels and it is clear that if parents have to pay for schooling, then boys in less developed countries get precedence (Global Partnership for Education, 2021).

In addition, there is no universal agreement on what type of education should be offered, for example, one where rote learning and a lack of questioning of provided facts or statistics is built into a system, or one where questioning, creativity, self-reflection and individual reactions and responses are encouraged. Certainly we are provided globally with detailed data on how much finance countries apportion to education and what level of learning receives the most. Figures show that spending on higher education generally tops the list (OECD, 2021) whereas for many, the need to front-prime education for the youngest children is seen as the best the way to proceed (World Bank, 2022).

In 2015 the 2030 Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015) had set goals for governments to allocate at least 4% to 6% of GDP to education, and/or allocate at least 15% to 20% of public expenditure to education and in 2021 UNESCO member states agreed to further increase funding to education to overcome the effects of the pandemic (UNESCO, 2021).

We now have a system in many developed countries where in order to succeed, large amounts of money have to be spent to enable an individual to obtain the 'correct' qualifications. Previously these were acquired gradually during employment, possibly a more achievable approach for all. UNESCO and other sources, produce quantitative figures to compare national spending patterns, but in most cases countries' systems of education are so different, the figures have little depth of meaning, or are of little use comparatively. It is essential to be able to examine whether money spent educating people is of value to the individual, or the nation, but this requires more than statistics in order to judge the results.

The discrepancy between developed and developing countries in the amount of GDP allotted to education widened as a result of the Covid pandemic (Al-Samarrai et al., 2021). The joint report 'Education Finance Watch 2021' by World Bank, GEM and UNESCO, showed that pre-pandemic education spending had increased during the last decade globally, but was then badly affected by the needs created by the increasing demands of the health sector, created by the pandemic. As a result, governments in 65% of poorer nations reduced education funding, whilst reduction in education budgets was only seen in 33% of richer nations. The report also claims that the recent gains seem unlikely to continue in the near future.

More importantly than the amount of finance provided for education, is the efficacy of the use of that finance. This appears to be failing, as large amounts of money are spent, with limited results. World Bank (2019) showed that despite spending

rising in low and middle income countries, 53% of their ten year olds cannot read and understand an age appropriate text. The problem appears to be ineffective and unequal use of finance and a lack of clear linking of spending to the final outcomes of education. Rises in education spending have not resulted it appears, in better outcomes for students. Financial control and the close scrutiny of spending need to be managed more strictly and results assessed regularly, if progress is to be made and wastage of resources avoided.

It is not therefore only poorer countries who are struggling to provide the necessary funds for education, as in developed countries the costs of student debt, incurred from university fees is increasing and research budgets are stretched. In the UK, nurseries, the start of educational provision are closing due to increased running costs and a shortage of trained staff, leaving families with working parents unable to find child care for the under-fives (Leitch, 2022). Plus schools are struggling to introduce a new induction programme for teachers the costs of which are heavy (Hilton, 2022b). Whatever the financial demands in individual countries, it appears governments of all nations are failing to provide good access to high standard education, due to rising costs and higher expectations.

Possibly the most urgent attention needed to recovering education, is to examine how and on what money is spent/wasted in the individual countries, in order to assure careful use of the limited, but so essential resources the world can offer to this needy area. Improvement in the application, efficacious use and control of available finance, could result in a much faster improvement in world education systems.

Inclusion

The UNESCO GEM Report (UNESCO, 2020) addressed the global problems of lack of inclusion in education, namely those excluded by background or ability. The report is influenced by the Incheon Declaration Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015) which committed the education community to the UN SD Goal 4 and the imperative of educational inclusion in all global systems. It suggests why inclusion is yet to be achieved globally and the reasons for this failure. The Equity Report (UNESCO, no date) demonstrated an improvement in gender equity in education and in developed countries, girls outperforming boys in school and university. Gaps between the provision and quality of rural and urban education still exist in various countries, but some improvement had been demonstrated.

However, in certain areas, for example in sub-Saharan Africa, the gap between boys and girls increases as they grow older, with poverty having a large effect on the figures for girls' education, in comparison to those for boys. In addition, resulting from effects of the pandemic, serious alterations in school attendance occurred, whilst tertiary education was mostly conducted online, limiting the attendance of those without access to requisite equipment.

In order to offer equality of education to all, there are numerous issues to consider. The inclusion of students with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and those from diverse backgrounds such as immigrants and different cultural groups, who are in mainstream education, is an increasing challenge. Students with SEND may experience prejudice, bias, discrimination, or bullying (Ableism) which can be hostile or benevolently patronising (McCarthy, 2022). In addition, there is anxiety that globally, girls do not receive equal access to education, either through poverty (boys prioritised), or political/religious taboos (Afghanistan), or early marriage. In order to

change provision, improved school policies and teacher training, plus better parental involvement are essential (Singal, 2008).

SEND issues raise the question, is separate schooling the answer, or should there be special provision, depending on the severity of the learning issue, or physical disability? Much has been achieved in developed countries to offer equality of access to education for children with disabilities, but in developing countries the picture is not so positive. Srivastava et al. (2015) discuss the move towards Education for All, proposed by the World Education Forum in 2000 with the intention of being achieved by 2015. This had not occurred and in many countries students with SEND did not attend school, or were still taught in segregated, not mainstream establishments. They also point to the problems that may arise if Western moves on inclusivity, for example, removing special schools and enrolling all students in the same school with specialist provision, are attempted in developing countries. It is challenging to take this approach and implement it globally.

However, proposing and enacting inclusion of all SEND students in mainstream provision in some developed countries, has not been as successful as was hoped. This could be due to teachers' inability to cope with such a diverse student body, despite the careful planning of individual needs and goals; insufficient inclusion training of prospective teachers; or the reality that each SEND student has widely differing abilities and needs. Mulholland (2022) suggests that a new approach devised for Multi-Academy Trusts (MATS) in England and Wales should include provision of some smaller, more individual settings for SEND students. These would meet individual needs and be able to supply specific resources, allowing a more targeted individual approach. However, this author questions whether this could destroy the inclusion, recently achieved in these countries. She does however, also refer to the competitive nature of education, with schools being judged on results and points to the practices of off-rolling 'difficult' pupils to home education. The very poor regulation of pupil movement in the education system and the so called home schooling undertaken by parents she believes, are cause for concern. In addition, companies have exploited this laxity, particularly with pupils excluded from education by behavioural issues, with unscrupulous owners claiming they are home educating and charging parents for lessons provided in poor accommodation, often by untrained teachers (Channel 4 TV, 2019).

Inclusion in all education systems encompasses the need to create a process that transforms education in each sphere, to meet the needs of all students, and staff, particularly those from marginalised groups such as SEND, ethnic minorities and women, particularly in the developing world and those from lower income groups. This change may involve the examination of selection requirements, what curricula are offered, accessibility issues, support offered, equal treatment of staff and promotion criteria. Salmi and D'Addio (2020) stress that in higher education it also needs to challenge the reproduction of the inequality embedded in previous systems. Salmi (2020) also points to the equity data on admission to education, which tends to focus on disparities of access, as opposed to considering participation, related to population numbers of specific groups. Higher education needs to ensure its support for those with physical or learning challenges, in order to help them succeed and progress.

Certainly, university attendance and employment in many Western countries is not equitable between racial groups and women, who outnumber men on university courses, are not taught by academic women at high levels in universities, men still hold most of

the top posts, with black women earning the lowest academic salaries (Hilton, 2019). So at all levels internationally, inclusion of marginalised groups and equal treatment are not yet achieved and some serious internal questioning needs to occur, to change concepts and assumptions. If the world is to move forward in providing equal access to education and rights in employment, related to ability and expertise, students, plus all staff that educate them, must be treated equably.

Migration has been an ongoing crisis, as many flee war, natural disasters or to find a more successful life. This has created problems for countries seen as successful or peaceful, where opportunities exist. These newcomers have to be supported and also in many cases educated (often young men with few qualifications) or children. The intention of an online forum, organised by Arigatou International Geneva (2021, p. 2) as part of the 47th session of the Human Rights Council was to ‘explore lessons learned and success stories, concrete examples from experts, policymakers and people from different religions, national and ethnic backgrounds’ on how education of migrants, could best be supported. Conclusions were that education needed to go beyond literacy and numeracy and include instruction on social and emotional matters, spiritual and ethical learning.

In addition, it needs to stress gender equality, which is not ensured in many countries. Protection of mentally vulnerable learners too was paramount, as many of these students have traumatic previous and the private sector should be approached for increased support for inclusive education for these vulnerable groups, with new resources, new ways of learning and requisite financial support. The report concludes that, including these elements at all levels of education will aid social cohesion between host and migrant communities. To achieve this, a whole government approach is required across health, social affairs and education. The support of UN initiatives, for example in Uganda, has had marked effects and individual countries such as Greece have introduced language and reading classes in migrant centres to speed integration. However, in the UK it had been common to put non English speakers, traumatised and socially unprepared children, into main stream schooling, putting enormous pressures on teachers.

To ensure success for migrant and host communities, these actions to integrate migrants into their new countries needs concerted efforts from all possible sources of support, from international and national agencies, state and private, to individuals. Without these efforts migrants may not proceed to higher education and successful careers. Universities in England are assessed on their approach to and support of migrant students, particularly so in teacher training. A mixed ethnic workforce is therefore required in all levels of education, to provide inspirational support to students from whatever background.

Solving ongoing and serious staffing issues

Staffing is a key to the success of any educational institution. Academic staff are the foundation of any education establishment and with the increased number of students recruited for studies in universities, and increasing numbers in schools, recruiting more teachers becomes a key to their success. Finding suitably qualified staff has become a big issue, not only in the UK, but around the world. The problem is evidenced in primary and secondary schools, further education and higher education. This obviously impacts teaching and learning, with constant shortages of teachers creating problems of consistency for students. Some tertiary establishments are now

recruiting by word of mouth, from friends and families, without the rigours of effective recruitment and selection practices geared to equal opportunities in employment. Effective management of Human Resources is essential in all educational establishments to ensure excellent talent management, recruitment and selection practices.

A report by University and College Union (UCU, 2022) affirms that the UK's university sector is widely admired for its world class teaching and research, for example Covid-19 vaccine and climate change, with UK universities leading the world in response to major global challenges. The report also points to the increases, since 2016 in student numbers, with almost 2.8 million students studying in UK universities indicating the importance of universities to our society and economy. Despite all the pluses, there are still doubts about the success of our university sector particularly, the challenges faced by the teaching staff resulting in demotivation, anger and anxiety about what the future holds for them and their students (Ibid., 2022).

Qualified and efficient teachers are always needed in education institutions, however the pandemic and issues such as low pay and high workload have made recruitment and retention of teachers very difficult to achieve. One of England's teacher unions, NASUWT (2022) called for a strike over years of low pay, pay freezes and below inflation awards, resulting in many teachers pay being cut by 20% in real terms in the last twelve years. This is also a problem for university staff.

The increasing workload and productivity demands brought by the marketisation, massification, and technologization of higher education have consistently been associated with increasing work-related stress, burnout, and mental health difficulties (Fontinha et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; Achinewhu-Nworgu, 2021). There is evidence that compromised staff wellbeing can lead to not only individual suffering, but also 'the wasteful loss to the sector of able and experienced personnel' (Morrish 2019; 45). Furthermore, poor well-being negatively impacts upon staff productivity and support to students, which may affect their success.

Recruitment is the process of generating a pool of capable staff to apply for employment to an organisation. Selection on the other hand, is a process used to choose from a pool of applicants suitable for a job, giving management goals and legal requirements (Bratton & Gold, 2017), whilst Gilmore and Williams (2007) see it as scrutinising applications and making decisions on who is employed. Recruitment and selection are closely related with other HRM processes, for example, HR planning, human resource development (HRD), and succession planning. In modern organisations, the key concepts of recruitment and selection are associated with attraction and retention of skilled employees.

Since HR is considered as an asset and HRM acts as an integrative part in business strategic process, the recruitment and selection of staff are considered to be important aspects of education policy. Effective recruitment and selection policy determines the quality of the employees in an organization, therefore, securing, developing, and motivating talented people with the right skills and approaches are crucial in strategic HRM education policy applicable to recruiting teachers. As an insider, the problem of recruiting teachers is experienced and felt; however, it differs from one establishment and programme to another. In addition, most international students pay huge amounts of fees to study in UK education institutions, so high quality teaching and learning, including support throughout their studies is essential and this can only be achieved by

recruiting qualified, permanent and competent teachers that cannot be found by recruiting from the streets.

Hybrid teaching and learning

The future of education is moving to hybridisation imposed by the current pandemic with many institutions having opted for hybrid teaching and learning. This globally requires access to technology, electricity and computers to embrace the online facilities to teach and learn. Achinewhu-Nworgu (2020) in her research with the international students studying in the UK and students from a University in Mexico also, Nguyen (2020), identified home distancing and online studying, embracing virtual learning/technical problems, loss of friends and families, isolation, stress, home sickness, panic and inability to cope with coursework due to worries and stresses of the unknown. However, some providers have now opted for hybridisation in delivery, with some classes now running face to face and others online, and the stress of the combined tasks for both the teachers and students is overwhelming. The need to embrace use of technology in teaching and learning requires more training and development of teachers and students to be confident and competent in using Teams, WebEx, Zoom and other available means of virtual delivery. Globally the challenge is often availability of connection and machines to allow contact.

A BBC Report (BBC News, 2023) from 50 out of 160 universities surveyed showed that the hybrid method of delivery had lasted beyond the main pandemic crisis, due to high demand for places for students and the inability to fit numbers into lecture halls. Almost a third of university courses (28%) were still persisting with hybrid delivery in January 2023 compared to 4.1% in 2018/19 pre pandemic. Student opinions were diverse, from they liked the choice and flexibility, to it was not worth the thousands of pounds the course was costing, with lectures online and it is not a good learning situation, being alone in your room watching a glorified teaching service – like watching a YouTube video.

Training and development is needed at this current time and also a key responsibility of every organisation, more so, at this current era of technological driven world after Covid 19. This has not only affected businesses in the private and public sectors but also education sectors with sudden changes in working practices as they change to hybrid delivery in teaching and learning. Training and development are important parts of organisational improvement to embrace changes in working practices, particularly in education institutions. An inclusive culture with a focus on embracing change and developing staff skills is noted in good organisations (Kum et al., 2014).

Change occurs in different ways and for us; it was sudden with no preparation to embrace it. The Covid-19 pandemic has introduced uncertainty and unrest for global businesses, including education institutions, resulting in plans of action (Tison et al., 2020), for an alternative way of working. Off the job and on the job training are needed to support teachers in coping with the demands of the new system. Training is an important way to fill skill gaps and address skill shortages within organisations. However, despite its importance, evidence suggests that employers, including in the UK, are training less and investing less in their workforce than they were 20 years ago (CIPD Report, 2018). Training is geared to development of new leadership norms and better communication that help in gaining more skills to embrace the current changes in work practices and improve performance. However, in a dynamically changing

education era, it is not sufficient to provide one off employee training and development, hence teachers need continuous training and development to be competent and efficient in using technology in delivering teaching and learning.

The following section below provides a brief on methodology and comments from a few participants consulted on their views about the current challenges and future of education.

Methodology and comments from current interview research

To address the questions asked above, we decided to hear from university teachers hence, a face to face interview was conducted with ten volunteers, six females and four males. The intention was to seek their views on current staffing and training issues and what should be done to tackle some of the challenges identified in our literature which impact on their teaching, learning and wellbeing.

Some of the findings and comments from the participants are reported as:

- continuous stress with heavy workload (D);
- lack of sufficient teachers, hence the full time staff are used to cover classes (P);
- working from home and commuting to university can be daunting and exhausting (H);
- in most cases the students and the teachers struggle with technology, particularly, the foreign students with limited access to technology or facilities to learn (A);
- the future of education is obvious and it is technologically driven and therefore, requires constant training and development to keep abreast with the demands of hybridisation in teaching and learning (F);
- teacher's wellbeing is a big issue, we need more teachers to teach and more admin staff to lessen workload from lecturers (G);
- recruitment and selection protocols are diminishing and changing to part time recruitment drives to catch up with emergency class cover, qualified and permanent teachers are needed to sustain students' experience (U);
- the success of the universities will depend on resources to facilitate the challenges of technology in providing quality teaching and learning (K);
- we are doing the best we could to teach students and the success rate is meeting our targets (X);
- despite all the foreseen and unforeseen challenges, the increase in students' enrolment is overwhelming with some universities putting people on waiting lists, an indication of meeting the demands of teaching and learning by all means (O).

Conclusion

All the above demonstrates the pressures on education organisations and their staff. It is unsurprising that staff shortages and their work stress are affecting progress, students with special needs are not receiving enough support and training for hybrid learning is insufficient, whilst globally finances are under severe strain. These are but a few areas recently highlighted by UNESCO, which are seriously hindering improvement in education. The most interesting is that despite all the shortfalls and challenges evidenced in literature and from the participants interviewed, there is

continuous global demand for education in primary, secondary, further and higher education which demonstrates the need to seek solutions to remedy some of the challenges to improve education for all.

Recommendations

The following are actions that need to occur in order to recover education and improve provision globally:

- Adequate finance is essential and all countries need to work to meet their target expenditure.
- Much improved monitoring of how money is spent and managed in order to avoid waste, is essential in all education organisations and from governments.
- Learners with special needs require better and more individual approaches to learning.
- Flexibility and improved support are essential to improve access and success for students and teachers alike.
- Effective recruitment and selection policy for teaching staff should be paramount in education policies.
- Proactive leadership and management, based on experience and ability to implement positive change is essential for success.
- Continuous training and development opportunities for teachers with financial support to embrace the high demands of technology in teaching and learning.

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Dr. Gillian L. S. Hilton, University of West London and BFWG, United Kingdom

Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu, Ulster University, United Kingdom & Ireland

Part 1

Comparative and International Education & History of Education

Charl Wolhuter

Towards the Recovery of Education: Reaching for 2030 and Comparative and International Education

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to reflect on what the changing context brought about by the Pandemic mean and can mean for the repositioning and reinvigoration of Comparative and International Education in 2023. The paper commences with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Incheon Declaration, as the vision humanity has set for itself for 2030. The paper then maps out the gap between the reality of education globally in 2015, when the goals were set, and the vision for 2030. The intervention of the COVID-19 Pandemic increased that gap. This paper argues that at the same time the Pandemic brought with it an opportunity to redesign education in the world, benefitting from the opportunities offered by technology. The paper further argues that in effecting such a redesign of education in the world, the scholarly field of Comparative and International Education has a pivotal role to play to – to connect to the theme of this book and of the conference of which this volume is the proceedings of papers presented – to use education experiences of the Pandemic and post-Pandemic times, to learn to not only recover education to its pre-Pandemic state, but to ensure the recovery has enough momentum to move beyond the pre-Pandemic level, surging towards the goals set for 2030, i.e. building new better education systems.

Keywords: Comparative and International Education, Incheon Declaration, post-Pandemic world, Sustainable Development Goals, technology enhanced education

Introduction

Despite an unprecedented education expansion project the past seventy years being a signature figure of the contemporary era in world history, by 2020 education worldwide still had many deficiencies. Then suddenly COVID-19 came and aggravated existing problems in education even more. as its object of study education (systems), such systems in their societal contexts, and a comparison of education. In all this the

field of Comparative and International Education stands central, having as its scope of study this worldwide education expansion and reform project, and having assumed as one of its roles guiding the world towards realizing Sustainable Development Goal Number 4, pertaining to education.

The aim of this paper is to reflect on what the changing context brought about by the Pandemic mean and can mean for the repositioning and reinvigoration of Comparative and International Education in 2023. The paper commences with a portrayal of humanity's collective vision for education by the year 2030. The shortfall in education globally by 2020, measured against this goal, is then analysed. The further setback, but also the changes precipitated and the opportunities created by the Pandemic are then investigated. The implications and possibilities of all these for Comparative and International Education are then identified.

The Sustainable Development Goals and the Incheon Declaration: Humanity's vision for 2030

In response to the ecological crises as well as other challenges facing humanity, the global community has formulated their "Sustainable Development Goals" as its collective vision for the world in 2030. On 25 September 2015 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Resolution 70/1: "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", listing the following Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals: Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; Ending hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Ensuring healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; Achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls; Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; Building resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; Reducing inequality within and among countries; Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns; Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Conserving and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss; Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015).

Based on a meeting convened by UNESCO in Incheon, South Korea, 19 to 21 May 2015, the Incheon Declaration was drawn up by the over 1600 participants from 160 countries, including over 120 Ministers who attended the meeting. This Incheon Declaration unpacked Goal 4, and is the global community's vision for education by the year 2030 (UNESCO, 2015). From the United Nations Document spelling out the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, and especially from the Incheon Declaration, it is clear that Goal 4 distinguishes it from the other in that it (education) is

seen not only as a Goal in itself, but as a means to and precondition for the realisation of each of the other Sustainable Development Goals.

The shortfall: the state of education in the world

With respect to all three dimensions of quantitative participation, quality and equality, the state of education during and in the years after 2015, when the Sustainable Development Goals and the Incheon Declaration were drafted, shows a massive shortfall, when held up against the Sustainable Development Goals and the Incheon Declaration as goals or vision. On the quantitative dimension, even before the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, 258 million children of school-going age across the world (or 17% of the cohort) were still not attending school (UNESCO, 2020b).

The word “quality” appears prominent in Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, dealing with education. ‘Quality’ in education is a difficult term to define, and has many facets. The following components of education quality can be distinguished: input quality (financial expenditure on education and physical facilities), process quality (quality of teaching and learning taking place), output quality (that is what students know and can do upon leaving or at a particular point in an education system) and product quality (that is what difference education has made on the life and work of the student after having left the education system). On all four components of quality the education systems of the world are seriously wanting. For example on output quality, even nations with well developed education systems, such as the United Kingdom, have expressed concern about less than desired education output quality. Government figures in England put it that around eight million adults in England have the numeracy skills proficiency at the level of primary school children (Isgin, 2023). Even more concern-raising is that 60 per cent of disadvantaged pupils do not possess basic mathematics skills by the age of 16 (Ibid.).

“Equality” in education is similarly a term to which many meanings have been attached, and a term that escapes attempts to define it in one short statement. However, no matter how equality in education is defined, stark inequalities especially along (but not limited to) the dimensions of socio-economic descent, gender and racial/ethnic status, at all levels of education access, survival in education, output or certification, and product equality exist in all societies. To illustrate with one example, in a recently published article Abdourahmane (2021, p. 15) reports the following salary inequalities between men and women of equal education qualifications in Saudi Arabia: those who have completed primary school education: men average 5 901 Saudi Riyal per month, women 4 063 (i.e. a wage gap of 1 838 Saudi Riyal per month); those with completed secondary education as highest qualification: men 8 874 Saudi Riyal per month versus women 5 202 (i.e. a gap of 3 631 Saudi Riyal per month); those with bachelor degrees: men 13 148 Saudi Riyal per month versus women 10 257 (i.e. a wage gap of 2 891 Saudi Riyal per month); those with master’s degrees: men 18 720 Saudi Riyal per month versus women 11 805 (i.e. a wage gap of 6 716); and those with doctorates: men 26 701 versus women 23 372 (gap 3 321).

The onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic: setback and opportunity for education

Then, on top of the already not optimal state of education in the world, the unexpected outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic at the same brought a further

deterioration. At the beginning of the year 2020, the global community was caught off-guard by the unexpected and rapid outbreak of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) Pandemic. According to Ensign and Jacob (2021), schools are among the worst institutional casualties of complex disasters.

The immediate reflexive response to the Pandemic, in the education sector, was for authorities to close education institutions. Statistically, this has affected about 91% of the global student population (UNESCO, 2020a, 2020c), followed by a decision that education should move towards a distance education model, with teaching take place on-line and learning should take place at home.

It is not difficult to argue that such an arrangement will spell:

- the end of education opportunities for many students;
- for other students it will negatively impact on the quality of education they receive; and
- it will be those students already in a disadvantaged position regarding unequal access, survival, certification and life chances, who will be affected disproportionately adversely, thus inequalities in education will be exacerbated (Wolhuter, 2023).

To belabour these points. An extensive survey among primary and secondary schools in South Africa conducted a few months into the national lockdown and school closures precipitated by the COVID-19 Pandemic, found that 29% of all learners had lost all contact with their teachers, 79% of schools that are dependent on school fees (from parents) could not manage to collect such fees, and 51% could not succeed in sending any homework to their learners (Slatter, 2020, pp. 6-7). It is not difficult to hypothesise from this that it is the already deprived learners (from poor households) suffering most; those who are on the wrong side of the digital divide with no computers at home, and with parents likely to be the least well equipped and least capable to offer assistance at home.

On the other hand, the Pandemic has coerced those in charge of education systems worldwide, to make the change towards harnessing the plethora of technology available in the world of today, to promote the movement towards quality, equitable inclusive lifelong education for all. It should be borne in mind that education is known to be a very conservative sector of societal life, characterised by inertia and resistant to change – a feature of the education sector first highlighted in HRW Benjamin classic publication *The Saber Tooth Curriculum* (Benjamin, 1939). The Pandemic has forced the education sector to embrace technology it has thus far to a large extent eschewed. It is in this schema where Comparative and International Education comes into the play.

An assignment for Comparative and International Education

Any education strategy or innovation can only succeed if that strategy is attuned to the total education system context as well as societal context in which it is tried. The scholarly field of Comparative and International Education has in its purview the study of education systems, the study of education systems in their interrelationships with the societies in which these systems are embedded, and finally the comparison between education systems, in their societal contextual interrelationships. From such comparisons finer or refined statements can be made regarding education systems – societal contextual interrelationships, and also refined statements regarding the interrelationship between various components and elements of education systems.

It behoves scholars of Comparative and International Education to investigate the education ravages brought by the Pandemic, and how these were sought to address by harnessing technology. These efforts should be assessed within the plethora of education system and societal contexts that they were done in all parts of the world, and out of such a scholarly exercise can transpire recommendations as to how to successfully employ technology in pursuing the noble education goals of 2030 spelled out in the Sustainable Development Goals and in the Incheon Declaration. It is also the belief of the author that Comparative and International Education should rise to this occasion, it can also go a long way towards addressing the following serious lacuna besetting the field of Comparative and International Education, as identified by Wolhuter and Jacobs (2022):

- unresponsiveness or a lack of adequate response to new vistas beckoning;
- the “black box syndrome”;
- the lack of an autochthonous theory;
- an inadequate presence at universities; and
- an enduring Northern Hegemony.

To these can be added the lack of impact registered by Comparative and International Education scholarship (cf. Khumalo & Niemczyk, 2022).

To belabour some of these deficiencies evident in the field. The “black box” syndrome refers to the overconcentration of societal contextual forces shaping education systems, to the detriment of attention being paid to what is actually taking place within classrooms and institutions of education regarding teaching and learning. The field is thriving on theoretical frameworks that were developed in cognate fields of scholarship, particularly Sociology, Economics, Political Science and Anthropology, what is sorely missed is theoretical frameworks that was developed placing education systems in their societal contextual interrelationships central. In large parts of the world the field has been marginalised in its presence at universities, initial teacher education programmes and graduate programmes of education in particular. In terms of epistemological and theoretical predilections, thematic foci and scholars active in the field, a persistent Northern Hegemony is visible. Finally, these shortcomings are some of the reasons why the field fails to register a demonstrable impact in terms of academic impact (feeding into the broader family of Education sciences and beyond), impact regarding improving education practice in schools and classrooms and improving the design and reform of education systems, and impact regarding informing the formulation of education policy.

Conclusion

By means of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Incheon Declaration in particular, humanity has set itself a lofty and inviting vision to pursue towards 2030. Yet in order to achieve that goal, there is a steep mountain to scale. Moreover, the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic has simultaneously rendered the achievement of the goal more difficult and galvanised humanity in reaching to the possibilities offered by technology to pursue its noble aims. In this equation Comparative and International Education is a pivotal factor to get to the solution to connect to the theme of this book and of the conference of which this volume is the proceedings of papers presented – to use experiences to learn to not only recover education to its pre-Pandemic state, but to ensure the recovery has enough momentum to move beyond the pre-Pandemic level,

surging towards the goals set for 2030, i.e. building new better education systems. It is the wish of the author that the deliberations of the conference and the papers published in this book will feed the building of a more virile field of Comparative and International Education, rising to the occasion of the post-Pandemic world.

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Prof. Dr. Charl Wolhuter, North-West University, South Africa

Hennie Steyn

Empowering Parents to Support their Children to Survive and Thrive in School: A Present-Day Challenge

Abstract

This paper accentuated the importance of the availability of suitable programs to train parents to support their children to survive and thrive in school. Parents have a role to play in supporting their children to fully benefit from their education. Parents should set a positive home environment to support the learning of children. It was also indicated that the training needs of the parents can be described and used as topics for the modules of a training program as part of non-formal education. It was also explained that the program should be delivered in the format of distance education by using e-training platform to deliver the programs in an attainable, sustainable and affordable manner.

Keywords: empowerment of parents, training of parents, training needs of parents, training needs of parents, nature of training programs for parents, delivering of training programs

Introduction

It is generally accepted that parents should be intensely involved in the lives of their children, for example in the aspects of caring, nurturing, socialization, discipline, protection and also the individual child's education (Ronaasen, 2014, p. 157). However, it was found that parental involvement does not realize to the full meaning of partnerships in education. Thus, it is obvious successfully accept their responsibility amongst the different partners in the provisioning of education and to play their roles in supporting their children to survive and thrive in school (Xaba, 2015, p. 197; Epstein, 2011, p. 46).

The challenge

Effective teaching-and-learning of learners, especially on the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels, is dependent on the successful interaction of the partnership, namely the learners, the teaching fraternity and the parents. It is conspicuous that the national education system takes responsibility for preparing and training of two members of the partnership, namely the learners and the teaching fraternity. The focus is naturally on the learners, for example, by supporting them, for example, with curricula, teaching facilities and support services.

However, strangely enough, no support is given, on a formal or informal basis, to the parents to support their children in education. The reason is probably ignorance and a lack of knowledge on the side of officials in the national education. Xaba (2015, p.

197) concluded that parental involvement does not realize to the full meaning of partnerships in education.

Therefore, the present-day challenge is to find means to effectively train parents in an attainable, sustainable and affordable manner in order to empower them to support their children to survive and thrive in school.

The importance of parental involvement in the education of their children

The participation of parents contributes to the improved school and academic successes and performance of their children. The role of parents can be broadly divided in two sections, firstly the role of parents at home and secondly the role that parents play to ensure the effective functioning of the school. Regarding the support by parents to their children at home, it is emphasized that real-life experiences and settings are important for learning, for example, in literacy learning. It is accepted that social-emotional competencies of the children are as important as cognitive and academic competencies. Children of empowered parents are better prepared to achieve in school (Ball, 2014, p. 98).

Empowering parents to successfully support their children: The training needs of the parents

Assist parents to support children on an emotional, intellectual and physical level

It is accepted that the most important relationships of young children, especially in preschool and primary school, are with their parents, family, peers and friends. These relationships focus on key aspects, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making (Von Salisch, 2001, p. 311; Koivula & Huttunen, 2018, p. 178). The social-emotional development shows a rapid development between the ages of 5 and 12 and thus requires constant interaction by the parents to guide the development to a healthy and balanced self-understanding and self-image by the child (Von Salisch, 2001, pp. 310-311).

Parents have to understand how the relationship between parents and children can influence success in education

Parents are considered to be their children's first and best teachers. However, parents do not necessarily teach their children how to do Mathematics, but they should teach their children, for example, how to behave, how to interact with other people, which are good and which are bad habits and to have respect for other people, and this should be done by means of direct teaching as well as by intended and unintended example. Children must experience positive support at home, as they should also obtain positive learning conditions at home that allow them to achieve educationally according to their individual potentials. Parents are also responsible for laying a solid foundation, for example: to promote positive family values, to help the children to function within a pre-determined disciplined environment and to project positive attitudes and behavior regarding and about schooling (DBE, 2017, pp. 8-10).

Parents should understand how their children learn

Parents play an important role in supporting their children to learn successfully and to enjoy learning. Parents should understand how children learn and thus to ensure that

they set the correct example and that they foster and develop a rich learning environment at home. Areas of development can be identified where parents can play role, namely regarding the cognitive development, the socio-cultural development, the physical development and the mental development of the children (Redding, 2000, p. 20).

Parents should help their children to choose and manage their extracurricular programs

Extracurricular activities are typically defined as those activities that are not an integral part of the standard academic curriculum of a school. Although it is difficult to link extracurricular activities directly to academic success, it is generally accepted that well-chosen activities will add value regarding depth and outcomes of a person's academic accomplishments (Roopesh, 2018, p. 289). Parents should assist children to choose correctly which extracurricular activities to choose.

The role of parents to motivate their children to perform in a balanced way

Parents should motivate their children to perform in a balanced way regarding academic achievements in school and, for example, regarding achievements in other activities such as sports and cultural activities. Self-concept of ability influences motivation levels and is closely related to the level of self-worth which also influences one's willingness to try. Motivation includes extrinsic motivation, the availability of external rewards and intrinsic motivation, the 'pleasure' to complete a task successfully. Lastly it is important to help the child to achieve according to his/her own potential and not to only attach achievement to external motivation (Watts et al., 2004, pp. 16-17).

Parents should help their children to cope with pressure in school and in education

Pressure or stress in life can be explained as the emotional or physical reaction of an individual's body to a challenge or demand. Human pressure can have significant negative or positive effects on the performance of people. Parents cannot prevent their children from feeling stressed, but they can help their children to cope with it. Several reasons for stress can be listed, but it is true that a small amount of stress can be beneficial, but large amounts of stress can be unhealthy (Maykel et al., 2018, p. 31).

A good remedy for stress is to acquire the attitude of resilience. Resilience can be defined as the inherent ability to succeed in the face of challenges that occur in school and everyday life. It appears as if resilient people have several psychosocial resources, such as stronger intellectual functioning, parental availability, parental well-being, and more optimistic self-concepts. In the case of children it seems that their positive relationships with trusted adults, especially their parents, are essential (Goldstein & Brooks, 2012, pp. 2, 9, 10, 11).

Parents have to know that the personal relationship with their child's teacher and the school's management team support success in education

It was proven by research that children's academic performance, social skills and emotional wellbeing have improved if their parents have a good relationship with their teachers. It is being recommended that this relationship should be that of a partnership. It is also indicated that this partnership between parents and schools can be understood regarding three different characteristics, namely firstly the separate responsibilities,

secondly the shared responsibilities and thirdly their sequential or follow-on responsibilities (Epstein, 2011, pp. 4, 26). Although in general teachers welcome the parental involvement of the parents, it is important that each of the parties keep to their field of responsibility and that parents do not intrude in the professional space of the teachers (Deslandes et al., 2015, p. 132). A further pre-condition is that parents should be convinced that the school's teachers and management have the best interest of the children at heart will fully attempt to ensure the education success of their children. Schools will also expect the full buy-in and cooperation of the parents in a physical as well as financial manner (Jasis, 2021, p. 104).

Parents should support their children to deal successfully with bullying in school

Bullying or victimization of a child can be generally explained as a child that is being bullied when he/she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions executed by one or more of their peers. Bullying is usually characterized by three criteria, namely it is aggressive behavior with the aim of intentional harming to the victim and it is carried out repeatedly and over time and it occurs in an interpersonal manner. A unique characteristic of the typical bullies is their aggression towards their peers with little empathy to the victims of bullying. It is characterized by a power imbalance. Several actions exist to combat the bullying of children, but one that is important to parents is to create a home and school environment that is characterized by warmth and trust and the firm rejection of this unacceptable behavior by all involved (Harcourt et al., 2014).

Single parents should learn how to handle the unique challenges regarding their children in relation to education

Several research studies point clearly to the fact that the academic achievement of children from single parent households usually tend to decline when one parent leaves the family on a permanent basis, either by death or by divorce. The main reason could be a reduction in the family's situation regarding finances and/or of social support (De Lange et al., 2014, p. 330). It was also found that children from single parent households had more trouble to complete their homework, may have more behavioral issues and tend to drop out of school on an earlier age than children for two-parent homes (Epstein, 2011, p. 187).

Parents should have a thorough knowledge about the education system.

The overarching aim of the national education system is to provide in the differentiated educational needs of the citizens. In the education system several features and elements are available to assist the citizens to reach this aim (Steyn & Wolhuter, 2014, p. 55). The parents should use the guidelines and frameworks of the education policy to provide their children with ample opportunities to prepare themselves for their different roles in life. Secondly the education managers and functionaries are available on the different levels of the education system to support and guide the parents, also regarding the funding of education. In the national education system several education career paths, on the different education levels, are provided that learners can access to complete their education. Several services are also provided to support the individual learners, for example, orthopedagogic services, career

orientation services, transport services as well as medical and dentistry services (De Beer et al., 2022, p. 11).

Training programmes to support the empowerment of parents

The quality teaching-and-learning of children depends on the quality inputs by the three partners, namely the learners, the teaching fraternity and the parents. Ample opportunities, structures and infrastructure are provided in the education to ensure quality of services to the learners and to enable and empower the teacher fraternity to deliver quality services. However, very little is being done to support the third party involved to ensure that children can learn successfully, namely the parents, to execute their responsibilities in a successful manner. Nowhere in the education system provision is being made to empower the parents to acquire the required competencies as they need to successfully support their children.

To provide in the training needs of parents, as it was explained above, attainable, sustainable and affordable training programs are urgently needed to enable the parents to support their children in education. A few programmes for parent-training are available at some schools, but it is clearly not enough of number of sufficient qualities, particularly in South Africa. However, it is clear that the acquisition of these competencies will without contribute to learning and academic success of their children.

It is proposed that the characteristics of the training programmes should include at least the following, namely it should provide flexibility in following the programme, it should provide sufficient opportunities to engage with the parents, it should develop strong communication competencies of the parents, and it should show empathy with the difficult responsibilities of parents (Ronaasen, 2014, p. 174). The content of such training programs should be based on the training needs of teachers as it is being described above.

Delivery of the programme

The use of cluster-based forums and parent interest-groups are often recommended as delivery method (Xaba, 2015, p. 197), but it only realize in minimal manner. Therefore, educators and parents prefer e-technology based training, because the parents can engage with the programmes when and where it suits them (Thomson & Carlson, 2017, p. 425). The programs should be delivered by means of distance education programs. The programs should also be part of non-formal education because no 'academic' entrance requirements can be requested, but some kind of qualification should be provided to recognise the effort. Finally, the training program should consist of separate modules, each covering a particular topic, from which the parents can choose according to their own context and training needs. Each of the training needs as discussed above can be used as a topic of a separate module.

Several e-training platforms exist of which the Training-Apps (T-Apps) platform of Education Expert is an example. It was proven that the use of the T-Apps support was experienced very positively by the students and that they were convinced that it positively supports their learning experiences and achievements. It can be concluded that the use of the T-Apps has made a positive contribution to the learning success of students. The students are of the opinion that the T-Apps can contribute to improvement in teaching. Finally, an important finding was that the use of the T-Apps

supports independent learning and cooperative teaching-and-learning amongst the students. The conclusion is that the T-Apps can be used to deliver the training programs of parents in an attainable, sustainable and affordable manner (Steyn & Gerber, 2011).

Differentiation in the programme nature and contents

Several research findings suggest that programmes for parent empowerment should operate differently for parents of various backgrounds. It is recognized that the family background in the children's educational experiences should be recognized. The nature and content of the training programmes should be differentiated according to the various contexts of the parents (Kim et al., 2018, p. 175). The programmes should also be built on the principles of 'do it yourself' and 'doing it for ourselves together' (Xaba, 2015, p. 197). These principles simultaneously implied the importance of self-regulated learning and participation in active learning.

Conclusion

This paper accentuated the importance of the availability of suitable training programs to assist parents to acquire the required competencies to support their children to survive and thrive in school. It was indicated that parents have a role to play in supporting their children to fully benefit from their education. Parents should set a positive home environment to support the learning of children. It was also indicated that the training needs of the parents can be identified and described to be used as topics for the modules of a training program as part of non-formal education. It was also explained that the program should be delivered in the format of distance education and that e-training platform are available to deliver such programs in an attainable, sustainable and affordable manner.

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Prof. Dr. Hennie Steyn, North-West University, South Africa

Nonhlanhla Maseko

Life beyond Foster Care: Transitional Tools to Support Youth with Disabilities into Adulthood

Abstract

This paper investigates the transition planning for youth with disabilities living in foster care. Statutory regulations in South Africa contend that foster care lapses when young people reach the age of 18. It is however not certain how many of them are ready to navigate into an adult and independent lifestyle. This paper is concerned with the question on: *How is the transition for youth with disabilities facilitated towards adulthood?* Two foster homes catering for orphans, abused and children with disabilities were purposefully selected. Semi structured interviews were conducted with six caregivers. Findings revealed that there was no planning in place for these youth who are about to exit the foster care. Furthermore, these youths are not even aware that they will have to live independently after the age of 18 years. In conclusion, this paper suggests collaboration among the multi stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners at all levels to best prepare youth with disabilities aging out of foster care for life beyond care and what lies ahead of them. A supportive environment can provide the tools and resources that youth with disabilities need as they prepare for their transition ‘journey’ and to make a smooth landing at their destination of choice.

Keywords: transition, disability, youth, foster care, adulthood

Background and introduction

We all go through transitions in our lives, from infancy to childhood, from early childhood education to high school, and from adolescence to adulthood. Planning and preparing in advance for changes helps make things easier. It is important to plan for the transition from school to adult life. It is never too early to think about and prepare for youth with disabilities’ future. Transitions for youth with disabilities aging out from foster care system can be especially challenging. When teens turn eighteen, they are legally independent persons. An 18-year-old teen is assumed to be able to make medical, financial and life decisions on his/her own. People who are at the age of 18 can start receiving their own medical information and signing consent forms for medical procedures. Doctors and hospitals, government programs and social service agencies need written permission to speak with anyone else about that person. All of these can be a challenge for youth with disabilities and the caregivers. If no preparation is made for the day when the youth with disabilities turns eighteen, there may be disruptions in insurance, health care and support services.

It has been established that the transition from adolescence to adulthood is a challenging time for all young people (Collins, 2001; Osgood et al., 2005). Transition is generally defined as the act of passing from one state or place to the next (Merriam-

Webster, n.d.). The concept of “transition” is situated within the sociological concept of the life course. In this paper, it refers specifically to the passage of youth from youth-serving systems and services to adulthood. This passage may also be referred to as “aging out” or “emancipation” from the children’s systems. Transition policies and services generally encompass youth ages 14-18 or 14-21, although this varies from program to program and state to state.

Transition is the process that takes young people with disabilities from childhood to adulthood. The transition process promotes movement from school to post-school activities as well as from living in state care to independent living. According to Courtney et al. (2005), youth with disabilities transitioning from foster care to adulthood often do not receive critical services and supports to ensure their safety, stability, and wellbeing after they “age-out”. They typically lack coordinated and well-executed transition plans. A youth transition plan needs to be created and in place well before youth ages-out of the child welfare system. Transition services for young adults generally focus on connecting the young person with post-secondary or vocational education, employment, adult social services, and community resources, and preparing them to live independently. In this paper, *transition* will be used to refer generally to this process of leaving youth-serving systems at the age of majority (either 18 or 21).

Youth with disabilities are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system. Research has demonstrated that transition planning for youth with disabilities aging out of foster care in comparison to their same-aged peers is poorly planned (Courtney & Heuring, 2005). For youth with disabilities, this transition into independence is sudden, and they often enter adult life with no connection to community or family, little or no financial support, and few of the skills necessary for independent living (Osgood et al., 2005). Although youth with disabilities who are in foster care are involved with multiple service systems and agencies, but are rarely able to experience a seamless, coordinated approach to their care. Instead, they may receive contradictory or duplicative services or may fall through the cracks and receive very few services at all (Geenen & Powers, 2006). Foster and Gifford (2004) argue that transition planning is important for all youth with disabilities; it is, however, especially critical for youth exiting foster care who move abruptly into adulthood and typically have minimal resources and support. In addition, youth transition from foster care and youth with disabilities exiting special education are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, more likely to struggle with poverty and homelessness, and less likely to be enrolled in post-secondary education or training than their same-aged peers (Slayter, 2016). This means that they might need constant supervision and support from their caregivers. Therefore, transition can be even more difficult, due to different reasons such as mental and physical health, family support and social relationships, residential status and housing, employment and economic stability, education, and risk and criminal behaviours (Kessler & Jaklitsch, 2004).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework which underpins this paper is collaboration framework, thus all stake holders involved in the youths’ life should engage as young people need a comprehensive, multisystem transition support network. Collaboration framework is designed to help individuals and practitioners who are either starting collaborations or need help in strengthening an existing collaboration. Specifically, the framework assists people, groups, and organizations to achieve clearly defined outcomes. Drawing

from a diversity of people and opinions, the framework is based on a core foundation of shared vision, mission, principles, and values. It clarifies the factors, both process and contextual, which can either promote or inhibit the effectiveness of a collaboration, which in turn affects its desired outcomes. It is unrealistic to imagine that the foster care system alone can provide the resources necessary to address the employment, education, health care, housing, and family challenges of this population. Therefore, collaboration between schools and foster care is important in creating comprehensive transition plans that emphasize more specific and individualized personal, career, and education goals for each youth (Longoria, 2005).

Regarding services for youth with disabilities in the foster care system, collaborative approaches could include increased flexibility and autonomy for front-line workers and school personnel, so that they could truly meet the diverse transition needs of the children they serve (Geenen & Powers, 2007). Currently there is no clear transitioning plan that is in place. Furthermore, stakeholders who are involved in the life of a youth with disabilities are not communicating on what should be done in preparing for transition. However, some foster homes are managing the process without the involvement of other professionals as well as taking the individual's needs into consideration. The best practice for collaboration to be effective is by creating a transition team that will be responsible for managing the process. This team would incorporate a universal approach which will service all youth with or without disabilities. Moreover, this team would incorporate person-centred planning that is youth engagement in the development of service as well as the desired goals and outcomes of transition planning (Kaehne & Beyer, 2009).

Methodology

The research paradigm chosen for this paper aligns itself to constructivism and interpretivism as it focuses on human action, intent and communication (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Thus, reality is constructed from social interaction that allows an individual to assert his own views and beliefs. Two foster homes catering for orphans as well as youth with disabilities were purposefully selected as research site of this project.

Furthermore, six caregivers were selected to participate in this study. The criteria used to select sites for the study, which included manageability in terms of the number of sites, accessibility of the community and the caregivers (i.e., prospective respondents), and the willingness of respondents to speak freely and provide accurate and reliable information with the interviewer. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), in-depth interviews use open-ended questions to obtain data from the participants and help in understanding how they construct meanings. Each participant was interviewed once, and follow-up sessions were arranged for clarification of issues that arose in the interviews. Any conflicting statements and incomplete sentences spoken by participants were re-checked and followed up immediately.

The following questions guided the interviews:

- What is the nature of transition planning for youth with disabilities aging out of the foster care system?
- How are the other stake holders involved in transition planning for youth with disabilities aging out of the foster care system?

- What strategies can the caregivers use in planning and preparing for transition of youth with disabilities aging out of the foster care system?

Data analysis and collection were done concurrently to make sure that valuable information was properly recorded. The analysis of interview transcripts and field notes was based on an inductive approach geared to identifying patterns in the data by means of thematic codes. “Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (Mayan, 2009, p. 87).

Findings and interpretation of results

During the interviews, all participants (caregivers) reported that planning has not been done as they did not know that it was their responsibility to plan for transition. However, they are aware that when the child turns 18 years of age will have to leave the foster care. In responding to the question asked:

Eish, you know I was asking myself what is going to happen to the children once they turn 18 years.

I thought these children will stay in foster care until they get married.

Is it my responsibility to make the plan, I thought the social worker will decide where the child must go once they are 18 years of age?

Looking at these responses, caregivers did not know that planning for life beyond care is part of their responsibilities. It is also clear that caregivers do not even have an idea on how planning must be facilitated.

In addressing the issue of unpreparedness and lack of planning for youth aging out of foster care system, collaboration is recommended. Collaboration involves working together to create meaningful outcomes for all involved parties as stated by Longoria (2005). Collaboration means that a seamless process/journey occurs at all levels from community to agency, from young persons to policy level, working toward the same outcomes. Youth with disabilities need collaboration with others around them to get encouragement to take on greater responsibility in the home or school, based on an individual’s maturity level (for example, chores).

Collaborative efforts will prevent “passing the buck” between family and service providers in making transition plans which could have youth caught in the middle. Everyone should work together with the youth on their goals and enable youth to gain responsibility and control for the direction of their own lives.

Early preparation means that caregivers/foster parents should have the opportunity to be prepared for all transitions throughout the life course, by working collaboratively with other families and service providers. Service providers such as social workers and occupational therapists can work with communities, along with youth and caregivers, to develop collaborative community capacity building opportunities. For example, create opportunities for youth to use and test skills in community settings such as businesses, community centres and extracurricular clubs or groups as part of preparation.

The best planning occurs when the foster care, the school, social services, medical professionals and others caring for the child work together. This will improve the youth’s employment ability, continuing education options, housing options, and have a meaningful life that continues beyond care.

Lack of knowledge

Lack of knowledge was reported by the caregivers as a challenging factor. It also transpired that the youth aging out of foster care was not aware that s/he is about to exit as there was no one who communicated or prepared the youth in advance. Caregivers have an assumption that the future planning of children placed under their care lies with the social workers.

I'm just a caregiver, my duty is to make sure that these kids are in a safe environment and well taken care of.

I don't have the authority to decide the future of all the children under my care. I don't even know how to tell them that one day they will have to exit the foster care.

How do you tell someone to get ready to leave, when you don't even know where they will stay after care.

Everyone around youth should work together to reduce the number of assessments and people youth have to work with, in order to reach a goal. This requires collaboration on all levels. As foster youth with disabilities age out of the child welfare system, coordination of transition planning among key agencies and systems is imperative. Frey et al. (2005, p. 1) states: "Aging out" without a permanent family and/or adequate preparation for adulthood is a crisis. It is a personal injury to each youth in care and a public emergency for our national child welfare system.

Some are disabled to an extent that they cannot make choices about housing, medical care, finances, and legal issues. Once they've aged out, these youths have no one to make these critical decisions on their behalf. However, for foster youth, preparation must take place in their final years in foster care to ensure seamless oversight and safeguards.

Recommendations

Youth with disabilities must learn self-determination skills through formal goals on their plan and be actively engaged in the planning process (Wehmeyer et al., 2000). Consistency in planning, especially for those that transfer between numerous foster placements, must be addressed.

Transition plans must contain specific goals, action steps, and clear responsibility designation to ensure success. Service needs and agencies must be integrated and built upon supports and services available, including education/training, independent living programs, medical aid, and other health services. At a minimum, transition plans must include employment, education, housing, life skills, personal and community engagement, personal and cultural identity, physical and mental health, and legal information (Sheehy et al., 2000).

Appointment and training of educational surrogates

Although foster parents often function as an educational surrogate, many do not have training in special education and disability issues. Disruptions in foster placement create disruptions in the educational process and leave youth without a consistent, informed, and involved supporter (Geenen & Powers, 2006). A more consistent approach that includes stable, committed caregiver to ensure youth receive the coordinated, comprehensive services they are entitled to, is imperative.

Conclusion

This ancient African proverb, “it takes a village to raise a child”, is very true. No person, or family is an island, especially when caring for a child with disabilities. Communities – including families, schools, businesses, employers, health care providers, public service agencies, and many others, must work together to find, and share resources to help a successful transition to adulthood. Services coordinated between all agencies are important for youth with disabilities. When able, the youth with disabilities should be independent and respected members of their communities. The planning process for the change should be thoughtful, person-centred, and consider the person’s unique abilities and challenges. Transition planning should help youth with disabilities and family by providing information about community-based services and support, social security income, and affordable housing options.

All young adults are different, as are all families. There is no single “right plan” for transition to adulthood.

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Dr. Nonhlanhla Maseko, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

James Michael Brant

The Most Underserved Populations: How Rich and Poor Orphans Rise Together

Abstract

Our world has become starkly inequitable with 0.01% of the population owning 11% of all wealth, 1% owning 38% of all wealth, 10% owning 76% of all wealth, and the lower 50% owning almost nothing. Amongst all of these, there is a group of the most vulnerable, the most underserved, and ironically the most silent because, for the most part, they cannot speak for themselves: orphans, most of whom are in the lower 61%. The world population of orphans today is approximately 153 million. Selfishness and indifference have brought us to an appalling point in human history, but a radical change could be made, starting with the orphan population, if the world's middle class and above would adopt them in some way. The purpose of this paper is to explore the feasibility of such a social action and demonstrate the viability and potentially rapid effectiveness of this positive social engineering. The subject area is social and emotional learning, social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, and global citizenship. One of the groups in question is underserved and one is overserved yet underserved in that it lacks real happiness, in effect, both orphans. Through the lens of social constructivism, we examine the feasibility of projects through which the overserved help the underserved and both find fulfillment. Quantitative facts highlight the possibilities for radically ameliorating the orphan problem and qualitative investigation can measure the ensuing fulfillment of these groups. The final significant implication is that the orphan problem could be solved in this generation.

Keywords: underserved, orphans, indifference, middle class, social-emotional learning, social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, global citizenship

Introduction: Underserved population

Our world has become starkly inequitable with 0.01% of the population owning 11% of all wealth, 1% owning 38% of all wealth, 10% owning 76% of all wealth, and the lower 50% owning almost nothing (The Hill, 2021; Business Insider, 2021). Another viewpoint from which to see the disparity is that there is a high-income class of 7%, an upper middle-income class of 15%, a middle-income class of 17%, a lower income class of 51%, and a class considered in extreme poverty of nearly 10% (World Vision, 2022). By all definitions, more than half of our world is underserved. Cornell University law school defines the underserved as populations who meet challenges in accessing victim services because of geographic location, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, disabilities, special needs, and more (Cornell Law School, 2022). The United Nations SDG list outlines the type of services that are inequitably provided, as well as who the underserved are (UN Stats, 2018). Amongst all of these, there is a group of the most vulnerable, the most underserved, the most helpless and defenseless, and

ironically the most silent because, for the most part, they cannot speak for themselves: orphans, most of whom are in the lower 61%. The world population of orphans today is approximately 153 million (SOS Children's Villages, 2022). Contemplating this problem in the light of how beliefs can impact the teaching and learning of an underserved population, we must consider the duality of the problem. The orphans have an obvious need and problem, yet simultaneously, those who could bring a solution to the orphans' problem may be affected by their own need and problem, a certain learning disability, symptomatic of autism, yet also of psychopathy (Jones et al., 2010). To explain, those who could solve the problem might possibly not care enough to sense the urgency to solve it and believe that it is not their responsibility but someone else's or believe that the problem is unsolvable since it has always been there and no one has totally solved it before, therefore it is unrealistic to strive for a total solution and we must tolerate it.

This disability is manifested by convenient self-centeredness coupled with temporary but unstable happiness (Dambrun, 2017) compounded with a fatalistic attitude (Levin, et.al., 2021). The latter group referred to is the upper 41% of the socio-economic spectrum, who, if it is possible to help them learn to not tolerate the situation and learn to give of themselves sufficiently, could adopt the orphans. 153 million orphans are too many for any one or few nations to absorb and care for institutionally, but by dividing the load among many capable families, it is quite possible. It would depend upon the charity of that many families. Is humanity capable of such a selfless act? Selfishness and indifference have brought us to an appalling point in human history, in which more than half the world suffers need, while the other less-than-half continues to grow in wealth, even allowing 17.5% of all children to live in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2020) and 6.5% to be orphans, but a radical change could be made, starting with the orphan population first, if the world's middle class and above would adopt them in some way. The purpose of this paper is to explore the feasibility of such a social action and demonstrate the viability and potentially rapid effectiveness of this positive social engineering.

Audience and rationale

The target audience in this example is tandem, matching the other components. On the one hand, the lower and extreme poverty class, and on the other hand the middle and above class. The lesson for the middle and above class is to share their wealth, and it must be said, wisely, so that efforts are sustainable. The lesson for the lower and poverty classes is to use well the opportunity by taking good care of resources, working, and studying to become self-sustaining and be transparent about costs and expenses because there are sometimes abuses in this sense which turn donors away. The class size on the giving side could be a classroom of participating students at a school, a group of friends on a social network, a church congregation, a club, a neighborhood, a town, or even a city, state, or country, depending on the type of outreach used. In our current situation, we use all of these. On the receiving side, size could be a family, community, orphanage, school, village, or national project, also depending on the opportunity available. Our charity projects also span the range from individual families to nationwide projects. Age range can be all ages since we can learn to give and care at any age, and we never finish learning and practicing the subject. We have projects K-12, university, for parents, teachers, business sector, and government. These all overlap and intersect, but the materials and activities are age appropriate. The

subject area is social and emotional learning, social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, and global citizenship. The demographics are varied on both sides, including several ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic classes. In our current example model, we include special needs learners on the giving side, including PTSD recoveries, Asperger syndrome (semi-autistic) helpers, ELL students, and a semi-disabled previously homeless gentleman, all of whom work together as a team. On the receiving side, our orphanage team is frequently sick or injured, but nothing permanent. Our teams in Kenya, Congo, and other diverse locations are also quite varied.

The underserved population within the audience is the world's orphan population, using as an example our current model of the children and director of a Ugandan orphanage, as well as very low-income school children with families, and young village girl entrepreneurs served in our Kenya projects. There are also families who have lost many of their members to violent terrorism in Eastern Congo along with ex-child soldiers, and Syrian refugee children in camps and medical homes at the borders of Syria. The definition of orphan, according to the literature at present is broad, applying to a child without parents, with one parent, with parents incapable of caring for the child, an abused child, or a refugee who cannot return to his family for safety's sake, possibly temporarily. In all cases, the child needs care, but this could be through and together with his relatives, one of the parents, or even the community where the child lives (Brandeis University, 2011). This broadens the scope of how to "adopt" a child from only physically and individually adopting inter-country to helping to support both the child and family or caretakers involved where they are in their native country, which could be more what the child needs. In all cases, the primary consideration must be, "What is best for the child?"

Besides this, longitudinal research studies have shown that institutionalized orphan care does not provide the same nurturing effect as a child's own parent, even if only one, a family relative, or adoptive family care. Education is only one aspect of their need, intertwined with the need for food, shelter, and the warmth of a family. Using this informed logic as a guideline, we can deduce that 153 million orphans are underserved because they are still orphans in some way, even within the broader scope of the definition, and being an orphan implies that they are in some way missing what others have besides the already heavy burden of living in extreme poverty or low income. When they become adequately cared for they stop being orphans. If each family of the upper 39% of the world population was to adopt one orphan or orphan with accompanying caretakers, the problem would be quickly solved. The current world population is calculated at 7.96 billion, 39% of which equals 3.1 billion. The average family size in the U.S. and Europe is 3.3 and 3.1 per home respectively, with Australia at 2.53. India's growing middle class (28%) with an average family size of 4.8 brings the average up to 4 (Pew Research, 2020; Statista, 2022), so we can approximate 775 million families, middle class and above in the world. If each of these families adopted one orphan, the problem would be solved five times over.

As the audience is dual, so the underserved population is dual along with the solution to the problem: those in need of help and those in need of being willing to give the help. These two groups are ironically intertwined, a pair of quarks on distant sides of a universe, mysteriously entangled, affecting the movement or resistance to movement of one another. In the case of our rescue group, those who could solve the problem if they choose to; are also affected by their circumstance of wealth because by denying access to their lives of relative abundance, and for some, excess, they are

isolating themselves from the rest of the human family, closing their eyes to a need which could be solved by them. The same psychiatrist, cited in the introduction of this paper, who diagnosed self-centeredness and its temporary unstable happiness followed by depression contrasts it with selflessness and the accompanying stable and enduring happiness it engenders (Dambrun, 2017). In a way, both groups are orphans, one not by choice, and the other by choice, yet put to a test, a chance for freedom if it will venture out of the self-imposed gilded cage of materialism. This background to the twin-problem conundrum can shine a light on what the solution could be, which also is dual in this Rubik's-cube-type challenge. By moving one part, the next part can move, part by part, until all the squares are in place. One of the groups in question is underserved and one is overserved yet underserved in that it lacks real happiness. My instruction to this dual group would not be so much with words, but through the experience of fulfilling each other's needs, the true social constructivism of learning together to give and to receive, totally student-centered learning with only the necessary facilitation to make the opportunity possible.

Beliefs

My beliefs about relating to people of whatever race or background apply to relating to orphan children or possible rich donors. I have had friends, rich and poor from many races, and lived as the rich or as the poor myself. I know that people are people, although we need to brush the mud off when it comes to someone coming from much hardship. Experience has strengthened my conviction that I need to relate to all and have empathy and compassion for all. Over the years, I have been friends to rich "poor people" and poor "rich people", and at times have felt my heart break for each of them. My conviction to see past their outward appearance and circumstance and care about their real person inside has also been strengthened by what I have learned throughout life. Finally, I realize that we are all orphans, in a way, until we find meaning and share love in life, so this idea challenges me to keep looking for the orphans in this world and help them to find what they need. I am reminded of what was said in the book *Becoming a Global Competent Teacher* about needing to move past empathy and on to "caring for", meaning to put our good intentions into action to help someone (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2019). I am challenged to reach out to all the underserved people and help them to receive what they need. Experience is helping me to define my plans in this respect. These beliefs can positively help me to give instruction to the underserved groups I go to because they can help us to connect and relate. As far as negatively affecting my instruction toward a group, I sometimes tend to be too compassionate if that is possible when it is necessary to require and expect more from people, to help them reach their greatest potential. In the case of orphans, many great people have come from that group.

Conclusion

It is easier to settle for a belief that the problem of orphans in whatever form cannot be solved than to move society to not only believe that the problem can be eradicated but take the actions to make it happen. Sometimes looking at the numbers involved can help us to see possibilities that we would not otherwise see, thus energizing us to rise to the challenge. Taking the responsibility for an additional child in whatever form is not a small step for anyone and to think that such a large portion of

the world population as the entire middle class and above would even consider doing it might seem outlandish and unreasonable to most, seeing the current world economic situation. On the other hand, numbers do not lie and can show us possibilities beyond what we thought was possible. Sustainable development projects can take time and meet political and government-level economic obstacles which waylay efforts, but meanwhile, children suffer and die daily for a lack of timely care which at a citizen-to-citizen level could have been given. That is within our grasp, even if sacrificial for some, even if it is only until the sustainable development goals can be reached and take effect around the world, enabling each region to become self-sustaining. Would we tell our own children to wait on that if they were in such life and death struggles and needed our help today? We should consider counting these as our own children. That seemingly simple decision would be our next action step. Consider the relatively immediate change that decision would bring to the world. This generation would be known as the generation that took the step together to banish orphanhood. It is possible.

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James Michael Brant, President, World Institute for Social Education Development, USA

Marco A. Navarro-Leal & Dilsa Estela Muñoz-Muñoz

New Rurality and Traditional Families. Multigrade Schools in Colombia and Mexico during Pandemics

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present an exploration on the response of parents of two rural multigrade schools facing the homeschooling activities in the context of pandemics. To frame a comparative perspective some conceptual work was done about new rurality and family structure before interviewing parents of both schools about distribution of tasks among family members, distribution of time and technological support. The study concluded that the traditional structure of rural families made easy to carry on with the tasks of home, labor and education.

Keywords: new rurality, traditional families, multigrade schools

Introduction

It is assumed that schools play a significant role in the development of rural communities. Nevertheless, during the pandemic schools were closed but not the education activities. These were migrated home, where parents took a mayor role to play. What was the role they had undertaken? An exploration was carried out in the communities of the unitary schools in Colombia and Mexico. The paper starts with an overview of development theories to focus what is known as new rurality and then explores the family structure in these settings to frame the response of families to homeschooling activities during the pandemics, especially on the topics of distribution of activities among family members, time distribution and technological support.

New rurality

In all narratives of development theories, rurality is seen as a prelude to urbanity. From the different theories rurality represents the delay, the ballast that must be towed towards modernity. In linear theories, rurality represents the poor areas that must be brought up for economic takeoff; for prismatic theories, rural areas must be integrated into industrialization, be it in its agro-industrial aspect or in export manufacturing; in dualist theories the task for rural development is to bring the benefits of urban life to their communities. Paradoxically, the advancement of the rural areas consists of its de-ruralization, in other words, its urbanization (Mendoza, 2004).

Regional disparities, as well as unsustainable social inequities, have produced a mass and growing migration to national and international urban centers, depopulating rural communities, and therefore generating shortages in food production. Rurality has undergone important transformations; the sale and rental of land, farming by contract,

the introduction of agro-industries, as well as a greater diversification of economic activities related to rural tourism, commercial and food services, maquiladora companies, as well as greater development of communications and transport, environmental impacts, hydrocarbon spills, insecurity, many rural communities had begun a change towards occupations different to agriculture and cattle raising. In some territories, rural life with its traditions and cultural expressions tends to become part of the world of nostalgia. Given the anachronism of the rural-urban theoretical dichotomy, rural sociology has been introducing more appropriate concepts such as rurbanization, agro-cities, peri-urban agriculture, among others, which try to account for the current new rurality.

Traditional family

The changes in the family structure that have occurred in industrialized societies in recent decades are notorious. Martin Carnoy (2006) has observed the behavior of highly industrialized societies such as those of European countries and the United States, where a growth in single people is notorious, so is the incremental number of couples without children and single-parent families. For this author, changes in the structure of families are part of the changes in the structure of work and the labor market.

Although in some aspects there could be some similarities with those urban areas of Latin America where there are signs of flexibility in the labor markets (Lladó Lárraga, Sánchez Rodríguez & Navarro-Leal, 2013) the truth is that little research has been done on the rural family in Latin America. According to Vargas Calle (2022), more than talking about family, one should talk about families (in the plural), due to the uniqueness, variety, and complexity that each one presents.

Regarding the analyzed research, this author comments on three types of activities that make up the daily life of the rural family: non-agricultural work that allows some extra income; agricultural work that generates crops both for sale and for self-consumption; and the activities of the house that fall on the mother, daughters-in-law, sons and daughters, tasks that are distributed according to age: “the little ones fed the animals, the middle ones helped in the kitchen and the older ones went to work with the father” (Vargas Calle, 2022, p. 6). In summary, through the reviewed investigations it can be observed that still there is a traditional pattern of the extended family with a traditional distribution of activities.

Rural education

Just as rurality is perceived from development perspectives as a delay in the arrival of modernity, education is seen as a channel for modernization and social mobility. In this the family places great expectations, although the schools are generally perceived as “unfinished” or “incomplete”. Due to the sparse and dispersed population, these are often rural concentration schools and multigrade schools, which are generally considered by their teachers as “transit” schools, for whom programs have been implemented in various countries to promote their permanence.

Various studies show the benefits of the rapprochement between school and community. Ortega Arias and Cárcamo Vásquez (2018) reviewed research aimed at analyzing the relationships between families and schools and found strong conclusions: “a good organizational climate, good personal relationships, collaborative work

between families and schools favors good learning” (p. 115). A necessary reciprocity of relationships is recognized, while families recognize in school “the possibility that their children acquire educational credentials that facilitate their insertion into the future labor market and upward social mobility” (p. 116), aspirations that in the rural environment (old or new) do not differ from family aspirations in the urban environment.

However, despite these common aspirations, families do not share the same type of schools, unlike graduate schools with homogeneous grades and curricula in urban areas, in rural areas it is common to find multigrade schools, which, from the urban perspective, they are considered as “incomplete” schools, “in transition” in correspondence with development theories that consider rurality as a prelude to the urban, in a temporary situation, in a transition stage towards modernity. They are generally located in the smallest and most dispersed rural localities and consist of small schools in which a teacher attends students of different grades, ages and levels in the same classroom. In the case of Mexico, a 2019 report indicated that 78.3% of these schools were located in areas with a high and very high level of marginalization and 84.9% in the highest levels of isolation and that “one in three basic public education schools (36.7%) are multigrade” (Castro, Perales & Priego, 2019).

As for Colombia, the first Unitary School was in Pamplona, department of Santander, in charge of the teacher Oscar Mogollón in the 1960s. Later the school multiplied into 150 pilot schools. This is how in 1967 the Colombian government extended the methodology of the Unitary School to all multigrade schools in the country. Program that in 1985 managed to reach 8000 schools and that is how the Colombian government adopts the program as a strategy to universalize rural primary education. Later in July 1990 through decree number 1490 the national government says that the Escuela Nueva Methodology will be applied as a priority in basic education in all rural areas of the country, in order to improve it qualitatively and quantitatively (MINE, 1990).

Two unitary schools

Our interest in studying these schools resides in the fact that they represent the depth of rural schools and the relationships between them and the community. The context of the Covid 19 pandemic allowed us to analyze the response that rural families had to the transfer of education to their homes. Specifically, the study categories were the parental role, time, technology support and the management of school and domestic chores, but this contribution is focused on the importance of the extended family to face this transition. The resistance of rural families to transform their structure, as urban families have done, allows them to face and survive both confinement and the advancement of the “new rurality”.

The study of two multigrade schools in rural communities in Mexico and Colombia shows how, thanks to their extended structure, families transitioned through the pandemic period. The Praxedis Balboa school is a multigrade school, in which a teacher attends to 10 children and is located in a small community with the same name, in the Municipality of Villa de Casas, in the State of Tamaulipas, which according to the 2020 Census of Population held 113 inhabitants (52 women and 61 men) grouped in 26 houses equipped with electricity and piped water, all have a television, but none with a computer or tablet, although 80% have at least one cell phone. The level of schooling for adults is around the sixth grade. The agricultural town is located

approximately 25 km from the municipal seat and about 20 km east of Ciudad Victoria, Capital of the State of Tamaulipas.

Regarding the Misael Pastrana Borrero school, located in the village of La Linda in the municipality of Pensilvania, department of Caldas, belonging to the Santa Rita Educational Institution, this is a single-teacher school, a teacher attends to 15 students from preschool to fifth grade, guides all subjects, ensuring 5 effective hours of class per day, to each of its students. The school also includes 13 families with school-age children from the 28 families that make up the community.

This is a coffee growing community, therefore, the parents of the family are dedicated to the cultivation of coffee for the most part, accompanied by bananas, cassava and different fruit trees. The mothers of families are most of the time at home, taking care of the housework. Both fathers and mothers have primary education, some have incomplete high school and few have finished high school. It is located 15 kilometers from the municipal seat, by tertiary road without asphalt paving, dirt or uncovered type. Located 155 kilometers from Manizales, capital city of the department of Caldas.

An interview was designed with five open questions, which are applied to parents or guardians in the form of a recorded conversation and later transcribed. The interview was applied with previous validation in Colombian families in direct conversation with them, complying with biosafety protocols and in the same way it was done in Mexico. In this country the participants were 8 mothers, whilst in the former were 13 mothers of families.

Findings

The information collected was relevant since it allowed recording the organizational dynamics of families during the pandemic: the conformation of families, the distribution of activities, the attention to school tasks. A first record of observation is that in both communities the families are of the extended type, in which the grandparents, in addition to the central couple and the children, share the same roof, in addition to the fact that between the different families there are also interfamily relationships, although their homes are sometimes not contiguous. The treatment between the different members of the families is one of closeness and collaboration, despite the natural conflicts that arise from daily interaction in small communities like the ones explored here.

By taking care of the children's education at the same time as carrying out the jobs that allow subsistence without neglecting the traditional household chores. Different interviewees stated that once the confinement began, all routines were disrupted, except the work done by adult men in the fields. "Sometimes there was not enough time to do housework and also help the children with their homework." However, it did not take long to get organized. Most of them said that they did not have a fixed time to study, they were scheduled so that together they could do housework and later on the school tasks. Teachers were available all the time to clarify doubts, by calls or messages.

The pandemic made family members living in the cities to return home to live with their relatives in the same place, parents, cousins, uncles, grandparents and other relatives. All linking to the teaching-learning process of the students. In many cases in both countries, the grandmothers state that they stay at home with their grandchildren so that the children can go out to meet their work obligations and bring home economic support.

Conclusions

During the pandemics, in both countries was found that the mothers and in some cases the grandmothers, were always willing to support the children in their home education. The men, as a general rule, were the ones who got out to the fields in search of economic resources to support home. The technological tools for a virtual or distance education were always very limited in both countries, so an emergence education was offered, mediated by available resources such as, printed guides, cell phones that were present in most families, phone calls, videos, audios, video calls.

In both countries, many mothers and grandmothers commented that they had not finished their primary school studies and did not know how to help children, they did not understand the assignments, and it was necessary to request help from other people, including the teacher who were always available through calls and messages.

Finally, in relation to the purposes of this study, the analysis shows that from the perspective of development theories, this paradoxically consists in its de-ruralization and that the policies supported by these have promoted a certain impact on what has been called new rurality. However, although in the economic sphere of the rural communities studied there are signs of this new rurality (as shown by the creation of social organizations for production and the new occupations in the service sector, created from the growth of communications and transport), in the sociocultural sphere, traditional formations such as extended families and their distribution of roles still persist (still very distant from the changes that these have undergone in industrialized countries), which during the pandemic allowed attention and continuity not only to the tasks associated with the procuring of livelihood, but also the tasks of the home and the education of children.

Even in the context of new rurality, families retain the traditional structure of the extended family, and this allowed them to respond to educational processes of children, which was more difficult for nuclear urban families with greater technological support. So, the idea should prevail that any attempt to evaluate or transform the rural school should not be done from the perspective of urbanity, but rather consider the articulation of the culture of these schools with the culture of rural communities and their families.

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Prof. Dr. Marco A. Navarro-Leal, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)

Dra. Dilsa Estela Muñoz-Muñoz, Tutor of PTA for the Ministry of Education in Colombia

Martin Boško, Hana Voňková, Ondřej Papajoanu & Angie Moore

A Comparison of Response Styles Between Different Groups of Czech and New Zealand Students Participating in PISA 2018

Abstract

International large-scale assessments, such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), are a crucial source of information for education researchers and policymakers. The assessment also includes a student questionnaire, however, the data can be biased by the differences in reporting behavior between students. In this paper, we analyse differences in response styles of students in the Czech Republic and New Zealand based on data gathered in PISA 2018. The results show that Czech students use, on average, the acquiescence response style (ARS) and extreme response style (ERS) less than their counterparts in New Zealand. Contrarily, Czech students use, on average, the disacquiescence response style (DARS) more than students from New Zealand. A closer analysis according to the school type in the Czech Republic, showed that students from 4-year secondary general schools score, on average, the highest on ARS and ERS, but the lowest on DARS among all school types. The analysis in New Zealand according to the Year of study showed that students in Years 12-13 score, on average, the highest on ARS and ERS among all Year-of-study groups, the DARS values being similar across the Year-of-study groups. The mean ARS and ERS of each of the Czech school types remains below that of any of the New Zealand Year-of-study groups. For DARS, the mean score of the highest-scoring Year-of-study group in New Zealand (Years 9-10) remains below that of the lowest-scoring Czech school type (4-year secondary general school). Analysis of response styles is a crucial tool for the identification of some of the potential biases in student-reported data. Future research should take the differences in student reporting behavior into account and perhaps also employ other methodological approaches for their identification, such as the overclaiming technique.

Keywords: Czech Republic, New Zealand, PISA, student questionnaire, acquiescence response style, disacquiescence response style, extreme response style

Introduction

International large-scale assessments are a crucial source of information. They allow us to assess and compare the state of education in the world, providing valuable information to governments and policy makers, educators, researchers, as well as the general public (Bertling et al., 2016). One such assessment is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which focuses on 15-year-old students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy and is conducted triennially by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019). The assessment also includes a student questionnaire collecting information on their

attitudes, dispositions and beliefs, their homes, and their school and learning experiences (OECD, 2019). However, as these questionnaires heavily rely on Likert-scale items, the data can be biased by the differences in reporting behavior between students (Bertling et al., 2016). One of the approaches for the identification of these differences is the analysis of response styles (e.g., Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 2001; Buckley, 2009). The response styles analyse the tendency of a respondent to choose some response categories in Likert scale questionnaire items regardless of their content, which may reveal the differences in usage of the scale in various cultures and groups of respondents. Such analysis may include exploration of the acquiescent (the tendency to use extreme positive category, ARS), disacquiescent (the tendency to use extreme negative category, DARS), or extreme response style (the tendency to use both extreme positive and extreme negative categories, ERS; Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 2001; Buckley, 2009; Voňková et al., 2022).

The two countries under study (i.e., Czech Republic and New Zealand) were selected for the analysis to provide a comparison of response styles between two contrasting countries. The Czech Republic represents an inland, ethnically rather homogenous, post-communist country with one official non-English language (Czech). New Zealand represents an ethnically diverse island country with two official languages (English and Māori). Considering the PISA 2018 results in the Czech Republic, there were large differences in the performance of students from different school types as, for example, vocational schools with a VET (vocational education and training) certificate lag, on average, more than 100 points behind multi-year secondary general schools in each PISA discipline (Blažek et al., 2019). New Zealand then shows differences in results with regard to students' ethnicity as Māori and Pacific students score, on average, more than 50 points behind Asian and Pākehā/European students in each PISA discipline (May et al., 2019).

The aim of this paper is to compare the response styles of groups of students in the two countries using PISA 2018 student questionnaire data. The research questions are as follows:

- How do acquiescence, disacquiescence, and extreme response styles differ between the Czech and New Zealand students participating in PISA 2018?
- How do these response styles differ between Czech students from different types of schools and New Zealand students in different Years of study?

Methodology

Sample

We use data from the student questionnaire data set from the PISA 2018 study (OECD, n.d.), the main focus of which was on reading literacy. This paper uses data from 6,608 Czech students and 6,077 New Zealand students who had complete data about their school type/Year of study and response styles.

Students were grouped using a school variable. Due to the differences in education systems of both countries, students from each country were grouped based on a different school variable. The school variable chosen for Czech students was their school type, while New Zealand students were grouped based on their Year of study. The Czech sample consisted of several school types – basic schools (ISCED 2), multi-year secondary general schools and conservatoires (ISCED 2-3), 4-year secondary general schools (ISCED 3), vocational schools with Maturita exam (ISCED 3), and

vocational schools with a VET certificate (ISCED 3). Using ST001D01T for New Zealand students and the stratification variable for Czech students, we have identified:

- **Year of study of New Zealand students:** Years 9-10, Year 11, Years 12-13;
- **School type of Czech students:** basic school, 4-year secondary general schools, multi-year secondary general schools and conservatoires, vocational schools with Maturita exam, and vocational schools with a VET certificate.

Information about educational systems comes from governmental websites of individual countries.

Response styles

In this paper, three response styles will be considered. Acquiescence response style (ARS), disacquiescence response style (DARS), and extreme response style (ERS). Calculations are based on 4-point Likert-scale items found in a PISA student questionnaire with the scale *Strongly agree*, *Agree*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly disagree*. ARS, or the tendency to agree with items regardless of content, is calculated as a percentage of responses in which students chose the option *Strongly agree*. Analogically, DARS, or the tendency to disagree with items regardless of content, is a percentage of responses answered with *Strongly disagree*. ERS measure is a percentage of answers that the student responded with either *Strongly agree* or *Strongly disagree* (Buckley, 2009). Weighted mean and standard deviation calculations were made using the final student weight (W_FSTUWT).

Comparison of educational systems at primary and secondary level

In the Czech Republic, primary education (ISCED 1) concerns years 1-5 and occurs in basic schools. After five years, students may continue their lower secondary education (ISCED 2) in basic schools (years 6-9) or apply to 8-year secondary general schools for which students undergo entrance examinations. Additionally, students can also apply to 8-year conservatoires focused on music, dance, and theatre. Another possibility of transfer for basic school students is after the 7th year of basic school to a 6-year secondary general school. If students are admitted and transferred to the abovementioned schools, they typically also finish their upper secondary education (ISCED 3) at this facility. Students with finished lower secondary education may continue to ISCED 3 education in several ways. They can apply to 4-year secondary general schools, 6-year conservatoires, 4-year general field/vocational schools, or 2-year/3-year vocational schools with a VET certificate (výuční list in Czech). Education at upper secondary schools without a VET certificate is completed with a national standardised Maturita examination, which is a requirement for entry into tertiary education (MEYS, 2022).

In New Zealand, children can start school on the day they turn 5 (enrolling into Year 0 if they start in the second half of the year), meaning they do not have to wait for the start of the school year (ME NZL, 2022a). The education system is made up of 13 Year levels (ME NZL, 2022a). So-called ‘full’ primary schools cover Years 0-8, while ‘contributing’ primary schools cover Years 0-6. If students attend the latter school, they move on to intermediate school, which covers Years 7-8. After that children attend secondary school, which covers Years 9-13. Area schools and composite schools cover Years 0-13 in one school (ME NZL, 2022b). The national curriculum is not tied to Year, level (a stage of learning), or age, meaning each student progresses when they

have achieved the skills, knowledge and understating required. As a result, teachers teach students at multiple levels in their classes (ME NZL, 2022b). Students can also be taught in Kura Kaupapa Māori schools in Māori language where learning is based on Māori culture and values within a particular philosophy called Te Aho Matua (ME NZL, 2022c). These can include Years 1-8, which may be followed by Wharekura schools (Years 8-13), or they can include Years 1-13 (ME NZL, 2022c). Students unable to attend their local schools can enrol into Te Kura (The Correspondence School), which provides distance learning. Finally, Regional health schools are for students with significant health difficulties, where teachers teach students both in hospitals and at home (ME NZL, 2022c; ME NZL, 2022b). During Years 11-13, children are assessed by national standardised exams called *National Certificate of Educational Achievement* (NCEA), which they can achieve at three difficulty levels in a wide range of courses and subjects (NZQA, n.d.). NCEA is recognized by employers and it is also used for selection by tertiary institutions both in New Zealand and overseas (NZQA, n.d.).

Results

We first had a look at the mean values of response styles (ARS, DARS, ERS) in the two countries. The results are as follows:

- Czech Republic (N = 6,608): the mean ARS was 16.0% (SD = 12.64), while the mean DARS reached 11.7% (SD = 10.94). The mean ERS then reached 27.7% (SD = 19.00).
- New Zealand (N = 6,077): the mean ARS was 23.4% (SD = 15.40), the mean DARS was 9.5% (SD = 8.43), and the mean ERS reached 32.9% (SD = 19.34).

Then we also investigated how the values of response styles differ among different types of schools in the Czech Republic and among students in different Years of study in New Zealand. The results for the different types of Czech schools are as follows:

- Czech basic schools (N = 2,365): the mean ARS reached 15.4% (SD = 12.77), DARS reached 12.4% (SD = 11.72), and ERS reached 27.8% (SD = 19.76).
- 4-year secondary general schools (N = 865): the mean ARS was 19.2% (SD = 13.18), the mean DARS was 9.8% (SD = 7.55), and the mean ERS was 29.0% (SD = 17.54).
- Multi-year secondary general schools (N = 1,510): the mean ARS equaled 17.2% (SD = 12.06), the mean DARS equaled 11.7% (SD = 9.15), and the mean ERS equaled 28.8% (SD = 17.11).
- Vocational schools with Maturita exam (N = 1,290): the mean ARS equaled 16.0% (SD = 12.29), DARS equaled 10.8% (SD = 10.29), and ERS equaled 26.8% (SD = 18.37).
- Vocational schools with a VET certificate (N = 578): the mean ARS was 13.7% (SD = 12.47), the mean DARS was 12.2% (SD = 13.06), and the mean ERS was 25.9% (SD = 20.31).

The results for students in different Year of study in New Zealand are as follows:

- Years 9-10 (N = 379): the mean ARS reached 21.5% (SD = 15.13), the mean DARS reached 9.7% (SD = 8.98), and the mean ERS reached 31.2% (SD = 18.93).
- Year 11 students (N = 5,442): the mean ARS was 23.4% (SD = 15.37), the mean DARS was 9.5% (SD = 8.45), and the mean ERS was 32.9% (SD = 19.37).

- Years 12-13 students (N = 256): the mean ARS equaled 26.0% (SD = 16.05), the mean DARS equaled 9.6% (SD = 6.87), and the mean ERS equaled 35.5% (SD = 19.24).

Comparison of the countries

In their responses to Likert-scale items, students from New Zealand have, on average, higher values of ARS and ERS than their Czech counterparts (by 7.4% and by 5.2%, respectively). Czech students have, on average, a higher value of DARS than New Zealand students (by 2.2%). Moreover, the mean ARS of each of the Czech school types remains below that of any of the New Zealand Year-of-study groups – the highest-scoring Czech school type, 4-year secondary general school (19.2%), is lower than the lowest-scoring Year group 9-10 of students in New Zealand (21.5%). Similarly, for ERS, the highest-scoring Czech school type (4-year secondary general school, 29.0%) remains below the lowest-scoring Year-of-study group in New Zealand (Years 9-10, 31.2%). This is also true in reverse for DARS, where the highest-scoring Year-of-study group in New Zealand (Years 9-10, 9.7%) remains below the lowest-scoring Czech school type (4-year secondary general school, 9.8%).

Though the category of school type and Year of study is not comparable between the countries, we can see that within these country-specific categories, there are large discrepancies between students in ARS. Czech school types also differ in DARS, while New Zealand students remain fairly levelled across Years. Finally, when it comes to ERS, there is a notable difference between the Years 12-13 students and the Years 9-10 in New Zealand, while the most pronounced difference when it comes to the Czech Republic is between vocational schools with a VET certificate and both types of secondary general schools.

Conclusion

The results show that Czech students, on average, score lower on ARS and ERS, while having higher DARS compared to New Zealand students. Results from analysing the response styles of students according to their school type point towards heterogeneity among Czech students. The largest differences in response styles can be found between the 4-year secondary general schools and vocational schools with a VET certificate. When it comes to the Year of study of New Zealand students, the largest differences in ARS and ERS were found between Years 9-10 and Years 12-13 students, while Year 11 tended to be between these two groups. However, only negligible differences were found among the Year-of-study groups when it comes to the DARS values.

Analysis of response styles is a crucial tool for the identification of some of the potential biases in student-reported data. As the differences in student reporting behavior could lead researchers and policy makers to inaccurate conclusions based on such data, future research should take these differences into account and perhaps employ also other methodological approaches for reporting behavior differences identification and adjustment, e.g., the overclaiming technique. As our results show, such an analysis is fundamental not only for finding the differences in reporting behavior between different countries, but also for the identification of within-country heterogeneity in reporting behavior of students. Also, future research could also focus on an analysis of the changes in response styles in countries over time.

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Mgr. Martin Boško, Charles University, Czech Republic
 Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hana Voňková, Charles University, Czech Republic
 Dr. Ondřej Papajoanu, Charles University, Czech Republic
 Angie Moore, M.A., Charles University, Czech Republic

Nomthandazo Buthelezi & Nonhlanhla Maseko

Family Support for Learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities during Transition

Abstract

Family support is essential for academic success and the creation of resilient learners. Support is a complex and contested terrain that is variously described based on disparate philosophical lenses through which it is viewed. It cannot be denied that learners are bound to encounter several challenges during their educational expedition that might require support. In this study the focus is on learners with mild intellectual disabilities (MID) who are firstly assessed, diagnosed then recommended placement into a special class. Subsequently, they may well be required to transition from the mainstream class to a special class. Transition tends to be a challenging time for learners in general, however, it may particularly be more challenging for learners with MID for several reasons (i.e., fear of change, attachment issues, bullying from other peers etc.). Essentially, family support becomes critical in facilitating this process since it is construed for positive transition processes. Furthermore, it increases the motivation and confidence of a learner with MID who may potentially encounter discrimination and marginalisation during transition. Notwithstanding, the numerous benefits of family support for learners with MID, a variety of challenges experienced by families in the provision of support to a learner with MID have been identified in a school located in a semi-rural part of a South African province. Such challenges include but are not limited to poor communication between families and homes, lack/limited of knowledge and lack of functional family-school partnerships. Drawing from this, the current study aims to provide possible approaches to mitigate the challenges experienced by families in providing support to learners with MID during the transition process.

Keywords: family, support, transition, mild intellectual disabilities, special class

Introduction

This study is primarily focused on learners with MID who transition into a special class. Researchers such as Dockett et al. (2012) write that family support is influential during the transition process of a learner from a mainstream class to a special class. In support, McIntyre et al. (2010) indicate that families often want to receive communication regarding how best they can assist the learner with his or her transition, this includes seeking information pertaining to academic and behavioural expectations through school-led transition activities such as school visits, family meetings, and developing parent and professional alliances. Over the years empirical findings have demonstrated a positive association between family support during transition and coping mechanisms (Dockett et al., 2012). According to Dockett et al. (2012), family support is a powerful, preventive mechanism that supports resiliency and has a

significant impact on the successful entry of learners with learning disabilities into a special class. This section of the paper has introduced the core subject of the study, the next section grounds the study into context.

Background of the study

In South Africa the government through the provisions in the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) promotes family support in learner education for positive school outcomes and learner participation in schools (DOE, 1996). Regardless of the mandated policies, research indicates that families are still lacking in providing the holistic needs of their children in all school programmes and activities (Sedibe, 2012). SASA (DOE, 1996) correspondingly acknowledges that despite governmental efforts in enhancing family support there are still challenges that hinder with these efforts. Congruently more intervention strategies are required in South African schools to promote family support (DOE, 1996). In concurrence Ellman et al. (2020) point out that despite government interventions the problem continues to exist in South African schools, predominantly in underprivileged schools. Research shows that family support continues to be minimal in SA, which consequently affects learner progress, especially for learners with mild intellectual disabilities (Sedibe, 2012).

Learners with MID are mild functioning and require support although not as intensely as those with profound or severe intellectual disabilities since they do not require continuous care and management (Odongo, 2018). However, this does not suggest that they are to be deprived of any additional support particularly when they are transitioning to the next class. One of the best ways of ensuring that learners with MID succeed is through family support. For many families, limited or lack of knowledge concerning intellectual disabilities, might be the contributing factor that may hinder family support during the transitioning process. In education, transition typically refers to the three major transitional points in the public education system, which include moving from pre-school to primary school, from primary school to high school, and from high school to college or university (Little, 2015). While learners experience other transitions during their educational journey such as advancing from one grade level to the next, these types of transitions are referred to as the three “major” transition points that are particularly focused on teacher and school reformers as advised by Little (2015).

When transitioning, learners may often experience significant academic, social, emotional, physical, or developmental changes that may adversely affect their educational performance (Little, 2015). Further, throughout these transitions, for example, learners with MID may move from a familiar school to an unfamiliar school, where they encounter new teachers, peers, academic expectations, social issues, and school configurations which could increase the likelihood that they may feel overwhelmed, anxious, frustrated or insecure (Rowe et al., 2015). At this point, they may require the support of their immediate family to cope with these emotions. Odongo (2018) similarly concedes that support may be neglected due to lack of knowledge in transition and learning disabilities which maybe a reason why families are seemingly not initiating or attempting to implement strategies which could be beneficial in the transition process. Moreover, the lack of support may sometimes be attributed to families being intimidated by the school system which may leave them feeling as if they have nothing of value to contribute (Odongo, 2018). Subsequently, this also prevents families from effusively engaging in school matters on a regular basis

(Little, 2015). This study explored the primary question: Which strategies could be implemented to mitigate the challenges experienced by families in supporting learners with MID during transition?

Challenges experienced by families in supporting transition

Garbacz et al. (2017) established that there is a positive impact in education and academic achievement when families are involved. Family support has also been associated with improvement of children's self-esteem and academic performance (McIntyre et al., 2010). Additionally, Garbacz et al. (2017) are of the opinion that when families increase their interaction and discussion with their children it could consequently result in more responsiveness and sensitivity towards their children's social, emotional and intellectual developmental needs at home as well as at school. Conversely, there are challenges to family support such as lack of interest in the learner's academic life, time constraints of working parents and families assuming that their involvement is not pivotal towards their children's education (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018) resulting in minimal family support. Another challenge is the family's attitude towards their role and the importance it has on the learner's academic journey.

Liu et al. (2020) argue that when families of children with MID fail to execute their responsibilities of caring and supporting their children's education, it results in disconnection between the home and the school (Liu et al., 2020). When families are not aware of what transpires during transition, they fail to critic the effects of transition in order to provide the necessary support. Family support is key to the smooth transition of learners with MID, as such it is imperative for schools to develop a level of trust and rapport with families to augment transition (Liu et al., 2020). One of the ways that schools can develop these relationships is through transition activities with families and children: activities that build and strengthen the relationships between families and primary school, ultimately supporting the learner's entry into a special class (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Withal, families may encounter challenges when having to provide support to learners with MID, below the challenges are conversed.

Poor communication

Poor communication between the school and families can be attributed to many factors such as lack of resources or lack of family involvement. For learner success in school the study by Hornby and Blackwell (2018) reveals that communication is one of the most important factors in making that possible. To acquire an understanding of the complex term Hornby and Blackwell (2018) define the concept of communication as sharing of emotions, thoughts, knowledge, news, or skills. Liu et al. (2020) further assert that healthy communication is not always possible between schools and families, it can therefore not be disputed that communication barriers exist, and these can hinder with making the transition process smooth. These barriers may be identified as physical, technical, psychological or social and organisational communication barriers (Liu et al., 2020).

Lack of knowledge

In some cases, families of learners with MID may well be identified as being uneducated which may contribute to lack of knowledge (Odongo, 2018). For this

reason, families might not know how to be or get involved with their child's education. Another reason for this could arise when families feel intimidated by the school system and feel that they have nothing of value to contribute towards the education of their child with MID (Odongo, 2018). Since the school selected for this study is in a semi-rural part of the province in SA, they could also lack access to information avenues. This results in the school being the only source of information and failure to disseminate this information, it could subsequently contribute to limited knowledge pertaining to transition support amongst families.

Lack of functional family-school partnerships

The South African Schools Act (SASA) (DOE, 1996) states that it is vital for parents to be involved and participate in schools. SASA in its efforts to augment family-school partnerships (FSPs) put in place guidelines to be implemented in schools such as the SIAS policy document. One of the guidelines recommends commitment from all stakeholders involved in FSPs so that they can be functional. The establishment of school governing bodies (SGBs) is another imperative approach set to warrant the involvement of families in school-related activities as well as the administration of the school (DOE, 1996). Irrespective of these governmental strategies, research by Ellman et al. (2020) attests that there are still challenges in schools which delineates families from their roles as stakeholders in the partnership. As suggested in this study, these could be contributed by several factors such as power struggles, lack of knowledge and training resulting in lack of functional FSPs.

Family involvement through support could therefore play a substantial role in ensuring that there is a smooth transition of learners into a special class. However, the importance of family support in addressing the challenges faced by learners with MID during the transition process to the special class is not clearly documented in the South African policy guidelines. Fundamentally, this poses a gap in policies established by DOE (1996) which advocate for holistic learner support.

Approaches to mitigate family support challenges

The Department of Education (DOE, 1996) emphasizes the importance of family involvement in the education system. Policies such as the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 mandate parents to participate in all school's activities to support the progress of their children (DOE, 1996). Family support in the education of learners with MID has been found to have positive outcomes in improving their performance, moreover, it creates a motivating and conducive learning environment (Oranga et al., 2022).

It is pivotal that the family provides support to the learner during the whole process of transition. As mentioned above families appear to be unaware or uninformed about their role in the transition of learners with MID into the special class, which consequently leads to little or no involvement in the process (Oranga et al., 2022). According to Rowe et al. (2015) lack of functional partnerships constitutes challenges particularly when the school, families and the community do not see the value of educating and supporting learners with MID during transition. To mitigate the challenges the following have been recommended as approaches to endorse family support: positive communication; establishment of transition plans; and family-school partnerships (Oranga et al., 2022).

Positive communication

Positive communication was identified as an area of need to enhance family support. Increased, positive communication makes families feel more comfortable and welcomed into the school. Families want to hear beyond the negative and learn about their child's achievements (Foley et al., 2012). Also, teachers can show that they value family involvement by communicating what the family's role in transition could look like and invite them to school to discuss and plan for transition. When families feel that the school really values and encourages their involvement and inputs, they are more likely to participate. Providing a sense of openness and welcoming is another strategy that may make families feel comfortable. Congruently, when families feel comfortable they are more likely to be involved. Welcoming them as they enter the building or personally inviting them into classrooms are some of the simple steps suggested to breaking down the barrier of discomfort for families (Foley et al., 2012).

Transition plans

Findings from this study also established that transition plans do not exist at the school and therefore transition support cannot occur if there is no transition planning. Concomitantly Rowe et al. (2015) stipulate that it is vital for schools to partner with families in transition practices. However, that is also highly dependent on the school's clear understanding of transition processes and principles as well as who should be involved in the transition process. Transition plans are effective, in addition they also aid as one of the approaches that may well promote family support (Foley et al., 2012).

Establishment of functional family-school partnerships

Family-school partnerships are an effective strategy in supporting and empowering family support and bringing together schools and community resources in the enhancement of a smooth transition (Lindstrom & Beno, 2022). The family-school partnership framework contains a vision for effective partnerships as it contains a set of principles to guide families and schools in developing partnerships, it also sets out strategies that provide practical guidance to school communities and school systems in the implementation and fostering of family school partnerships to enhance family support (Lindstrom & Beno, 2022).

Additional recommendations

Based on the above discussion, the researcher thus recommends that further studies should focus on the development of transition programmes in South Africa as part of the screening, identification, assessment and support policy framework which could work in assisting learners during the transition from a formal to a special class. Ellman et al. (2020) are of the opinion that the education system should develop transition policy guidelines that may assist learners with MID and their families prepare for any challenges which may arise during the transition period. When a transition tool exists, it would contain step by step guidelines on how or what to do when facing transitional challenges. Such information when easily accessible can assist in ensuring that those concerned (learners) have enough confidence in navigating from one space to another without much exacerbation (Ellman et al., 2020).

Implementation of support structures for families and learners with MID when transitioning into the special class could prove difficult when done without additional

support (Ellman et al., 2020). A family-school partnership where families, the school and community work collectively as a team could be used as a strategy to plan and facilitate transition. Moreover, this strategy could alleviate the challenges that come with transition. FSPs could also involve external stakeholders such as social workers, psychologists and registered counselors could assist by providing counseling sessions before, during and after transition.

Consequently, when support is neglected during transition it may possibly become difficult for learners with MID to confront transition challenges that may arise (Ellman et al., 2020). Thus, the implementation of FSPs is recommended since, it is intended to upsurge the learner's self-esteem, motivation, as well as independence and overall character during transition.

Conclusion

This study was concerned with the approaches to mitigate challenges experienced by families in supporting the transition of learners with MID. What emerged from the pragmatic findings was that families experience these challenges due to poor communication, lack/limited of knowledge in MID and no functional FSPs. As a result, recommendations suggested that schools ought to involve families in school activities and partner with them in fostering functional FSPs. These recommendations, furthermore, could aid in information sharing and strengthen family support in the transition of learners with MID transition. Furthermore, recommendations might also additionally improve learners with MID's resiliency, attendance, and academic performance at school and beyond.

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Nomthandazo Buthelezi, M.A., University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Dr. Nonhlanhla Maseko, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Part 2

International Education Issues

Carlo Daniels, Ewelina K Niemczyk & Zacharias L de Beer

Challenges Associated with Implementation of Sustainability-oriented Principles and Practices: Lessons Learnt from South African Universities

Abstract

As evident in scholarly literature, universities worldwide embrace Sustainable Development Goals initiated by United Nations. Yet, regardless institutions' commitment, many countries, especially developing ones, struggle to effectively implement sustainability-oriented principles and practices in higher education. To that end, this paper, based on the qualitative document analysis, brings attention to main challenges associated with the implementation of sustainability-orientated principles and practices in seven South African universities. The findings show that several challenges exist due to the holistic nature of sustainable development (SD) as it is a concept that not only connects different areas of knowledge but also articulates knowledge from distinctive disciplines. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the strategy with the most potential of enhancing the implementation of sustainability-orientated principles and practices and ensuring longevity and improvement require support from top management of higher education institutions (HEIs). In addition, in order to strengthen SD, HEIs need to adapt a holistic approach and implement sustainability principles, knowledge, and practices within all academic activities. In alignment with the theme of the conference, this study provides reflections and recommendations towards the improvement of education considering the experiences and lessons learnt in a specific context.

Keywords: sustainability, sustainable development, sustainable development goals, education for sustainable development, higher education in South Africa

Introduction

It is well known that countries globally are facing unprecedented challenges. As a response to the challenges of the 21st century, many countries have committed to *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2015) seeking to integrate development, peace, social justice, and human rights (Ferguson & Rooft, 2020). The

commitment of the UN member states creates opportunities for vulnerable citizens who face challenges such as conflicts, diseases, natural disasters and unstable political environments (Novo-Corti et al., 2018). The UN member states have identified education as a fundamental instrument that nations can employ towards the social, economic and environmental emancipation of countries (Novo-Corti et al., 2018). Although primary and secondary education has an important role to play towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the role of HEIs is critical since they provide the optimal setting and resources to promote SD. HEIs have shown considerable commitment towards sustainability through international dialogue, conferences, teaching and learning, research, strategic planning and signing of declarations (Farinha et al., 2020). Despite their commitment, South African (SA) HEIs still grapple with challenges associated with implementing sustainability-orientated principles and practices. Many challenges exist due to the holistic nature of SD as it is a concept that not only connects different areas of knowledge but articulates knowledge from distinctive disciplines. The effective implementation of education for sustainable development (ESD) has proved to have a positive impact on the sustainability consciousness of students (Novo-Corti et al., 2018). Thus, it is no surprise that scholarly literature has identified ESD as the method with the most potential to change the mentality of citizens and nurture sustainability-orientated principles and practices towards achieving a long-term goal of sustainability (Novo-Corti et al., 2018). However, in developing countries such as SA, ESD is in its initial stages and only starting to gain academic momentum, leaving HEIs vulnerable to challenges. At the heart of effectively implementing sustainability-orientated principles and practices is ESD, which is a lifelong learning process, aiming to instil skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that will enable students to live and work in a sustainable manner. UNESCO (2019) conceptualized SD as preparation for the future, where environmental, social, cultural and economic matters are balanced in the attempt to attain an improved quality of life. SD is viewed as a process aimed at achieving the long-term goal of sustainability.

This paper relies on a qualitative research employing document analysis method to identify challenges associated with the implementation of sustainability-orientated principles and practices in seven SA universities. The following sections illustrate seven main challenges and provide an explanation of the measures SA HEIs under investigation have taken as a response to these challenges. As per ethical clearance, the names of the HEIs are anonymous.

Main challenges with ESD implementation

Maximising the implementation of ESD requires the identification of specific challenges limiting such implementation. As evident from the findings, the challenges pertaining to the implementation of ESD are interrelated, thus one challenge affects the other. The challenges are many; however, this section zooms in on the main seven.

The first challenge is the poor conceptualization of terms associated with SD in HEIs, leading to a lack of holistic vision and integrated approaches towards innovation and sustainability (Avila et al., 2017). Sustainability is clearly defined by less than half of the seven SA HEIs, thus the majority of HEIs do not define and articulate sustainability well enough to make it easy to understand and then realize in practice. Although the environmental and social realms of sustainability are addressed adequately by the majority of HEIs, they are not addressed in a holistic, interconnected

and interdisciplinary manner. Poor understanding of the holistic and interdisciplinary nature of sustainability is leading to its poor implementation in core activities and policy in the SA context.

Absence of a holistic vision leads to the second challenge, namely, poor trans-disciplinary co-operation within HEIs, which leaves academics to work in isolation within their faculties and areas of specialization (Avila et al., 2017). Consequently, most initiatives involve campus environmental sustainability (e.g., saving electricity) instead of ESD (Takala & Korhonen-Yrjänheikki, 2019). One SA HEI noted that academic's working in isolation is problematic as it leads to too many individual initiatives deployed at the HEI with little to no direction. In the context of this institution, the HEI intends to avoid isolated efforts in their attempt to respond to societal challenges such as sustainability.

The third and arguably the biggest challenge hindering the effective implementation of ESD is the lack of support towards sustainable initiatives from senior management of HEIs (Rampasso et al., 2020). To that end, Mula et al. (2017) noted that sustainability-related initiatives in HEIs often rely on the attention and conviction of individual academics. When there is a lack of support from top management, ESD is viewed as an optional addition into the curriculum. There is little evidence that top management in SA HEIs actively support the implementation of ESD. However, top management of one SA HEI opened up opportunities for implementation of sustainability-orientated principles and practices by signing the United Nations Global Compact, which was incorporated into core activities.

The fourth challenge is grounded in the limited amount of multidisciplinary research working groups, committees and offices allocated towards sustainability in HEIs which stems from a lack of guidance from top management (Farinha et al., 2020). Having an individual (sustainability coordinator) and an office space to address concerns about sustainability provides decision making power and guidance (Avila et al., 2017). SA HEIs are committed to building on their established track-record of multidisciplinary research groups. The majority of SA HEIs have responded to the dynamic economic, social and environmental changes by employing an interdisciplinary approach to research, dialogue and teaching. The use of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches has been made urgent due to the emergence of Covid-19. Some SA HEIs have capitalised on the opportunity presented by Covid-19 to scale up their service role and employ an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach to their core activities. In terms of working groups, one SA HEI has established a Sustainable Development Working Group with the objective to monitor and co-ordinate the SD projects at their institution. This action reveals that strategy adoption has been extended into actual implementation of strategy, from which other institutions can learn.

The lack of sustainability-related leadership from top management in HEIs leads also to the fifth challenge, specifically, poor implementation of sustainability-related commitments and policies (Farinha et al., 2020). Sustainability related policy and declarations are important towards the goal of ESD. However, although the signing of declarations and charters is an important driver for SD, it does not always lead to the implementation of their commitments. Currently, there is a lack of SD policies in the majority of the sampled SA HEIs.

The poor implementation of ESD related policies may negatively impact the curricula and research outputs of HEIs, which is the sixth challenge. As evident, HEIs

curriculum does not fully include and in some cases, totally disregards information about sustainability (Avila et al., 2017). Updating curriculum content and teaching materials is necessary in order to adapt to the dynamic nature of sustainability. SA HEIs ensures rigorous quality assurance of all academic programmes and courses. Curriculum content is continuously renewed, promoting multidisciplinary research and teaching initiatives to drive innovation with the aim of strengthening sustainability and increase societal impact. To this end, it is clear that SA HEIs incorporate sustainability-related content in their curriculums. However, the incorporation of SD content does not equate to ESD, as SD content is poorly specified and does not capture the holistic nature of SD.

Inadequate pedagogical approaches stem from a lack of professional development and teacher training, which is the last challenge (Feinstein et al., 2013). In SA, opportunities for lifelong learning through a variety of short courses to academics and other professionals are provided. Although efforts to professionally develop educators are promising in the context of SA, they are not linked to ESD professional development. Efforts to improve ESD in teacher education have made satisfactory progress as there is evidence of sound educational teaching practice, training and policy in SA HEIs. The concern is that not much has been done in terms of consistently incorporating ESD into SA teacher education.

Recommended strategies

This section provides an explanation of the lessons learnt from the institutional principles and practices employed in SA HEIs. Special attention is paid to the role of educational leaders in supporting teacher training and professional development, revising policy, adopting a whole-institution approach as well as interdisciplinary research and curriculum requirements. The discussion outlines six strategies that could maximise the implementation of sustainability-orientated principles and practices.

The first strategy, and the one with the most potential of scaling up the implementation of ESD and ensuring longevity and improvement, is support from top management of HEIs. In fact, the establishment and evolution of an ESD ideology require long-term commitment, time and continuous support from educational leaders. Thus, the development and adoption of an institutional strategy for SD needs to be supported by rectors, managers, and professors in order to sustain sustainability programmes and initiatives. The commitment and support of educational leaders to sustainability calls for articulation of ESD in strategic planning, the mission and vision statement and other relevant policies. For educational leaders to offer support and commitment in areas of priority and to catalyse effective transformation would require the provision of ESD-related training for individuals in leadership positions. Furthermore, educational leaders need to be aware of academics that may have a personal interest and motivation to engage in ESD; however, their engagement may be hindered by factors such as lack of time and financial resources. There are calls for educational leaders to allocate time and resources to the designing of new courses and the reviewing of existing courses, which will afford academics the opportunity to engage in ESD without increasing their workloads.

Management has one of the most important roles to play in scaling up the implementation of ESD. However, the role of educators is also crucial. The second strategy is endorsed by UNESCO (through their Global Action Programme), which is to improve the ability of educators to reorient their teaching practice towards ESD

through the provision of appropriate teacher training and professional development of staff. Professional development recognises that the need for lifelong learning, as change, is a constant feature of the 21st century. As per teacher training, scaling up the implementation of ESD at all levels of education (primary, secondary, and tertiary) will require teacher training programmes to embrace pedagogies that foster the competencies that enable teachers to serve as competent change agents.

Embracing ESD in professional development and teacher training programmes as well as throughout the core activities of HEIs should be articulated in policy, which accounts for a third recommended strategy. The purpose of sustainability policies is to encourage students to participate in SD dialogue, scholarly activities and initiatives, which is required due to the vast size and population of HEIs. Thus, SD dialogue, scholarly activities and initiatives should be enforced (through policy), as it is challenging to promote awareness amongst so many staff and students. It is important for educational leaders to not merely symbolically commit to ESD on paper; instead, policy should adopt a whole-institution approach in which all actions and decisions stipulated on paper are displayed through actions (of staff, students, and educational leaders) towards transformation and the implementation of ESD. A whole-institution approach is necessary to ensure that change towards sustainability is not isolated in one core activity of HEIs. A whole-university approach of ESD implementation embraces sustainability in research, curriculum, campus operations, extension activities, the mission and vision statement, policies, targets and objectives, the creation and implementation of educational strategies, and strategic planning and partnerships with stakeholders.

The fourth strategy refers to research, which receives special attention due to its potential to generate knowledge advancing society. Consequently, the availability and accessibility of scientific databases are critical to facilitate the research process, specifically areas of research under the broad umbrella of sustainability. Conducting research about ESD may be challenging, as academics and educational leaders are often overwhelmed by other duties. It is also unlikely that academics and educational leaders would adjust the scope of their research without pressure for change. For this reason, adding multi-, inter- or transdisciplinary research on ESD as a promotion criterion or as a criterion to attain research funding could serve as incentive to maximise the implementation of ESD in research.

The fifth strategy refers to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, which also receive special attention since they have potential to reveal permanent complex relationships between economic, social and environmental realms of sustainability. HEIs should promote inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration, dialogue, thinking and action in their core activities and whole-institution approach in terms of their research, teaching and extension activities. These approaches allow academics and students to engage with multiple perspectives and solutions from a variety of fields, which are needed in order to effectively respond to the challenges imposed on HEIs by the holistic nature of sustainability. Cooperation among HEIs through international events such as conferences and workshops have been identified as conducive to sharing knowledge, learning, and establishing new research projects across diverse fields.

The last strategy is to utilise existing quality assurance processes and external benchmarking of HEIs to make sustainability a curriculum and research requirement. The effectiveness of external agencies in encouraging compliance and implementation of sustainability strategies is grounded in the reality that HEIs receive funding for their

commitment to sustainability strategies. In addition, there is a high possibility that making ESD an explicitly assessed outcome of the curriculum would increase students' engagement. If sustainability is not part of the curriculum or exams, students may choose to disregard it. In addition, ESD should also be included in the criteria for determining quality and competitiveness. In this context, a national ranking incorporating sustainability as criterion has great potential to motivate HEIs to implement ESD.

Conclusion

As evident from the findings, the main challenges with implementation of ESD include academics working in isolation, lack of support towards sustainable initiatives from senior management of HEIs as well as poor implementation of sustainability-related commitments and policies. Consequently, tertiary education experiences of graduates may give insight into sustainability but fall short of capturing a deeper, interconnected understanding of the principles of sustainability (Mula et al., 2017). Considering the critical role HEIs play in the achievement of the UN's 17 SDGs and in protection of people and the planet, it is encouraging that the majority of SA HEIs have proactively responded to the dynamic challenges associated with ESD. Educational institutions can learn from the manner in which SA HEIs under investigation have responded to economic, social and environmental changes by employing an interdisciplinary approach to research, dialogue and teaching. In addition, it is clear that SA HEIs incorporate sustainability-related content in their curriculums. It is important to note that individual HEIs and faculties display great commitment and progress towards sustainability. However, at times, there is a lack of participation on the part of some HEIs and faculties. Furthermore, it is evident that a prerequisite for an effective response to the challenges associated with ESD is to have a clear understanding of the holistic nature of sustainability. An obvious starting point towards improvement would be for HEIs to define sustainability-related terms and clearly articulate the role of staff and students in achieving SD.

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Carlo Daniels, PhD Student, North-West University, South Africa

Prof. Dr. Ewelina K Niemczyk, North-West University, South Africa

Dr. Zacharias L de Beer, North-West University, South Africa

Johan Beckmann

The Non-recoverability of an Education System and the Resetting Option: Case South Africa

Abstract

The theme of the conference seems to assume that most countries had functional and well-performing education systems before the COVID-19 pandemic. All they need to do now is to recover and restore their systems to their former glory. Evaluations of the South African education system between 1994 and 2022 have been extremely negative. The question arises whether all systems could be restored and whether there are systems simply not worth restoring and needing a complete mind shift and a new start to begin to be able to provide quality education. I surveyed the South African school education system and the degree to which it complies with the legal framework that regulates it. I also consulted published material on education quality. I came to the conclusion that the system is performing extremely poorly and is probably not worth “recovering”. I then turned to the suggestions of prominent economic and education policy specialists. It became clear to me that an education system not worth recovering needs a mindset change in its leaders to be reset and begin over. Certain education systems will probably need to be reset and not merely recovered. I explain briefly what the literature suggests about resetting a system and then list a number of steps that might be taken to reset an education system.

Keywords: recovering, recoverability, non-recoverability, system inertness, system reset, resetting actions

Introduction

The 2023 BCES conference focuses on the recovery of school education systems after COVID-19. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines “recovering” as “to get better after ... a period of difficulty or trouble” and “to get back something lost or spent”. Both meanings seem applicable to countries that had well-functioning systems before the pandemic. This also begs the question of whether all education systems merit recovery following the cataclysmic event.

After studying information about the state of the South African school education system after 1994, it appeared to me that it did not merit “recovering” as defined above. In this paper, I will discuss the standard of education in South Africa that informed my opinion.

When evaluating the system, it needs to be remembered that the South African system after 1994 was a product of the constitutional negotiations between opposing political parties about a constitution to determine how the country would be governed. The interim Constitution of 1993 (later finalised in 1996) was a product of these

negotiations and preceded South Africa's first democratic elections of 1994 and the first democratically-elected government led by the late Mr. Nelson Mandela in 1994.

As with all documents emerging from such negotiations, the Constitution contains compromise decisions and provisions open to different interpretations. The influence of the negotiations can also be seen in the education laws and policies promulgated after 1994. Different interpretations of management and governance provisions (for instance about the powers of school governing bodies vis-à-vis the professional management functions of school principals) could foreseeably lead to disputes and contestations. Together with the inertness of the system, these could impede and delay the creation of a stable system focused solely on the provision of quality education for all that would annul the hurtful inequalities and discrimination of the previous "Apartheid" system.

Disputes understandably also make the system somewhat unstable. Many issues are still being debated when decisions have to be made.

There have been very negative assessments of the standard of South African school education over a number of years by authors like Spaul (2013) and Van der Berg et al. (2016). Organisations like the World Economic Forum (WEF) and BusinessTech and various regional and international assessment studies like the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SAQMEC), and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) have all provided conclusive evidence of the poor state of education in South Africa: it has been ranked the 3rd worst in the world by the WEF and the performances of its learners and educators have been found to lag far behind those of comparable systems spending much less money on education (Beckmann, 2021, pp. 755-757).

I summarised the findings of studies and other publications (Beckmann, 2021, pp. 755-757) that all painted a bleak picture of South African education and detected only paltry improvements over the years.

Education in South Africa after 1994

Introduction

The education system in place at the onset of the pandemic replaced the much-maligned apartheid system in 1994. Part of the intentions of the new government was to undo the injustices of the previous regime and replace it with a dispensation that would treat all citizens equally and redress the injustices of the previous dispensation.

Jansen (2002, p. 199) based his "construct of 'political symbolism' ... as a first step towards developing a more elaborate theory for explaining one of the most intractable problems in policy studies: the distance between policy ideals and practical outcomes" on seven empirical studies. Jansen's study convinced him that, in a situation such as the one in which South Africa found itself after 1994, the primary aim of new legislation and policy seemed to be to signal that a new government had taken over command and not necessarily that the system would be improved. Some of the problems of the new system may have arisen from such an aim.

The legal framework for the new system

The legal framework regulating a system can serve as a lens for assessing a system. The framework I used for the new system was conceptualised from the results of a qualitative study consisting of 14 semi-structured interviews with high ranking

education department officials, legal advisers to the education department, attorneys specialising in education law, teacher union officials, members of the legal team of the Minister of Education and professors of law specialising (Beckmann, 1997). The participants in the study all agreed that a framework for the provision of quality education should:

- define the educational standards and values consistent with constitutional principles such as the rule of law and a human rights culture;
- provide for adherence to constitutional provisions;
- clarify who has to or may receive education and who should provide it;
- define as clearly as possible the rights, duties, competencies and obligations of the various interested parties (stakeholders); and
- regulate the relationship between the various states and other stakeholders involved in the provision of education.

In practical terms, such a framework should:

- regulate the deployment and optimal utilisation of human and other resources;
- ensure consonance with the Constitution of 1996 by embedding, entrenching and giving content to the various rights to, and obligations concerning education;
- provide guidance to the various parties regarding the balance of their location in the system and their responsibilities towards the education system. The state should not be allowed to establish an educational dictatorship;
- be articulated unambiguously to avoid confusion over rights, competences and obligations and relationships. Provisions susceptible to more than one valid interpretation are likely to lead to a plethora of frustrating and system inhibitory disputes and court cases that could put urgently needed activities on hold;
- balance freedom (discretion) and control by not being too prescriptive or dogmatic nor too vague, thus preventing the stifling of progress and the erosion of accountability respectively;
- anchor education in the reality of its religious, linguistic and cultural diversity and create room for compromises to reconcile differences peacefully;
- enable the successful pursuit of the explicit business of education namely to optimally develop all the human resources of a country; and
- make it possible to enforce the law on people who transgress it.

What did the system after 1994 set out to achieve?

To obtain a more nuanced assessment of the success or failure of the post-1994 education system after 1994, it was necessary to establish what its explicit aims were (Beckmann, 1997; Spaull, 2013). Some of the aims set out were to:

- establish a single department of education under one minister while simultaneously making provision for significant local control over, and accountability for the provision of education at local level. Centralised and decentralised control measures had to be balanced and more coherence of central coordination vis-à-vis local control was contemplated;
- treat all clients of the education system equally and to eradicate unfair discrimination and reinstate supportive educational and ethical values; and
- provide education relevant to the economic, developmental and social needs of the country.

Why can the 1994-2022 system not merely be recovered?

In the section below, I will briefly discuss some of the apparent serious failures of the system where it does not comply with its legal framework and creates the conviction that it cannot be recovered or overhauled in a willy-nilly fashion instead of in a well-planned, well-considered, well-researched and facts-based manner. The prescribed format of this paper prevents me from acknowledging all sources I used to compile the list below but authors such as Spaul (2013), Van der Berg et al. (2011), Van der Walt (2023), Le Cordeur (2023) and Prince (2023) provide a usable picture of the state of education.

Various conspicuous aspects of the system which need to be addressed urgently and dramatically for the system to achieve its intended aims have been identified, including:

- The system is still characterised by inequality and backlogs. The gaps between previously economically advantaged and disadvantaged communities have not been significantly reduced since 1994 partly due to the inertness of the system.
- At the 55th national conference of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party, President Ramaphosa said (Van der Walt, 2023) that education is an important instrument with which to end poverty. He made exaggerated references to progress made since 1994. This type of statement is typical of neo-liberalist techniques to make government look good and, in the process, failures and problems are downplayed. The President said among others that:
 - a. Access to early childhood education (ECE) has improved considerably (it is now included in the formal school structure running from ECE to grade 12). However, Van der Walt (2023) points out some problems that are yet to be addressed such as the lack of trained educators, the lack of classrooms for ECE enrolments, the lack of quality programmes and the lack of money to pay the educators involved.
 - b. The grade 12 (called “matric” in South Africa) pass rate has improved steadily. Van der Walt (2023) raises serious and well-known concerns in this regard: less than 50% of grade 1 enrolments progress to grade 12 (signifying a totally unacceptable drop-out rate of more than 50%), the spectrum of subjects offered does not correspond with the needs of economic and industrial development, there are not enough enrolments in subjects linked to desperately needed scarce skills, the value and standard of matric qualifications is under suspicion and the unemployment rate for people between 15 and 24 years seeking employment is 59%. Current school education qualifications do not seem to open employment opportunities, leading to a sense of hopelessness among graduates from the school system.
 - c. Access to higher education and training has grown dramatically and should benefit the economy and the country in the long run (Van der Walt, 2023) provided that much-needed reforms take place that will solve the problem of a scarcity of properly qualified university personnel and the confusion about the languages of teaching and learning policy in higher education in view of the language diversity in the country.
- Political leaders and senior education often resort to expressing optimistic views about the status of education and to making promises about education delivery to the country. They gloss over statistics and fail to address problems about which government has done very little in the past 28 years. Recently, there has

been a notable increase in politicians even hiding their failures behind conspiracy theories (Mavuso, 2023).

- The above paragraph is typical of a lack of government transparency and communication, which is exacerbated by what is viewed as a disjointed relationship between the elite of the country represented by politicians and education officials and ordinary citizens. The elite seems to be ignorant of, or chooses to ignore the educational needs of the country, the economy and industry. Over the years, government has failed to constructively respond to parents and other stakeholders' requests and representations made to:
 - provide enough spaces for learners (Prince, 2023). In Gauteng Province, 4682 learners had not been placed in schools by 3 February 2023 (Nienaber, 2023). There are worrisome backlogs in the provision of new schools and classrooms;
 - maintain existing facilities and to address serious problems such as the absence of laboratories, computers and sports facilities in schools;
 - not lower pass requirements to ensure "better" pass rates;
 - address the fact that there are still about 4000 schools in the country that do not have appropriate ablution facilities. At least two learners have recently drowned in pit latrines despite court orders to education authorities to ensure proper ablution facilities at schools to respect learners' dignity and protect their bodily integrity (Cf. the judgment in the *Komape and Others v Minister of Basic Education* (2018) case). If nothing else, these cases point to an absence of skills to obey court orders and a disregard for the dignity and lives of learners;
 - curb unacceptably high teenage pregnancy rates;
 - stop corrupt practices manifesting as financial mismanagement, unlawful interference in appointment practices (a cause of the poor quality of teachers), the "deployment" of ANC "cadres" to leadership positions and the proven buying and selling of posts. Corruption by politicians in the form of "state capture" also pose a serious threat to the provision of education and thwarts efforts to curb these practices;
 - prevent and act decisively in case of proven incidents of racism, sexual abuse of learners (by learners and teachers); violence and assaults (even murders of learners and teachers); gangsterism; drug abuse; vandalism and conflicts between government, and SGBs and principals (Krugger, Beckmann & Du Plessis, 2022); and
 - address the four binding constraints on education (Van der Berg et al., 2016): weak institutional functionality, undue union influence, weak teacher content knowledge and pedagogical skills and wasted learning time.

Few reasons for "recovering" education (getting back something valuable that has been lost) can be found.

A leadership change of mind: resetting a system

If "recovering" is not a viable option, what could be? The conceptualisation of new education systems based on the "resetting" (analogous to but much more drastic and far-reaching than the resetting of a cell phone that has stopped functioning) of the minds of leaders (Schwab & Malleret, 2020) appears to be an option.

Education must first be put on a par with the economy and everyone must buy into the idea of a re-design of education. In Finland, for instance, education was officially made the first priority of the country in 1978 and their system is now consistently ranked among the world's top performers and their economy has shot up through the ranks.

A “reset” education system necessarily involves:

- a united vision for the country and education not based on SWOT analyses but rather on optimising educational institutions (Berkhout & Wielemans, 1999);
- a new set of appropriate statutes and policies;
- a curriculum with fewer subjects and greater emphasis on the development of the skills and knowledge a country needs to perform well economically;
- the availability of essential services including electricity and transport, social and health services (including the provision of nutritious meals);
- the availability of professional, competent educators and officials and teacher trainers;
- the adoption of different school management and governance models reflecting schools' performances to ensure that schools that need extra support receive it and that well-performing schools are allowed greater management and governance autonomy (Du Plessis & Küng, 2019);
- clear and binding ethical behaviour guidelines;
- an emphasis on quality rather than quantity;
- more determined efforts to eradicate social problems complicating school management and governance like child abuse, drug abuse and gender-based violence;
- an improvement of state transparency and an end to misleading the public. Because government on its own cannot solve all the problems in education, other stakeholders could discover opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the advancement of the education system; and
- the government considering an end to the tripartite alliance approach to the ruling of the state by two political parties and some labour unions (known to interfere in, and block reform efforts).

Conclusion

The need for a fundamental resetting of education in South Africa is obvious. It is unlikely that South Africa is the only country in such dire straits education wise. Education must have the best human and other resources and be characterised by a new vision making it a top national priority.

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Prof. Dr. Johan Beckmann, Research Fellow, University of the Free State, South Africa

André du Plessis

What Happened to ‘Educational’ in Educational Management and Leadership? The Rise of Managerialism

Abstract

This paper argues that school leaders and managers are being forced to abandon their educational purpose and that leadership and management activities of school leaders are now purposed towards satisfying the needs of a managerialist elite. As a result, the best interests of learners/students are placed secondary to the interests of the bureaucrats. The paper conceptualises educational leadership and educational management and the relationship between these two actions is explained. Thereafter, managerialism is defined and its expansion to an ideology is explained. Examples are provided of how managerialism manifests itself in education systems.

Keywords: educational leadership, educational management, managerialism, best interest of learners/students

Introduction

This paper interrogates the tension between education leadership and managerialism, which Shepherd (2018, p. 1668) describes as an “increasingly modern-day phenomenon” and is framed against the concepts of educational leadership and educational management which are regarded as “foundational concepts in the origination of educational institutions” (Connolly, James & Fertig, 2019, p. 504). However, these two concepts are often used interchangeably by both theorists and practitioners which du Plessis and Heystek (2020, p. 846) describe as conceptual (con)fusion. Thus, confusion or fusion of educational leadership and educational management has been enhanced by the increased dominance of managerialism. Hence, the question whether we have lost the educational focus of our management and leadership activities. I first explore the notions of educational leadership and educational management after which I pay attention to managerialism and the implications it has on educational leadership in particular and education in general.

What is educational leadership?

It is generally accepted that the quality of leadership in educational institutions has a significant positive influence on student/learner outcomes (Bush, 2007, p. 391). Leadership implies a movement in a chosen direction; simply put, change. Therefore, the fundamental question in any leadership discussion is: Leadership towards what? Or, leadership for what? The concept of educational leadership (some call it pedagogical leadership) provides the answer. It is leadership activities that are aimed at ensuring

that “[t]he best interests of the student [learner] is at the heart of the ethic of the educational profession” (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007, p. 212). The real focus of education should therefore be student learning. This also implies a moral obligation which brings with it a responsibility (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007, p. 218). In for example the South African context, this moral responsibility is entrenched in section 28 (2) of the Constitution of 1996:

A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.

Section 28 (2) of the Constitution is reinforced by Section 9 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005:

In all matters concerning the care, protection and well-being of a child the standard that the child's best interests are of paramount importance, must be applied.

The leadership component of 'educational leadership' firstly requires “influence, not authority” (Bush, 2008, p. 276). Bush (2008, p. 277) explains that although both 'influence' and 'authority' are dimensions of power, 'authority' is linked to formal positions, while 'influence' can be exerted by anyone in an educational institution. In educational leadership the influencing process must be intentional. In other words, to achieve a certain purpose that should be in the best interest of the student (learner). The influencing can also be done by individuals or groups (Connoly, James & Fertig, 2019, p. 510).

Secondly, leadership actions should be grounded in personal and professional values which form the foundation for moral leadership (Bush, 2008, p. 277). Educational leadership therefore has a strong normative element. Thirdly, excellent educational leaders have a vision for their institutions (Bush, 2008, p. 278) and are able to clearly articulate this vision and motivate followers to strive toward this vision. This denotes the direction towards which is being led. Fourthly, excellent educational leaders are contextually intelligent because context influences teaching practice and student learning (Marishane, 2016, p. 165).

Educational leadership is focused on people and excellent educational leaders inspire trust. An educational leader originates, is innovative and challenges the status quo by continuously asking 'what' and 'why' questions. They are often frustrated by the restrictions placed on them by bureaucratic hierarchies which characterise modern education systems.

What is educational management?

The notion of 'management' is generally associated with an organisational hierarchy in which individuals who occupy higher positions exercise authority (not necessarily power) over those lower down in the hierarchy. It is often associated with dominance by those in senior positions and by status and privilege (Connoly, James & Fertig, 2019, p. 506).

Management is characterised by bureaucratic and rational approaches and education systems are seen to be divided into “management units”, for example schools, and sub-units, for example subject departments (Bush, 2008, pp. 273-274). Bush (2008, p. 274) lists several criticisms of this model. Firstly, it prescribes a unitary set of objectives to all the stakeholders of schools. Secondly, it assumes that the allocation of resources is unproblematic. Thirdly, it assumes that the assessment of educational outcomes is unproblematic. And fourthly, it assumes a single process of

accountability where in practice educational managers (and leaders) have multiple, and in many cases, conflicting accountabilities.

In an educational context, management is the action of carrying out the responsibility for the functioning of an educational institution (Connoly, James & Fertig, 2019, p. 507). At a school it would entail the establishment of structures and processes and procedures that are followed by the school. Among many possible examples, it would include the work allocation of the teaching staff, planning and implementing the school's timetable, the procedures to follow when drafting and moderating tests and examinations, the budgeting process, procedures for photocopying, etc.

At their core, managers focus on systems and structure and rely on control to maintain it by insisting that things must be done 'by the book'. They are inclined to rely on generic solutions to problems and are averse to innovative solutions. Generally, they accept the status quo and struggle to see the 'big picture'. The notion of management is therefore often being regarded as rigid and inflexible and "having no place in the complex and dynamic world of an educational institution" (Connoly, James & Fertig, 2019, p. 508).

However, excellent 'educational managers' understand that their management actions are not the end goal per se, but rather that their management actions should be aimed at ensuring the smooth running of the school so that the core purpose of the institution, can be realised, namely effective teaching and learning. From this perspective, good educational management creates the foundation on which educational leadership is built.

The interaction of educational leadership and educational management

As explained in the preceding sections, educational leadership and educational management require distinctly different actions. Ideally, those in formal management positions at all levels of an education system would be highly competent educational managers and educational leaders so that the best interests of students/learners are placed first in all management and leadership activities. Therefore, both management and leadership activities must be underpinned by the educational element and there must be acknowledgment that education is a multi-faceted phenomenon. This means that leadership actions must be tolerated by managers and management actions be tolerated by leaders.

In addition, allowance must be made for the contextual uniqueness of educational institutions. For example, there are differences in which one would lead and manage primary and secondary schools or schools that are in privileged or deprived contexts. The implication is that principals must play a leading role in their schools' pedagogical practices. This means that they should not merely be implementers of regulations and policies, but be developers of teachers and students/learners. In this regard, it is important to understand that development processes need to be led. It is for this reason that educational leaders are key to a recovering education system (Alava, 2018).

What is managerialism?

Managerialism is according to Klikauer (2015, p. 1103) "not simply a 'modern management method' and it is not an 'institutional model'". It is an ideology generated at universities that house management schools "that generate thousands of MBAs and

other management graduates” (Klikauer, 2015, p. 1106). In simple terms managerialism can be described as:

a belief that organisations have more similarities than differences and thus the performance of all organisations can be optimised by the application of generic management skills and theory (Klikauer, 2015, p. 1104).

Klikauer (2015, p. 1104) explains that “[t]o managerialist practitioners, there is little difference in the skills required to run an advertising agency, an oil rig or an [educational institution like a school or a university]” and that “[e]xperience and skills pertinent to an organisation’s core business are considered secondary”. The implication is that a managerialist would not deem it necessary to have any training to manage an educational institution as it could be managed by applying generic management principles. Furthermore, managerialism pretends that there is an equalisation between non-profit organisations (public schools) and for-profit organisations (corporations listed on a stock exchange) (Klikauer, 2019, p. 427). Klikauer (2015, p. 1104) also argues that managerialists “pretend to have advanced knowledge and know-how deemed necessary to the efficient running of organisations” and that “managerialism has extended itself from the limits of business organisations deep into public institutions [for example schools] and society”.

Managerialism as an ideology

Management has elevated itself into an ideology – managerialism – by adding the ‘ism’. Hence Klikauer’s (2015, p. 1105) more comprehensive definition of managerialism:

Managerialism combines management’s generic tools and knowledge with ideology to establish itself systematically in organisations, public institutions, and society while depriving business owners (property), workers (organisational-economic) and civil society (social-political) of all decision-making powers. Managerialism justifies the application of its one-dimensional managerial techniques to all areas of work, society, and capitalism on the grounds of superior ideology, expert training, and the inclusiveness of managerial knowledge necessary to run public institutions and society as corporations.

Klikauer (2015, p. 1105) therefore contends that management “expanded to become something that transcended management” which he describes as “something rather simplistic, trivial, mundane, and, to be honest, rather dull”, and that management has “mutated [expanded] into a full-fledged ideology”. This is illustrated by Klikauer (2015, p. 1105) in the following formula: Management + Ideology + Expansion = Managerialism.

Through this expansion, managerialism has not only universalised its generic managerial techniques and solutions, but also has indoctrinated those who are not managers, to think like managers (Klikauer, 2015, p. 1104). Managerialism is thus oppressive in nature as it is primarily concerned with the advancement of the managerial class. In societal spheres where managerialism has become dominant, its ideology is portrayed as common sense. It therefore does not require further explanation and should therefore not be questioned (Klikauer, 2015, p. 1104).

Manifestations of managerialism in education

Managerialism has penetrated education systems of the world and manifests itself in a variety of ways, resulting in a managerialist society. Du Plessis and Heystek (2020,

p. 847) argue that the paradox created by managerialism is that policies aimed at deregulation and greater autonomy of schools is associated by many with a process of re-regulation and re-centralisation. This has resulted in educational strategies that focus on the monitoring of learner and school achievement (Strandler, 2015, p. 890). Glatter (2012, p. 562) argues that this has led to the emergence of a “compliance society” controlled by a “remotely accountable and technocratic centre” – the managerialists - who takes the initiative. In this compliant society relationships between learners/students and teachers are de-socialised and relationships of dependency and compliance have developed rather than relationships of interaction, negotiation and mutual respect. Wilkens (2011, p. 391) describes it as a “deliberate antagonistic assault on the notion of the autonomous profession” and an undermining of the essence of classical professionalism. In this compliance society, teacher professional development (TPD) “has become a ‘top down’ imposition rather than a genuine personal and collegial enterprise, and is likely to be viewed more as a disciplinary device than an empowering one” (Wilkens, 2011, p. 391).

Therefore, support provided to teachers is underpinned by a philosophy of ensuring compliance rather than a philosophy of capacity-building and improvement (De Grauwe, 2004, p. 9). In this regard Hargreaves (2000, p. 169) reason that “performance management through targets, standards, and paper trails of monitoring and accountability ... may have comforted governments with ‘procedural illusions of effectiveness’, but they have also subjected teachers to the micro-management of ever-tightening regulations and controls that are the very antithesis of any kind of professionalism”. This has resulted in an ultimately damaging risk-averse, target chasing ethos “where traditional notions of context-specific practice emerging through professional dialogue are suppressed” (Wilkens, 2011, p. 391).

It is argued by Kimber and Ehrich (2011, p. 181) that the managerialist restructuring of education systems has created what they call a “democratic deficit”, meaning that instead of strengthening accountability, managerial practices have undermined it. Secondly, the over-reliance on, and inappropriate use of performance practices derived from the private sector have led to traditional roles and values associated with the public sector, being ignored. Thirdly, they argue that a “hollow state” has emerged “where public goods and services have been removed from the public sector” resulting in citizens being subordinate to the ‘ruling’ managerialist class. In a school situation this results in what du Plessis and Heystek (2020, p. 851) describe as “top-down and bottom-up dissonance”. They (du Plessis & Heystek, 2020, p. 851) argue that “the top-down managerial voice of the education authorities” creates discord with the “bottom-up teachers’ voices” and that this discord generally plays itself out in the offices of school principals. Due to the authoritarian nature of managerialism, principals would be more inclined to listen to the voice which speaks the loudest, the bureaucrats who have subscribed to the managerialist ideology.

Conclusion

This paper argued that the educational element of school leadership and management has been devalued and is being placed secondary to the principles of subscribed by managerialism. The generic application of managerialist principles has resulted in the leadership actions of educational leaders and managers (school principals, etc) being restricted because it is contrary to the managerialist belief that there are universal solutions to problems. As a result, education systems are

increasingly favouring the best interests of the managerialists – bureaucrats – rather than the best interests of the learners/students. Learners/students are being depicted in terms of outputs and targets and the contextual nuances that are relevant to individual schools, individual learners/students and teachers, are being ignored. This ignorance undermines the education profession. In addition, the managerialist desire to create a compliant society and the suppression of democratic principles makes the education profession an unattractive career option.

Therefore, education systems need to question whether they are indeed 'educational' and are focused on the best interest of their learners/students. If they answer yes, an education system will have hope to recover. If the answer is no, ...

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Dr. André du Plessis, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Leon Roets, Brianna Kurtz & Karen Biraimah

The Impact of the Racial and Economic Divides on Access to Quality Education in South Africa and the United States

Abstract

Struggles for educational equity in the United States (US) and South Africa (SA), particularly with regard to race, class, and ethnicity, remain significant and have become even more critical during and following the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Many scholars have focused on the daily struggles of school-aged children, indicating that millions in each nation are homeless, food insecure, and without health care. Moreover, schools often serve critical social reproduction functions in addition to their primary role of advancing learning by providing feeding schemes, computers and internet connectivity, and, in many cases, essential childcare for workers. Since 2020, the pandemic and lockdowns negatively impacted the education delivery system in both countries by enhancing the socio-economic and digital divides. Both countries struggled to provide equitable access to quality education for all children, regardless of their socio-economic status (SES) or geographic location. Through a comparative lens, we analyze attempts by the US and SA to address racial and economic divides over the past decades, and particularly during the pandemic and its disruptions, to better understand the mechanisms education systems used to address stakeholder inequalities. After a brief overview of the historical paths to greater social and economic equality made by both nations the paper explores the significant roles that race, ethnicity, and SES continue to play in determining access to quality education, especially during times of disruptions such as the recent pandemic. It also asks if the economic divide has become the more powerful and consistent factor determining access to well-resourced schools. The paper concludes by asking if patterns of historical racial and ethnic inequalities are now being replaced by an even greater economic divide that continues to provide patterns of inequitable education for children based on their race, ethnicity, SES, and access to supportive resources.

Keywords: COVID-19, educational equity, social reproduction, South Africa, United States

Introduction: What is educational inequality?

Worldwide there is a myriad of inequalities, such as income inequality, inequality of opportunity, political inequalities reflected in power relationships, and social inequality based on an individual's class, race, ethnicity, gender or language. Moreover, educational inequality can be imposed by many factors such as gender, social stratification, or differences in parental income and/or occupation. Unfortunately, much educational inequality is attributed to economic disparities, which often reflect racial or ethnic categorization and the often-accompanying factor of geographic location. For this paper, we will examine the problem of educational inequality, which may also be a product of those inequalities previously mentioned. Though educational inequality is a very complex phenomenon, it can often be defined as the unequal

distribution of academic resources which include, but are not limited to, school funding, qualified and experienced teachers, educational books and materials, and inconsistent access to technology through devices and the availability of consistent high-speed internet access. These communities are usually historically disadvantaged and/or oppressed, and often comprise individuals belonging to marginalized groups that are frequently denied access to adequately resourced schools. This inequitable access to quality education often results in significant differences in educational success and can ultimately suppress individuals' social and economic mobility.

The cornerstones of this paper are the racial and economic divides that impact access to quality education, with a focus on two nations, South Africa (SA) and the United States (US). After defining these inequalities and their potential impact on education inequality, it also examines the impact of COVID-19 and the ensuing digital divide that has made accessing quality education for all children an even greater challenge. The paper concludes with suggestions on how educators might include more culturally relevant pedagogy, a belief in student resilience, and the need for decolonization of education.

The impact of the racial and economic divides on accessing quality education

During the 21st century, and particularly during the 4th Industrial Revolution, two factors appear to reproduce and even strengthen inequalities. The first, often termed the “racial divide”, perpetuates historic patterns of inequalities based on race or ethnicity, including inequalities in education and life chances. This divide has persisted through colonization and decolonization in South African schools, and through segregation and integration in schools throughout the US.

The second factor, often termed the “economic divide”, focuses on the role of socio-economic status (SES) in perpetuating historical inequalities in schools in the US and SA.

The impact of the racial divide on accessing quality education

Though located thousands of miles apart, the US and SA share patterns of social and economic inequalities based on race and ethnicity. First, there is a pattern of inequality visible through continued segregation of schooling despite decades of policies and practices designed to provide equitable education for all children. Moreover, while many US desegregation and SA post-apartheid policies have evolved over time to address these inequalities, there remain institutionalized and sustained inequalities regarding educational opportunities.

The struggles for greater educational equity in the US parallel ongoing decoloniality and the Africanization struggles within SA, though the US began this difficult process in 1954, four decades before SA moved forward with its post-apartheid era in 1994. Unfortunately, whether cloaked in terms of decoloniality, indigenization, or desegregation the struggle to provide equitable access to quality education for all children continues.

For example, Black et al. (2020, p. 48) suggested that:

As in South Africa, the U.S. has millions of children who are homeless, food insecure, and without health care. Schools serve critical social reproduction functions for the vulnerable beyond their core role of advancing learning, by providing feeding schemes,

computers and connectivity to those without, and – in many cases – childcare for essential workers.

For Walker and Archung (2003, p. 25):

... the education of Blacks in both countries was embedded in a system of racial segregation, designed to promote Whites into positions of leadership, land ownership, and economic control and to doom Blacks to subservience.

Moreover, Christie (2020) added that educators also needed to critically analyze and decolonize curricular content by providing children with both culturally relevant and historically accurate content and modes of classroom delivery.

Of course, when attempting any comparisons between education and social issues within the US and SA, it is necessary to acknowledge the significant variance between their education and cultural histories. For example, while African-Americans are a minority within the US and most have family histories dating back to slavery, Black South Africans are the majority within their country and were not systematically enslaved. Nonetheless, there are threads of comparability between the two countries which will now be explored by examining opportunities to provide greater equity for all students.

The impact of the racial divide on accessing quality education in South African schools

Though people have lived in what is now SA for over 100,000 years, the country has only recently moved beyond an entrenched history of colonialism, racial and economic separation, and inequality, including the Native Land Act of 1913 that established “Bantustans” through the forced eviction of thousands of Black Africans from their traditional lands and homes from 1948 until 1994. Unfortunately, until the election of Nelson Mandela as President in 1994, schools and universities within SA remained legally and racially segregated, including inequitable funding patterns.

More recently, through decoloniality and a greater focus on intercultural perspectives, SA continued to address its inequitable history, though as Ntshoe (2017) has noted, “new forms of hidden and subtle discrimination, racism and resegregation are developing in South Africa” (p. 70). These inequalities exist within current patterns of teaching and learning reflected in Outcomes-Based Education and Curriculum and Assessment Policy statements, which continue to focus on broad-based education, rather than on indigenous knowledge and intercultural and diversity sensitive education (South African Department of Basic Education, 2021).

The impact of the racial divide on accessing quality education in US schools

In the US, scholarship (e.g., Ford, 2014) suggests that school districts continue to segregate by race, ethnicity, and SES which reflect both systemic and historic racism within American society and its schools. Reconstruction, which followed the end of the American Civil War in 1865, initially opened schools for freed slaves, though these facilities were racially segregated and of poor quality when compared to schools for White children. This educational inequity endured for more than a century, buttressed by the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling that maintained “separate but unequal” – rather than the stated “separate but equal”. Walker and Archung (2003) suggest that southern Whites purposefully “segregated African Americans into separate schools that received less money in state expenditures per child, maintained poorer

facilities, had fewer library books and other material educational advantages, and received little or no transportation for students seeking to attend school” (p. 21).

However, almost six decades after the historic 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* (Warren, 1954) ruling that separation was inherently unequal and ordering racial desegregation with “all deliberate speed”, school enrollment in the US south, and throughout much of the country, continued to segregate not only by race, but by class, resulting in a growing racial and economic divide.

The impact of the economic divide on accessing quality education

Unfortunately, even with laws meant to move the US and SA beyond historical patterns of de jure educational racial/ethnic segregation, de facto segregation based on socioeconomic class often functions to maintain these inequalities. Economically segregated school systems, often based on economically segregated neighborhoods, perpetuated inequalities.

The impact of the economic divide on accessing quality education in South African schools

When analyzing how the economic divide impacted access to quality education in SA, it is helpful to refer to the Gini Index (which is a summary measure of income inequality), which listed SA as the most economically unequal nation in the world. The most recent Gini Index for SA, 63.0 (where 0 represents perfect equality and 100 implies perfect inequality), is the highest of all nations included in World Bank data. For comparison, the Gini Index for the US is 41.5, the UK is 35.1 and Finland at 27.7 (World Bank, 2022). Moreover, attainment of the highest levels of education within SA, such as tertiary and advanced technical education may ultimately depend on costs (both explicit and implicitly), parental and personal aspirations and perceptions, societal and cultural values, cycles of demand and supply within the labor market, and perhaps most importantly, an individual learner’s motivation.

Throughout much of SA, a lack of capacity in high-quality schools that focus on a transformed curriculum for all students, has maintained a classist, if not a racist school system with the continued migration of learners to previously White-dominated schools. Moreover, the use of English as the dominant language of instruction can continue patterns of inequality. Unfortunately, beyond issues of language, other factors can maintain unequitable access to quality education, such as costs for transport, uniforms, extra-mural activities linked to the arts and sports, and parent association fundraising. However, the greatest sources of potential unequitable access to quality education for all South African learners stem from the period of apartheid and the current need for a supply of highly-qualified teachers, regardless of race, class, or ethnicity. To this end, SA needs to focus on developing and maintaining quality teacher education programs that are more inclusive and diverse.

Regrettably, in modern SA, unemployment or underemployment continues to sustain an unequal divide. For example, SA’s unemployment rate in 2022 was 36.8% for Black/Africans, 26.5% for Colored, 13.7% for Indian/Asians, and 7.8% for Whites (Statista, 2022). Not surprisingly, unequal unemployment rates were also reflected in unequal school attendance, particularly with regard to the level of family wealth. As reported by UNESCO (2022), the disparity between poor and rich students completing particular levels of schooling became greater as the level of education rose. For example, 72% of students from the poorest families, but 98% from the richest families

completed lower secondary in 2016, while only 21% of students coming from the poorest families, but 80% of those students coming from the richest families completed upper secondary school. Moreover, where a student lives can also impact access to quality education. For example, UNESCO reported that 83% of students from rural areas, but 91% of students from urban areas completed lower secondary school, while 34% of students from rural areas and 55% of students from urban areas completed upper secondary school.

Wealth and location have clearly impacted school attendance and completion in SA, though issues such as the unequal ratios of educators to learners, a lack of trained teachers and quality infrastructure, a dependence on public transportation, and urbanization underscore the impact of the economic divide on accessing quality education in SA.

The impact of the economic divide on accessing quality education in US schools

In the US, as in SA, the disparity between poor and rich students completing their schooling became greater as the level of education rose. While there was relative parity in school attendance through the lower secondary level, patterns of inequality began to appear in completion rates at the upper secondary level, with 89% of the poorest students and 97% of the richest students completing upper secondary. However, the impact of SES becomes quite clear with regard to tertiary completion rates in 2019, which recorded 22% for the poorest, but 74% for the richest students (UNESCO, 2022).

The impact of COVID-19 on school inequalities

As we emerge globally from pandemic lockdowns, it has become clear that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the educational delivery systems worldwide, including within the US and SA. It enhanced the social-economic divide, including digital inequality, and the ability of families to maintain a supportive home environment (Black, Spreen & Vally, 2020).

Unfortunately, even with heroic attempts by educators, students, and their families to maintain pre-COVID levels of achievement, standardized test scores reflected a decline in pass rates in most countries. The impact of COVID-19 also affected students differently, depending on the level of schooling, their race/ethnicity, and their SES. For example, in the US students of color and low SES students were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, experienced more mental health challenges, and had parents that experienced greater difficulty in adjusting their work life to school closures than the overall student population (Garcia & Cowan, 2022; Gazmararian et al., 2021).

While education in SA was challenged by similar school shutdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic as experienced in the US, Mhlanga and Moloi's (2020) study suggested that these challenges also motivated a digital transformation. The authors described that during the necessary lockdowns, a variety of Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) inspired the use of new technological tools from primary through university education where educational activities were switched to remote (online) learning. Though 4IR had its challenges, it presented an opportunity, according to Mhlanga and Moloi for greater access to education for all within SA.

Moreover, it also provided innovations in distance learning and greater involvement of parents in their children's education. During the pandemic, many educational communities searched for strategies methods and tools to help prevent or

reduce gaps in learners' education, with many of these strategies incorporating digital devices and online learning approaches. Moreover, during the pandemic new tools and strategies were developed to assist students as they adapted to new teaching and learning approaches, including asynchronous classes provided from elementary to university levels. Overall, the goal was to keep children safe while systematically reducing or eliminating learning gaps.

Concluding remarks: Moving beyond the racial and economic divides

Moving beyond the racial and economic divides, we need to focus on the need for culturally relevant pedagogy and student resilience, with education again being viewed as the great equalizer. This perspective was underscored by Gorski (2016) and other scholars who suggested adopting a pedagogical approach focused on "equity literacy". For Gorski, this perspective should include select teacher dispositions and skills that allow them to recognize and address conditions that deny some students access to quality education. To achieve these ends, however, we must first focus on revising programs for both pre-service and in-service educators to include concepts that: a) there is a universal right to equitable educational opportunities; b) poverty is often linked to other factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and/or disability; and c) educators should focus on students' resilience, not student deficits.

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Assoc. Prof. Leon Roets, University of South Africa, RSA

Assist. Prof. Dr. Brianna Kurtz, Mary Baldwin University, USA

Prof. Dr. Karen Biraimah, University of Central Florida, USA

Obed Mfum-Mensah

“Transgressive” Instruction as Cultural Production: Teaching Strategies to Disrupt the “Dirty Gossips” about Sub-Saharan “Africa”

Abstract

There exists a power asymmetry between instructors and students in the physical classroom and other learning spaces which symbolizes the distribution of power in social spaces. Because of the structured power asymmetry in most learning spaces, promoting effective classroom teaching sometimes requires instructors to replace existing hierarchical power relations and with fluid, organic, and transgressive classroom dynamics in their relationships with their students. This approach has the potential to empower students to become their own agency for interrogating the assumptions and ideologies that they bring to the classroom. This paper outlines the instructional strategies that I incorporate in my “nonwestern” course that aims to introduce students in my university to the sub-Saharan African region. The course uses the interdisciplinary approach to explore the complicated ways history and social changes (including globalization) intersect to shape education reforms, and economic and social development in sub-Saharan Africa. Students bring a plethora of assumptions about sub-Saharan “Africa” to this course and my goal as an instructor is to help students interrogate their own assumptions and deconstruct the myths and distortions about the “Africa” in a broader term. The paper outlines the way I deliberately select course materials, and sequence course contents and themes to scaffold and promote incremental knowledge about the region for students during the semester. Furthermore, the paper outlines the strategies that help nudge students’ critical thinking and restructure the power relations in the classroom. While these strategies may not automatically change students’ assumptions about sub-Saharan “Africa”, they nonetheless become opportunities for my students and I to reposition for effective discussions about the region with the goal to interrogating students’ prior assumptions and views about the region.

Keywords: curriculum, higher education, pedagogy, teaching methods, sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

Human interactions in the learning space are symbolic of the power relations and the potential roles of individuals and groups in our society. Interactions between instructors and learners are one of the symbols of hierarchical power relationships. Louis Althusser defines power as “that force which operates in ways that are subtle, disguised, and accepted as everyday social practice” (Althusser, 1971, p. 143). Teaching specific content knowledge sometimes demands that the instructor shifts from the solely “structured” teaching approach to incorporate “transgressive” pedagogical practices to help restructure the hierarchical power relations and empower learners (Hooks, 1994). Transgressive pedagogies can provide learners the tool to

become their own agency in interrogating the assumptions that they bring to the learning space. In this paper, I discuss the strategies I implement in my instructional space (and their effectiveness) in a “nonwestern” course, which focuses on sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). I teach in one of the American universities which are geographically situated in south-central Pennsylvania. Most of the students in our institution are White Christians of the evangelical tradition. Many of these students also come from the area where our institution is located.

Several years ago, our institution introduced “nonwestern” course as a component of the undergraduate curriculum to promote inclusive excellence and strengthen students’ knowledge in diversity and the dialectic of the global and the local. One of the objectives of the course is to help students explore the effects of external (western) contacts on nonwestern societies’ development. To help learners grasp the all-encompassing discourses the course explores, I intentionally select different nations in SSA based on their colonial histories and their contemporary engagements with global governing bodies and development entities. I do so deliberately with the understanding that societies in SSA constitute diverse ethnic groups and cultural states even within those individual nations. I employ a postcolonial framework to discuss the contemporary power relations between SSA and the global forces and the complicated ways global forces (particularly, Europeans and other western societies) helped construct power relations that portrayed the “outsiders” (mostly Whites) as the dominant and powerful group and indigenous African societies as dominated and marginalized groups in the global power relations.

Contextualizing reflexive narratives

As a rooted African scholar who lives in south-central Pennsylvania, I share the complicated “baggage” that African academics carry in their diasporic spaces. Because my academic and scholarly works focus on SSA, I view teaching *Education in sub-Saharan Africa*, as an opportunity to initiate deeper conversations about the African continent and SSA with my students to explore ways to interrogate the “dirty gossips” about the region. Employing reflexive narratives as an epistemological framework for this paper is heuristic, insightful and a reclamation of dignity. I use this epistemological approach to discuss the nature of strategies I implement (and their effectiveness) in my “nonwestern” *Education in sub-Saharan Africa* course, which introduces our university students to sub-Saharan Africa, helps to deconstruct some of the myths, distortions, and “dirty gossips” about Africa, while exploring some of the development challenges facing the region and their causes. Some of my goals in the course include nudging students to become their own agency for interrogating the “trusteeship” and “organized infantilism” ideology in global governing discourse, and inculcating sensitivity to the global injustices that continue to marginalize sub-Saharan African societies. Narrative reflexivity can be a treasure trove for analyzing how power relations are symbolically constructed in societies. Donata Ndongo Bidyogo-Makina captures this poignantly when he pointed out that:

We write not as mere storytellers; we conceive of our office as a solid ethical and moral commitment to our suffering societies, miserable specters wandering on immensely rich soil. We choose between supporting the sane or the insane, the oppressors or the oppressed, the executioners or the victims... the gift we possess will not immunize us from the pains of others, a collective pain that is our own pain. (Bidyogo-Makina, 2017)

Deconstructing the “dirty gossips” about “sub-Saharan Africa”

The course introduction explores the “dirty gossips” about “Africa”. Ugandan scholar Okot P’Bitek defines “dirty gossips” as distortions and misrepresentations about Africa (P’Bitek, 2011, p. 11). These “dirty gossips” are etched in the psyche of many people who are not from the African continent. For the past seventeen years that I have been teaching the course, I have come to realize that many of the students that enroll in *Education in sub-Saharan Africa* come to the course possessing little knowledge about Africa and a slew of myths and distortions about the continent and its people. This lack of knowledge about the continent by many people in our global community translates into the “othering” of Africa and Africans. The selected texts for the introduction include the late Kenyan journalist, Binyavanga Wainaina’s piece, *How to Write about Africa* (2005), Curtis Keim and Carolyn Somerville’s book *Mistaking Africa. Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind* (2018), and my book *We Come as Members of the Superior Race* (Mfum-Mensah, 2021).

I use both symbolic violence and postcolonial frameworks for the introductory discussions. My objective is to help students explore the deliberate ways western societies employ myths and distortions to construct African societies as subordinate and inferior in transnational and global governance discourses. Symbolic violence discusses social relations, power, and the “othering” of people in postcolonial and development discourses. (Richards, 2013). Within these frameworks, we read and analyze historical materials to help students understand the complicated ways western forces employ written texts to create power asymmetries and hierarchies that put Africans in subordinated positions. We also explore the ways colonial cultural processes and political structures created indelible imprints on colonized societies in SSA. In the process of colonization, colonial powers prodded colonial subalterns in SSA to embrace an internalized deficiency mindset, an inferior status, and an inferiority complex in their relationship with colonial dominant groups in what Frantz Fanon describes as “epidermization of inferiority” or what Pierre Bourdieu calls as the “habitus” disposition (Johnson, 2013). I lead students to investigate and document evidence of Africa’s resistance to external forces. The *Africans: A Triple Heritage* a documentary series by Ali Mazrui and Basil Davidson’s *Africa* documentary series together provide an excellent and balanced perspective on Africa’s engagement with outsiders.

My use of postcolonial framework helps challenge and estrange colonial episteme and discourses which project the narratives of white Europeans and colonial people at the center of cultural processes and occlude the history of colonialism and imperialism and rather reproduce epistemic structures and Eurocentrism (Mfum-Mensah, 2021). As part of this exercise, the course examines diverse African epistemologies and philosophical thoughts and the complicated ways they shaped African cultural processes, social, and political organization, and economic forms, and diverse religious views.

Discouraging western “trusteeship” and “organized infantilism”

A major objective of the course is to foster students’ critical thinking about the nexus between education and development in SSA. To achieve this objective, I incorporate research activities that give students the freedom and flexibility to formulate questions that merit investigating. Students then choose one of the selected

countries in SSA as their focus country throughout the semester. The themes for investigation include the following: tribalism, racism and ethnicity; religion and nation building; regional disparities and development; sociopolitics of language and development; gender and development; conflict and development; education and nations in transition; and terrorism and development. Throughout the semester, I use activities that help model how to provide a balanced perspective when discussing outside trusteeship and organized infantilism of African societies. The strategy includes helping students to explore how outside forces engaged Africans.

Transgressive discourse

An effective negotiating strategy that drives the discussions about the relationships between global governance, education, and development, is to minimize the tensions that are likely to emerge from students' contact zones in the course. At the introductory phase of the course, I emphasize my commitment to respecting students' opinions and that students commit to respecting each other's opinions. I also assure my students of my commitment to "fostering a safe classroom environment" for all discussions. Furthermore, I help students approach the discussion of global governance, education, and development in SSA from intellectual and scholarly perspectives rather than those *Old World Novels* (Mfum-Mensah, 2021). These approaches help to minimize my students' feelings of anger or guilt for any past injustices created because of western trusteeship and organized infantilism.

I provide research questions that help students to research the history and context of the spread of Islam as a religion and cultural and political force, and as an agent of education in SSA. My goal here is to nudge students to investigate the complex ways Islam has shaped societies in SSA and its contributions to social, political, and cultural processes and educational development in the region. Some of the exciting discussions focus on Islamic philosophical thoughts, Islamization of Africa, and the Africanization of Islam. I should point out that many of my students come to the course with diverse views (some negative) about Islam given what they have read about the religion and the "street lore" they gather from the United States media and recent events around terrorism. Part of this course is to help students demystify the myths about Islam using scholarship, and to help them learn the skill of developing balanced views on the contribution of Islam in the development discourse in SSA.

Furthermore, I provide directions to students as they dive deeper into European trading and exploration activities, Christian missionary activities, colonization, early twentieth century philanthropic initiatives in SSA, contemporary western development in SSA, and global governance groups. From that early encounters and Europe's trading activities, explorations and institutionalization of imaginary geographies, the Christian missionary enterprise, formal colonization, and post-independent development discourses, one can see similar props of European (western) "trusteeship" and "organized infantilism" of African societies. In postcolonial discourse, "trusteeship" alludes to territorial conquest and occupation of an entire region. In the process of conquests and occupation, colonial actors usurp the lands and resources of the indigenous (and rightful) owners and forcibly exploit them. Trusteeship draws from the concept that, more advanced powers have a special duty for the welfare of the so called "backward" people (Holland, 1946). "Organized infantilism" on the other hand, is a sinister strategy used by people in positions of power to construct an "infant" identity of subordinated groups so they cannot think for themselves with the objective

to gain control and dominate them (Giroux, 2015). The concept of organized infantilism explains the complicated strategies of dominant groups to keep individuals and groups they have power over, in situations that Stephanie Frances Beswick terms “dependable patronage” and infantile stage of development (Beswick, 1994).

Conversations around the issues of “trusteeship” and “organized infantilism” are some of the most challenging topics in the course given that me and my students’ identities and positionalities and the tensions that usually emerge from such discussions. Most of my students are socialized and oriented in the “white savior” mentality and ideology. They believe that Christian missionary activities and other development activities should be strengthened in SSA and the developing world as part of their service to humanity. Whether this view is a self-serving one is a conversation for another time. There is a broad range of “nonwestern” courses offered in my institution. Students who enroll in *Education in sub-Saharan Africa* do so because of their passion for SSA development, and the last thing I want to do as an instructor is using the course to “kill” that passion. A lot of these students have been made aware of only the positive role the American government, nongovernmental entities, and church-related organizations have played in the past and continue to play in global governance and development. Few (if any) have encountered texts that critically explore the contradictory roles of western entities in the development of SSA. Discussing the contradictory roles of western agencies can sometimes be perceived by students as a slight of the “good” works western nations and national agencies pursue overseas.

How does the instructor use her or his teaching as a tool to equip students, who are in all sense a “captive audience”, to exercise a balanced perspective in a situation where the instructor is also a native African and therefore considered as an “embodied other” who occupies an advantaged positionality in the classroom power relations? This situation potentially exposes the instructor to some vulnerabilities, especially because students are also actors who wield the power to evaluate the instructor at the end of the semester.

Over the years, I have come to adopt Byron’s (2012) *positive engagement* approach and Ekblad’ (2011) *model*, which they recommend for teaching inclusive excellence, as an important transferable strategy to negotiate students’ and my feelings of vulnerability. Both scholars advise instructors to foster positive engagement through reflections on power dynamics, establishing ground rules for class discussion, and cultivating a commitment to overcome the fears and anxieties associated with stepping out of one’s comfort zone through teaching. The approach also includes awareness, and sensitivity to students’ views and ideologies (Ekblad, 2011). While it is important to identify and navigate the unique challenges that instructors encounter as they seek to deconstruct students’ prior assumptions and ideologies, I approach discussions around these sensitive issues through circumspection, empathy, and ethics of care (Byron, 2012; Ekblad, 2011). This approach requires that I come to the level of my students as I provide authentic leadership to move students from the “known” (their prior assumptions) to the “unknown” (deconstructing those assumptions).

Conclusion

It is expedient for instructors to become aware of the context of teaching, deliberate in selecting the content and subject matter and restructure the power relations in the classroom as they seek to implement effective strategies in their instructional spaces. I have highlighted the strategies I employ in teaching a course that introduces

students to sub-Saharan Africa. I come to the course with the understanding that students are not homogeneous and monolithic. Every year provides a new group of students and I need to have that awareness. Nonetheless, I also come to the course with the understanding that students bring their prior assumptions about "Africa" to the course. To help students interrogate their prior assumptions and deconstruct the myths and distortions about the region requires deliberate selection of course materials and texts, sequencing course contents and themes in ways that help to scaffold knowledge incrementally for students, modeling what critical thinking looks like, and restructuring the power relations in the classroom. I implement the strategies I have outlined here by reinforcing the insightfulness of using both symbolic violence and postcolonial frameworks. I remind students that these frameworks provide a critique of how Western colonial and racial domination worked together to render the voices of colonial subalterns in SSA fugitive (Lennox, 2006). My goal is to help my students to "decenter" western and global discourses that distort and misrepresent sub-Saharan African societies and challenge imperialist narratives that depict the depravity of "Africa" and "Africans" without any agency of themselves, while positioning western entities as "trustees" and "saviors" of Africa's development.

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Prof. Dr. Obed Mfum-Mensah, Messiah University, Pennsylvania, USA

Noziphiwo Cleopatra Kgati & Zacharias L de Beer

Towards Enhancing Open Distance Learning Students' Roles and Responsibilities: An African Epistemological Perspective

Abstract

South Africa requires an educated population to sustain her economic development. Higher education institutions are under pressure to produce graduates with skills and competencies to fulfil such an aspiration. Distance education is an essential avenue through which more South Africans can have the much-needed education without necessarily displacing themselves. Distance education is facilitated and regulated by the White Paper on e-Education which is a generic policy document to serve the needs of the system-wide use of ICT integration at all levels of education. It falls short of conceptualising the implications of ICT in distance education particularly the North-West University's (NWU) open distance learning (ODL) multi-mode of education content delivery. The conceptualisation shortfall facilitates a Western-oriented understanding of knowledge while ODL students' traditional understanding of their roles and responsibilities is ignored. The concepts of roles and responsibilities are critically important for the effective functioning of ODL, and they are essential to the attainment of students' education aspirations. At the NWU, approximately seventy per cent of ODL students are Africans whose worldviews do not harmonise with the vision of universities. The research question which underpinned this study was *What are the experiences of the roles and responsibilities of open distance students at a higher education institution?* This study followed an interpretivist research paradigm, which would draw on a qualitative research approach. A systematic literature review was utilised and subsequently the views of ODL students were explored. Purposive sampling was employed to select ODL students as research participants for focus-group interviews. The collected data were analysed using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (a CAQDAS), ATLAS tI. Due attention was given to ethical considerations throughout the study. The findings revealed that ODL students have several ways in which they understand their roles and responsibilities which were shaped by their African worldview, Africanisation. The findings that emerged from the analyses of roles and responsibilities were task orientation; time management; personal growth; social roles; financial responsibilities; personal responsibilities; family responsibilities; and social responsibilities.

Keywords: open distance education, distance learning, roles of distance learning students, responsibilities of distance learning students, Africanisation

Introduction

In our capacity as university lecturers for open distance learning (ODL) students, we often observe how ODL students grapple with what is expected of them as adult distance students. Some difficulties which were observed were that students submit their assignments long after the due date has passed and then make excuses. Some students submit work that is not their own and then they indicate that they are studying

“cooperatively”. After inestimable face-to-face messages and telephone conversations with students, it became apparent that students are not aware of, or do not understand, their roles and responsibilities as ODL students. This could contribute to why many students experience difficulties in their professional development through ODL. It is for this reason that the purpose of this paper is to investigate the view of ODL students concerning their roles and responsibilities framed within the African epistemological and ontological perspective.

In this section, aspects of African epistemology and ontology have also been unpacked in the terms of Ubuntu, culture, tradition, religion, and human being. As the large majority of the NWU ODL students originate from African cultures, the world view of this paper and the rest of the study mainly relates to African value systems. This value system is different from the colonized Western epistemological view that often underpins higher education methodologies in South Africa.

Firstly, the African epistemological and ontological lenses through which we understood the research problems were elucidated, systematically reviewed literature, focused, and interpreted the data to arrive at the findings. This section is followed by the statement of the problem and motivation for the research. A brief review of the literature is explained next. In the review, brief engagement with distance education, ICT in ODL, ODL students’ characteristics, roles, and responsibilities and decolonising the African university was done. The research question is presented in this section. The next section in the paper outlines the aim of the study. The qualitative case study as well as the research design and methodology of this research was presented. The sampling criteria for participation are also reported, together with the ethical considerations. The collection and data analysis of the qualitative data are discussed, and the trustworthiness and credibility of the qualitative findings are considered. The paper ends with an outline that explains how the rest of the research report is structured.

African epistemological and ontological lens for this study

Gray (2001, p. 3) defines the term Afrocentric as

an idea and a perspective which holds that African people can and should see, study, interpret and interact with people, life, and reality from the vantage point of African people rather than from the vantage point of European people, or Asians, or other non-African people, or from the vantage point of African people who are alienated from Africanness.

An Afrocentric worldview is “used to describe the cultural values of people of African origin and African descent throughout the World” (Mekada, 1999, p. 53). In recent times, the importance of the concept of Ubuntu has increasingly become more prominent in South Africa. The underpinning notions of Ubuntu, “rooted in African traditional society and philosophy and implying humanness or the quality of being human”, are now questioned by those who seem to experience the meaning of Ubuntu owing to the unequal nature of the South African society under the democratic dispensation. Ubuntu also “espouses the ideal of interconnectedness among people”; much of it is still very much in practice within African societies. This view is supported by the African belief that “one should always live for the other”.

Ubuntu

Tutu (2011, p. 24) states that “Ubuntu teaches us that our worth is intrinsic to who we are. Ubuntu reminds us that we belong to one family: God’s family, the human family”. Ubuntu is associated with *umntu* meaning a human being and is “a deeply rooted value system in the African society”. A human being (*umntu*) comprises the following elements: body, heart, breath, soul, energy, language, intellect, and humanness. These elements together make up a human being. The nature of Ubuntu is the most valuable attribute of true human existence. Le Roux (2000, p. 43) claims that

a person possessing Ubuntu will have characteristics such as being caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature, socially sensitive, virtuous and blessed.

This would mean that Ubuntu/Botho is considered to constitute aspects of a social ethic that in African society, serves as a unifier of that society. This is an important social issue because African societies tend to place a high value on social behaviours which are associated with the worth of an individual – unlike the West, which is often characterized by humanism (Teffo, 1998). The dependency of the human self on the other within a society is conveyed by the saying “Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang” (Sotho) or “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” (Nguni) which means “I am because we are” (Teffo, 1998, pp. 3-5).

Mbigi and Maree (2005) define Ubuntu as a metaphor that places emphasis on the social connotation of group solidarity; on the endurance of African communities which comes as a result of poverty and dispossession, hence survival is achieved through brotherly group care. Unlike that of individual self-reliance common in western societies. They further explain that this praxis of concerted solidarity is not new and not peculiar to Africa. Ironically, Ubuntu is the embodiment of an idea, often flawed in its interpretation and the practice thereof. Ubuntu acts as a social barrier, causing people to become less selfish and egocentric.

The ideal person according to the African worldview... is one who has the virtues of sharing and compassion. The individual has a social commitment to share with others what s/he has. The ideal person will be judged in terms of his relationship with others, for example, his record in terms of kindness and good character, generosity, hard work, discipline, honour and respect, and living in harmony. (Teffo, 1996, p. 103)

The perception of Ubuntu along with that of its counterpart, communalism, when drawn from an African philosophy of education, contributes significantly to one’s understanding of knowledge within an African educational discourse (Venter, 2004).

The philosophy of Ubuntu helps with human relationships, and boosts human value, trust, and dignity. This again leads to social harmony and cohesion starting with the family and cultural community, circling out to the universal community. (Le Roux, 2000)

Human beings are social beings created to live within a subtle network of mutual dependency. The ideal of *Botho* or *Ubuntu*, as implemented within an educational setting, can only work when teacher advancement forms part of the community. For the implementation to be considered a success, this requires that the philosophy of Ubuntu should be at the centre of teacher advancement in Africa. The mainstream narrative of the current forms of teacher development, mainly western, must be dismantled. Ubuntu-oriented teacher education should acknowledge the many identities throughout the people that make up any open and distance learning institution and who concur in

creating substantial learning opportunities for learners of African descent (Van Niekerk, 2004).

Distance education

Education is mostly considered to mean the undertaking or proceeding of acquiring general knowledge which may or may not directly impact society. Education also has the potential to develop ones' potential of reasoning and rational judgement through a process of preparing oneself or others intellectually for a mature life. Van Heerden (1997, p. 18) indicates that "Africanisation of education is often employed concerning educational change, and in the sense of bringing African culture into formal schooling".

This paper is centred on distance education. There is no single unifying definition of distance education (DE). DE has been conceptualized in many ways, but in easy terms, it alludes to a predetermined and systematic educational provision where there is a significant distance between the instructors' institution and that of the student (Sikwibele & Mungoo, 2009). Teaching and learning in DE is a planned process that normally occurs in a different locale from teaching, but it requires a special course design and instructional techniques, supported by special organizational and administrative arrangements, in which various types of ICT are used for communication (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). The most general features of DE include the use of mixed media (paper-based and electronic) for "teaching and learning, correspondence, independent learning, and the possibility of face-to-face meetings with tutors" (Sikwibele & Mungoo, 2009, p. 12).

ODL is an advantageous mode of education delivery because "it makes learning more accessible" to a wider range of students, especially those in remote areas, and provides them with "the opportunity to control their learning schedules" (Ko & Rossen, 2001, p. 5). The openness of ODL presents an ideological position that affects access and availability of education to distant communities and supports the assumptions about the production of knowledge and its facilitation. In South Africa, DE and ODL are predominantly being used to deliver teacher professional development (TPD) for in-service practicing teachers across different geographic and socio-economic barriers. In South Africa, consideration of the implementations of open and distance learning and teacher development should be reflected upon in terms of the history and context. This implies that a rethink is needed when teacher development programmes are being designed in open and distance learning.

Information and communication technologies in open distance learning

Various forms of ICTs are used in ODL for pedagogical support, e.g. computer hardware and software, the Internet, calculators, multi-media, broadcasting technology (radio and television), personal digital assistants (PDAs), course management tools, computer-mediated communication (CMC), electronic networks, wireless networks, data projectors, interactive whiteboards, computer conferencing, etc. (Shafiul Alam, 2010, p. 98).

The general direction of DE/ODL depends on a country's technology infrastructure, pedagogy, and educational objectives. The attainment and assimilation of knowledge are significantly facilitated by ICT, which offers developing countries, such as South Africa, unprecedented opportunities to enhance education. To make

gains with this opportunity, improved policy formulation and execution is required that would seek to broaden the range of opportunities for business and the poor (Mikre, 2011).

Although ICT plays a substantial role in fostering an equalization plan for many developing countries, this has not succeeded in addressing some of the fundamental inequalities also created by the realities of digitalization. The widening gap between those who have access to the digital world and those who still struggle to have access, seems to have made a huge difference in the digitalization of ODL (Mikre, 2011). The use of ICT in ODL has the possibility of reducing the digital divide amongst students and has the potential to reach rural and remote areas for skills development and proper education, providing the opportunity for the massification of education while students are exposed to world class standards and trends (Kruger, 2010).

ODL students' characteristics, roles, and responsibilities

General characteristics of successful open distance learning (ODL) students include students who: (i) voluntarily seek further education or professional development; (ii) are on average, older than on-campus students; (iii) are highly self-motivated; (iv) self-disciplined students; (v) are willing to initiate telephonic conversations to instructors for assistance; (vi) possess a serious attitude towards coursework; (vii) take responsibility for their independent studies; and (viii) possess a previous qualification (Baloyi, 2014).

Vital to successful ODL learning is the students' ability to balance responsibilities, both within communities of learning and beyond. Students should become "self-directed learners", which requires them to be highly "self-regulated", to be responsible for organizing their learning, and to be reflective (Du Plessis, 2011).

Research question

The research question which underpinned this study was *What are the experiences of the roles and responsibilities of open distance students at a higher education institution?*

Research design

The study followed an interpretivist research paradigm, which would draw on a qualitative research approach. To explore the experiences of the ODL students' roles and responsibilities, a systematic literature review was employed to qualitatively scrutinise the appropriate literature and subsequently explore the ODL students' views. Purposive sampling to select ODL students as research participants for focus-group interviews was utilized. Although registered as distance students at the North-West University, these students had the proximity advantage of attending contact sessions at the Potchefstroom campus, where Interactive White Board sessions were being offered to all distance students. The collected data were coded, sorted, and summarised as themes, using the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (a CAQDAS), ATLAS tiTM. The analyses comprised an integrated dataset of voices from systematically selected authors and ODL students to address the research question. Due attention was given to ethical considerations throughout the study.

Findings

The findings revealed that ODL students have several ways in which they understand their roles and responsibilities which were shaped by their African worldview, Africanisation. The findings that emerged from the analyses of roles and responsibilities were task orientation; time management; personal growth; social roles; financial responsibilities; personal responsibilities; family responsibilities and social responsibilities. This is because existing literature on these two entities combined them as a single. The analyses indicated that the students were not able to clearly distinguish the entities of roles and responsibilities and indicated a superficial understanding of how students understood aspects of task orientation, time management, and social roles. Students who are task oriented demonstrated a vivid understanding of their roles, and this eventually contributes to their academic success. The students who understood their roles superficially, tend to confuse their social roles with time management for academic activities. For this reason, much of their time available for study is redirected toward attending to family responsibilities. This created a disjointed understanding on the part of students in terms of their expectations as ODL students. ODL students are expected to study at their own time, pace, and space. The inability of students to “juggle their time” to oblige their roles and responsibilities, contributes to the ineffective fulfilment of their goals. Most ODL students are full time employees, parents, community representatives, etc. These responsibilities receive more attention than their commitment to their roles as students, especially regarding their time management.

Conclusion

It was evident that ODL students perceived their personal growth differently. ODL students are intensely aware of their financial responsibilities, and they often experience difficulties in fulfilling them. These students experience financial constraints due to their family and personal obligations. Although the language of teaching and learning is predominantly English, it was evident from the findings that when students understood their responsibility for personal development, they were also able to overcome barriers associated with the use of English as a language of teaching and learning. It emerged from the findings that ODL students were unable to attend classes organised on Friday afternoons and Saturdays due to their family and employment responsibilities. Students often regard family responsibilities as more important due to their African context, and this might affect their studies. From the lens of an African perspective, the study identified eight matching conclusions, contributions, and questions to be addressed during future research.

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Dr. Noziphiwo Cleopatra Kgati, North-West University, South Africa

Dr. Zacharias L de Beer, North-West University, South Africa

Coenraad Jurgens

Safety in Mechanical Technology Workshops at South African Public Schools

Abstract

South Africa has an urgent need for qualified technical and mechanical people. Technical disciplines are encouraged in public schools to fulfil this requirement. Teachers are also in an environment that is becoming increasingly litigious. Technology teachers may be forced to pay greater attention to managing safety and security as legal liability for harm caused during activities in school workshops is expected to increase. The safety of all students is a crucial component in schools. Effective teaching and learning can be improved in workshop areas where learner safety, or “Geborgenheit”, is generated. The security of students while they participate in activities is the responsibility of the Mechanical Technology teacher. For school workshops, an efficient safety policy must be created to reduce the danger of injuries and harm to students. The primary method for reducing and preventing injuries and making sure that the teacher or school is not held accountable for damage, is a purposeful policy. The empirical investigation used a mixed research methodology, where Mechanical Technology teachers quantitatively and qualitatively assessed the management of security in school workshops. Data were triangulated (analytically, narratively, and discussed), and conclusions and suggestions were formed. The results show that teachers are unaware of their legal obligation to take care of students and are under-informed on delictual liability and education law. Due to the complexity of today’s society, all participants in the education industry must recognize that understanding the legal and technological facets of the field is not only important, but also ought to be made essential.

Keywords: Mechanical Technology, safety, workshops, public schools, education legal perspective

Introduction and problem statement

Schools have workshops, laboratories, and sports fields which, according to Oosthuizen (2022, p. 6) make these areas in schools potentially dangerous due to the activities that take place there. One of the tasks of schools and governing bodies according to Article 20(1)(e) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), is that special attention must be paid to the safety of learners and the prevention of injuries to learners in school workshops. Despite this prescription, many learners are still injured in school workshops (Smit, 2022, p. 1). Mechanical Technology is a school subject in the Senior and Further Education and Training (FET) phase, which includes a large part of teaching in practical workshops (DBE, 2014, p. 9). It is in these environments where the safety risks with the use of subject-specific machinery are very high (Smit, 2022, p. 5). Smit also mentions that teachers are responsible for managing and controlling technology workshops. Mechanical Technology teachers should therefore be aware of their legal obligations and responsibilities regarding the security

of learners in the workshops (Smit, 2022, p. 5). These risks place a legal duty on the teachers which means that they must ensure the safety of learners under their care, who work with dangerous machinery in these workshops (Oosthuizen, 2022, p. 6). With his study in South African schools, Oosthuizen (2011, p. 2) found that a high percentage of accidents with machinery occurred in school workshops.

State of the art

Safe school environment

According to Barnes (2010, p. 40), schools must be a safe learning environment for learners and teachers. Teachers must confidently practise their practice in a safe environment, and where learners can develop their latent abilities. Machelm (2015, p. 28) explains that learners who feel threatened or unsafe cannot be stimulated academically and that an unsupported educational environment can have a ripple and negative influence on the learners' academic success and also on their intellectual progress. Zengele (2013, pp. 29-30) refers to different aspects in a school environment which are decisive for the underpinning of the teaching-learning situation. One of the aspects is safe school infrastructure where a secured school infrastructure can let learners participate in school activities with confidence, without fear of injuries which can lead to better academic success. According to Oosthuizen (2015, p. 5), learners as adolescents have the need for subject knowledge and general basic skills that they can use as adults. Learners must therefore learn the necessary skills in a safe school environment and be able to apply them later in the adult world after their schooling.

Mechanical Technology

The National Curriculum Statement defines Mechanical Technology and its applications in the school curriculum as follows (DBE, 2014, p. 9): Mechanical Technology focuses on concepts and principles in the mechanical (automotive, mining, shipping, rail, power, generation, etc.) environment and on the technological processes. It encompasses practical skills and the application of scientific principles. Mechanical Technology aims to create and improve the engineering and manufacturing environment and to ensure the sustainable use of the natural environment and resources. The Mechanical Technology workshop consists of three disciplines: Motor, Fitting and machine work and Welding and metalwork (DBE, 2014, pp. 8-10).

Workshops

Adams, Mitchell and Nortier (2012, p. 2) explain that workshops are places where persons or learners are busy designing, making, manufacturing or repairing industrial tools, equipment and models. Onele (2014, p. 23) indicates that a workshop is the place where practical activities such as measuring, cutting, assembling of parts, repair work and finishing of products are carried out. Onele (2014, p. 23) states that the school workshop is the place where learners apply the practical part that they learned in the theoretical class. According to him, the workshop is also the storage place for machinery, tools, accessories and materials used for the practical component.

Public schools

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996) established a national schooling system and recognised two categories of schools: public and independent.

Public schools are state-controlled and independent schools are privately governed. All private schools were included in the independent school category. Public schools depend on the government for funding and supplies and the standard of education varies from region to region (RSA, 1996).

Education law perspective

The study was conducted from an education law perspective and endorses the principle of education law as an independent discipline as postulated by Oosthuizen et al. (2020, pp. 7-10). Education law plays a special role in creating a safe, secure school and classroom environment. Rules, regulations, fair procedures, and other legal measures are used to create security. Oosthuizen et al. (2020, pp. 7-10) explains that education law aims to regulate education in South Africa so that an environment of security can be created. The participants involved in this security environment are learners, parents, teachers, as well as the state. According to Oosthuizen et al. (2020, pp. 7-10), it is of great importance that all stakeholders in the educational environment realize the importance of security in the educational setting. Knowledge and understanding of education law according to Coetzee (2008, p. 184) are essential to bringing about a balance regarding the respective rights and duties of educational role players in the establishment of a protected learning environment that contributes to effective learning and teaching.

Research aim

The primary research aim of the study is to establish the comprehensive understanding of the nature of the educational legal obligations of Mechanical Technology teachers in relation to safety management in the Mechanical Technology workshops.

Research design and method

The research was carried out from a pragmatic paradigm design. In the empirical part of the investigation, mixed methods were used, where quantitative and qualitative research methods were combined in one investigation. For the quantitative research, a structured electronic questionnaire was developed. The quantitative study was supplemented with a phenomenological study during which individual semi-structured interviews were used as data collection method.

Population and regional sampling

For the quantitative research, the teachers from 220 (N=220) technical schools in South Africa who offered Mechanical Technology as a subject during the study, were the target population of the study. For the qualitative study, a purposive sampling approach was followed, and the participants (N=8) were selected because of their expertise, skill and experience in schools; therefore, participants who could provide the richest information were selected.

Ethical aspects

Approval for the study was obtained from the ethics committee of the university under whose supervision and care the research was carried out. All ethical directives as determined by this committee have been complied with.

Data analysis

For the analysis and processing of the quantitative data, appropriate statistical techniques were chosen, and the data was processed by the statistical consulting service of a university. The interviews with the eight respondents were then recorded and the recordings were transcribed, after which various groups, categories, sub-themes and themes were identified. After the coding process was completed, the final data analysis was done and perceptions were compared and combined.

Findings

Some of the combined findings from the quantitative and qualitative investigations were as follows:

Ignorance

Teachers believe that in today's society people are more aware of their rights, as evidenced by the court cases of the past number of years. Very few of the teachers show sufficient insight and understanding about the Constitution and how it relates to safety in the workshops. However, the teachers in the study realize that they themselves are in danger of being held liable if they violate learners' rights in any way in the workshops, and are therefore criminally liable for such violation of rights. In the light of this, the teachers realize their responsibility to ensure the safety of learners under their supervision and that they must be aware of the rights of the child so that they can create a safe workshop environment for the learners. Teachers are aware that they have an obligation to ensure the safety of learners under their supervision and control. The clear lack of knowledge about legislation that exists among the teachers who participated in the study, is a serious bottleneck for the teachers who have to prevent risks in the workshops and to fulfil their duty of care for the safety of the learners. Common law imposes certain obligations on school principals, teachers and governing bodies and grants them certain powers. The teachers stand in an *in loco parentis* position towards a learner. As a result of the *in loco parentis* role, the teachers get an obligation, as well as a power to take measures to ensure the safety of the learners. The teachers are aware that they have a duty of care towards the learners entrusted to their care in the workshops, but they are ignorant of the common law nature and content of the legal principles of the duty of care.

Injuries

Most of the teachers consider workshops to be a potentially dangerous place and that learners are exposed to accidents and injuries as a result of the activities they carry out in the workshops. In the quantitative study, only 11.88% of the respondents indicated that there were no injuries in their workshops. However, many of the injuries are minor injuries. Six respondents indicated that there were very serious injuries with machine tools, and only four respondents indicated that they also suffered very serious injuries with portable hand tools. There is a great deal of ignorance about the *de minimis non curat lex* principle, which means that the law does not consider trifles. This principle does not give teachers the right to ignore minor injuries, to talk them down or not to report them, but the principle should be reassuring, as the teachers are not held responsible or blamed for minor injuries. In the quantitative study, 5.8% of the respondents indicated that learners sustained minor injuries with specific fixed

machinery, while 14.42% sustained minor injuries with specific portable power tools. 24.32% of the respondents indicated that learners suffered minor injuries with certain hand tools. The teachers who participated in the qualitative study each referred to an incident or injury they had as a teacher in the workshop. Although more serious injuries do not occur frequently, serious injuries and very serious injuries do occur from time to time as evidenced by the interviews with the participants.

“Geborgenheit” (a loving-caring attitude) in a workshop environment

The teachers are aware that the law requires a higher degree of careful supervision in the workshop towards learners based on their specialized knowledge and expertise. The teachers realize that there are consequences of negligent actions, but there are situations in practice where the teachers are expected to risk certain risks against their knowledge. In such cases where, for example, there are too many learners in the workshop, creates a situation that poses a risk of injury, and because there are no alternative circumstances, the teachers take the chance and use existing facilities in the hope that no injuries will happen. Damage is therefore foreseeable for the teachers, but some of them feel that they are not in a position to prevent it. However, from the study it appears that although a large number of teachers are not familiar with the legal theoretical nuances and legal technical details of delictual liability, there is indeed a sense of duty among them. Most of the participants can recognize dangerous situations in the workshops and realize that they must act preventively to prevent the learners from risking injuries.

Safety

The teachers have a duty of care towards the learners and the teachers are expected to take and apply certain measures that will prevent risks and injuries in the workshop. The teacher’s duty of care entails, among other things, that he is held responsible for a safe workshop environment. Under Section 61 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), the Minister can make regulations under the Act to achieve important objectives of the South African Schools Act. Article 8A (2) of the regulations states that a public school must take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of the learners during any school activities and that learners, where possible, will always be under the supervision of a teacher. Workshop safety measures and learner discipline in the workshops must be well applied. Learners who stay within the limits of the workshop rules find themselves in a safe space in which they feel safe and secure and can therefore freely participate in the workshop activities. The findings of this study indicate that effective education can take place within a space of security.

Level of competence and experience of teachers

The teachers were of the opinion that there is a definite connection between teachers’ levels of competence and the practical skill levels of that they must apply through teaching and learning. The participants confirm that expertise is essential for meaningful teaching and learning. Some of the teachers consider themselves experts in their subject area based on their good training and practical experience. The participants agree that a teacher is considered as a reasonable expert based on his training, and that expertise is the foundation of high-quality teaching and learning. As a result of the specialized knowledge and experience of the teachers, the safety of the

learners is ensured to a large extent and optimal skill development of the learners can take place if there is security in the workshops.

Conclusion

It became clear from the study that there are legitimate gaps in safety policy and practice at Mechanical Technology workshops in public schools. The study showed the nature and frequency of injuries in the Mechanical Technology workshops. The lack of safety due to unsafe conditions, incompetent teachers, inadequate training and supervision, as well as fear of working with machinery have a detrimental effect on educational practices, safety obligations, and quality of education. Teachers adapted to a certain extent by establishing their own policies or measures, but this is not sufficient and cannot be enforced at schools – and compliance or not – largely takes place informally and in a voluntary manner. This results in learners receiving training in workshops being unnecessarily exposed to possible injuries. Workshop safety policies specifically intended for workshops will need urgent attention. These safety policies must be enforced through school policies, legislation, regulations, and subordinate legislation. Furthermore, this problem will have to receive attention in the initial training of teachers as well as those who are already practising.

Finally, the hope is expressed that the recommendations will be implemented in such a way that safety in workshops will improve and that the number of qualified teachers who teach Mechanical Technology and learners who take Mechanical Technology as a subject will increase so that the shortage of craftsmen and technically skilled employees in the labour market and in the manufacturing sector will be addressed.

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Dr. Coenraad Jurgens, North-West University, South Africa

Gergana Sakarski

Evaluation of Homeschoolers' Soft Skills: Initial Survey Results

Abstract

Soft skills are key for the successful realisation of individuals in their personal, professional and social life, but scientific research conducted on the soft skills of homeschoolers is still scarce so far. One of the most frequent questions, when homeschooling is discussed concerns the presumed lack of social skills of homeschoolers. A common assumption is that homeschoolers' socialisation is compromised and homeschooled individuals' soft skills development is, therefore, impaired. However, researchers, education specialists, and homeschooling families have differing opinions about this question. Research shows that the concern of social skills deficit comes often from outside the families, although parents usually care the most about their children's wellbeing. Homeschoolers, who were surveyed in the framework of this research did not confirm this assumption either. Therefore, there seems to be a clear need for deeper understanding and further exploration of the soft skills of homeschoolers. This paper aims to present the initial findings, discovered through theoretical study and qualitative and quantitative analysis of the preliminary results of an online survey conducted with homeschoolers from 3 countries aged over 16 years in order to explore the soft skills they develop.

Keywords: homeschooling, home education, soft skills, social skills, leadership, critical thinking, adaptability, problem solving, communication

Introduction

Homeschooling is nowadays a growing educational phenomenon, which is gaining more and more popularity and exposure over different countries and continents, no matter if it is legally recognised, regulated, not mentioned in the legislative texts or even illegal (Roche, 2017; De Beer, Vos & Myburgh, 2020; Sakarski, 2022). Homeschooling does not have a commonly accepted definition and different terms are used in the scholar literature to name comparable concepts and practice, including the terms *homeschooling*, *elective home education*, *family education*, and other similar terms, depending on the country, the language or the understanding of the author. In this paper the term homeschooling describes the education given to children by parents, tutors, private teachers or other individuals, outside of schools, where at least one of the parents takes responsibility for the education of the child.

There is a large variety of approaches and styles used by families who homeschool their children, as homeschooling is a personalised and most commonly individualised practice per se. Despite this variety of practices and ways to educate children outside of schools that have been explored by scholars, there are still a lot of questions that remain unanswered. One of them concerns the development of soft skills in

homeschooling. Soft skills are transversal or transferable life competencies acquired through life experiences and situations. They can be “cognitive, social and emotional skills, which enable children and adolescents to continue lifelong learning and become active and productive citizens” (UNICEF, 2022), which combine with other fundamental or specific technical skills, needed for the individuals to thrive in their professional and personal lives. “The term Soft Skills is used to indicate all the competencies that are not directly connected to a specific task; they are necessary in any position as they mainly refer to the relationships with other people involved in the organization” (Cimatti, 2016, p. 98).

This paper aims to present the preliminary findings from ongoing research, conducted in the framework of the PhD thesis of the author. The research methods used include literature study and empirical analysis of the responses of an online survey designed to gain insight into homeschoolers’ soft skills development. The analysis presented here is based on the anonymous responses collected between July and November 2022 from 13 current or former homeschoolers aged over 16 years. Random sampling was used in this research.

Literature review

A very common question, when it comes to homeschooling, concerns the social skills development of homeschoolers. Social skills are part of the soft skills individuals gain and enhance over a lifetime. There is no starting age to develop soft skills and there is no unique measure. Although not much research has been conducted on the topic of soft-skills development in the process of homeschooling, the socialisation question has often been addressed in the scholarly literature. There seems to be a common belief that homeschooled children do not have opportunities to socialise with their peers, therefore their social skills development would be compromised (Fineman & Shepherd, 2016).

However, these presumptions have not been confirmed by scientists who explored this alternative teaching practice. Recent research conducted with adults, who were homeschooled as children found that “homeschooling had not hindered their ability to navigate society effectively” (Hamlin & Cheng, 2022, p. 332). Although empirical research on this topic had some limitations (Kunzman & Gaither, 2020), due to the sampling challenges and self-reporting approach, some conclusions can still be drawn about the results of homeschooling: “It would generally produce results equivalent to those of school attendance, for academic success, socialisation, socio-affective development of children and their professional and social integration in adulthood.” (Brabant, 2021, p. 101).

The social interactions have not necessarily occurred at school with peers of the same age, but, as stated by Respondent 3, “Homeschooling means a family will have to work harder to find opportunities for their children to socialize with those outside the family”. These opportunities have often been created through extracurricular and social activities, sports, cultural visits, travel, community activities, hobbies, private courses, and family relationships. “The acquisition of social skills in homeschooling is dependent on the individual parent’s approach towards homeschooling and their main objectives for adopting this method of child education” (Abuzandah, 2020, p. 1071).

Research design

The purpose of the research was to observe and comparatively analyse the degree to which current or former homeschoolers aged over 16 years assessed their soft skills development. The age threshold was selected as it has been assumed that younger individuals might not have the necessary self-awareness needed for the purpose of the study. An anonymous questionnaire was designed for this research. It consisted of a total of 75 items, including open questions, Likert questions, rating scale questions, multiple choice questions classified in four sections: General Information and Demographics; Education & Employment Status; Soft Skills Self-assessment; Other Questions. The choice of different kinds of questions was motivated by the will to obtain a panoramic examination of the soft skills profile of the respondents. The research was randomly distributed online by email. The responses, analysed in this paper, have been collected with the Google Forms platform. The soft skills assessment section included 50 items with five-scale rating, divided into 10 groups of soft skills, including Time management, Communication, Adaptability, Teamwork, Creativity, Leadership, Interpersonal skills, Work ethics, and Critical thinking. Each soft skill item was rated separately by the respondents on a five-point scale (1 = Not developed; 2 = Underdeveloped; 3 = Good; 4 = Very strong; 5 = Excellent).

Results

Demographics

The evaluation was based on an experimentally designed self-assessment questionnaire, completed by 13 participants from 3 countries spread as follows: 2 from Bulgaria, 5 from Canada, and 6 from the USA. The average participants' age was 25 years, the mode and the median age was 20 years, while the younger respondent was 16 years old and the eldest was 45 years old. 57.1% of the respondents were women, and 42.9% were men. The highest level of education completed by 9 of the respondents was high school, 1 secured a Bachelors' degree, 1 graduated with a Masters' degree, 1 had a Doctoral degree and 1 was still in grade 10. The respondents, enrolled in a higher education institution at the moment of the survey, declared to have specialised in the following fields: data science, pastoral studies, elementary education, missional leadership, communications, non-profit leadership, creative writing/fiction, theatrical operations and management.

Education and employment

In terms of main occupation, 10 of the respondents indicated that they were enrolled in a higher education institution; 6 had a job; 1 was a student enrolled in a regular school, and 1 was a homeschool teacher. The respondents generally felt they were successful in their higher education and other studies, with 76.9% rating their success level at 4 and 23.1% rating at 5, and 84.7% felt that they had been prepared for their current studies, with 15.3% who rated their preparedness perception at 2 and 3 points (based on questions with a five-points scale: 1 = minimum; 5 = maximum). In terms of employment status, 69.2% of the respondents had a job when they completed the questionnaire, where the majority of the jobs were jobs, which could be qualified as "student jobs", and 33.3% were full time and permanent positions. The respondents were employed in a variety of sectors including information technologies, education,

healthcare, public sector and other services, which all of them found in less than a year; and a third of them declared have found in less than a month. The majority of the positions had been found through networking, including personal networks, social networks, previous networking with recruiters, which allowed the assumption that homeschoolers had to mobilise a set of soft skills, such as interpersonal skills, communication, networking and other job-specific competences in order to secure their employment. 61.5% (8) have had access to career counselling services, but the link with the professional realisation have not been confirmed and could be a ground for future exploration. The results of the survey showed that all the respondents had a good preparedness and success in their current work (rated 4 and 5 by all the respondents); and 77.8% (7) felt satisfied or very satisfied with their work, with only 22.2% (2) respondents rating their work satisfaction level as good (3 points).

Soft skills self-assessment

In terms of soft skills, the resulting data showed that the questioned homeschoolers had mitigated evaluation of their time management skills with good to excellent organisation skills, at least very strong prioritising skills, but less categoric stress management skills, whereas for 46.2% of respondents this skill remained underdeveloped. This controversial result about time management skills is consistent with previous research findings (Sakarski, 2022). The time management skills were considered as a positive outcome of the homeschooling for some of the homeschoolers, but for others, this skill, including prioritising, planning, goal setting and stress management, was less consistent. The participants noted mainly good, very strong and excellent communication skills, with affirmed presentation and written communication skills (more than 8 respondents rated these skills as at least very strong). Learning and growing mindset was clearly one of the strongest skills all of the respondents noted as at least very strong, which can be due to the way their learning experience occurred from daily life situations, allowing them to cultivate adaptability. Optimism and positive attitude (76.9%), situational analysis (69.2%) and in learning and growth mindset (100%) are also among the skills which participants assessed as at least very strong (rated with 4 and 5 points). Self-management and self-motivation were judged as less developed or at least unequally developed by the respondents.

These results differ from Gaudreau and Brabant's findings, who identified self-determination and self-motivation of unschoolers as one of the highly rated positive repercussions of unschooling (Gaudreau & Brabant, 2021). The skills assessed by the respondents as at least good (graded at 3 points or above) were: verbal communication, presentation, calmness, learning and growth mindset, logical reasoning, observation, brainstorming, coordination, idea exchange, imagination, innovation, questioning, generosity, humour, tolerance, discipline, acuity, questioning.

The average of the self-assessment rating provided by the respondents, rated the following skills in the 90th percentile: learning and growth mindset (avg. 4.38), logical reasoning (avg. 4.38), empathy (avg. 4.31), humour (avg. 4.23), analysis (avg. 4.23), responsibility (avg. 4.23). Only 2 of these skills are from the same group of interpersonal skills. The skills rated in the 10th percentile, based on the average group of interpersonal skills are: stress management (avg. 2.77), assertiveness (avg. 2.92), networking (avg. 3.15), mentorship (avg. 3.15), mediation (avg. 3.23). The skills are from different skills groups, except for two of them, which are classified as leadership skills. The table

below presents an overview of the soft skills assessed in the survey with mean, mode, median, minimum, and maximum value.

Table 1: Summary of auto-evaluated soft-skills, assessed in the current research

Skills group	Soft skills	Average	Mode	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Adaptability	Calmness	3,62	3	3	3	5
	Learning and growth mindset	4,38	5	5	3	5
	Optimism and positive attitude	4,08	5	4	2	5
	Self-management	3,54	3	3	2	5
	Self-motivation	3,54	5	4	1	5
	Situational analysis	3,92	4	4	2	5
Communication	Active listening	3,62	4	4	2	5
	Constructive feedback	3,69	4	4	2	5
	Presentation	4,15	5	4	3	5
	Verbal communication	3,77	4	4	3	5
	Written communication	4,08	4	4	2	5
Creativity	Experimentation	3,62	3	3	2	5
	Imagination	4,08	5	4	3	5
	Innovation	3,77	3	4	3	5
	Mind-mapping	3,31	3	3	2	5
	Questioning	4,00	4	4	3	5
Critical thinking	Acuity	3,38	3	3	3	5
	Attention to detail	3,69	4	4	2	5
	Questioning	4,08	4	4	3	5
	Scheduling	3,69	4	4	2	5
Interpersonal skills	Cultural intelligence	3,69	5	4	2	5
	Diplomacy	3,62	3	3	2	5
	Empathy	4,31	5	5	2	5
	Humour	4,23	4	4	3	5
	Networking	3,15	3	3	2	5
	Tolerance	4,08	4	4	3	5
Leadership	Assertiveness	2,92	2	3	2	4
	Generosity	3,92	3	4	3	5
	Initiative	3,92	5	4	2	5
	Management skills	4,00	5	4	2	5
	Mentorship	3,15	3	3	2	5
Problem-solving	Analysis	4,23	5	5	2	5
	Brainstorming	3,92	4	4	3	5
	Decision making	3,38	4	3	2	5
	Logical reasoning	4,38	5	5	3	5
	Observation	4,08	5	4	3	5
Teamwork	Collaboration	3,62	4	4	2	5
	Conflict management and resolution	3,77	4	4	2	5
	Coordination	3,69	3	3	3	5
	Idea exchange	3,62	4	4	3	4
	Mediation	3,23	3	3	2	5
Time management	Goal setting	3,54	4	4	1	5
	Organisation	4,00	5	4	3	5
	Planning	3,92	4	4	2	5
	Prioritising	3,77	4	4	2	5
	Stress management	2,77	2	3	2	4
	Work ethics	Commitment	4,00	4	4	2
Discipline		4,00	5	4	3	5
Professionalism		3,77	4	4	2	5
Responsibility		4,23	5	5	2	5

In addition to the auto-evaluation of the soft skills, the survey included five open questions, allowing the respondents to express their views and perception of the results of their educational experience. The comparison highlighted the flexibility of the schedule which differs much from the formal schooling paradigm.

According to Respondent 4, currently in college in Chicago, USA, specialising in Elementary Education “Homeschooling could lead to development of a love for learning, time management skills, the ability to communicate with different people, and the opportunity to grow in areas of talent or interest”. Respondent 6 evaluated the “good work ethic, taught from a Christian perspective, [...] time management and self-motivation” as positive outcomes of homeschooling. Respondent 10 assesses “personal exploration and development of passion and self-motivation” as propitious consequences of homeschooling. According to Respondent 3 “Homeschoolers who have a good work ethic are prepared to achieve their goals on their own even if they are not as strictly pushed toward them as public schoolers might be. Homeschooling often gives students more flexibility in their schedule to pursue part time jobs and other educational and vocational experiences that can help prepare them for the future.” “HS [homeschooling] fostered a curiosity and love for learning new things in me that I am unsure I would have received in the public school system” said Respondent 13.

These statements align with conclusions, previously drawn by several researchers exploring homeschoolers’ social skills that, in some cases and under conditions, soft skills developed by homeschooled individuals could be fostered as a result of homeschooling.

A convergence of evidence from different perspectives can be observed: from the results of the survey and the study of previous research we can conclude that homeschoolers develop soft skills mainly through various life experiences. Their social skills seem to be honed through interactions with people of different ages, provided that the families allow these interactions and invest the necessary time to create such opportunities for their homeschooled children, as opposed to the granted opportunities to socialise with peers of the same age, usually provided in regular schools.

Discussion and conclusion

The results presented in this paper have indicative character as they are based on self-assessment by a limited number of respondents, which does not allow their generalisation. However, they are still suggestive of similarities and differences, which are observed in homeschoolers’ soft skills.

One of the most notable conclusions is that the surveyed individuals have a large variety of skills, according to their self-assessment, and they do not seem to confirm the assumption that homeschoolers lack social skills. These findings could be used as additional support for training, mediation (Ranev, 2021) and supervision of social workers (Staneva, 2022), assessing homeschoolers achievements in order to get insights not exclusively limited to the academic performance and the social environment of the assessed children.

Soft skills are complex, dynamic and largely dependent on the context, which makes their assessment a challenging task. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed in order to draw general conclusions. Although the results of this study provide a simplistic view of the soft skills development of the questioned homeschoolers, the findings could be used as a starting point for future explorations of the long-term social effects of homeschooling.

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Gergana Sakarski, PhD Student, Sofia University, Bulgaria

Martin Boško, Ondřej Papajoanu, Angie Moore & Hana Voňková

Examining Paradoxical Associations Between Students' Questionnaire Responses and Their Achievement Across PISA Cycles: The Case of Teacher Support

Abstract

In the context of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), paradoxical findings concerning the relationship between questionnaire scales and student achievement are often documented. These questionnaire scales are found to correlate positively with student achievement within countries at the individual level, but negatively at the between-country level (i.e., when correlating questionnaire scale and achievement values aggregated at the level of countries, the countries being the unit of analysis). These anomalous findings can be caused by the differences in reporting behavior of students in different countries and might lead educators and educational policy-makers to erroneous conclusions. In this paper, we examine the relationship between the teacher support scale and student achievement across three PISA cycles – 2012, 2015, and 2018. Our results show that there is a consistent negative between-country correlation between teacher support and student achievement in all three examined PISA cycles, which is in line with the previously documented paradoxes. We have also found that some countries, which participated in all three PISA cycles under study, consistently contribute to this paradox by having quite high levels of student-reported teacher support but rather low achievement scores. Future research should take into account the differences in reporting behavior between students when making cross-country analyses and consider the application of methodological approaches to identify and adjust for these differences such as the anchoring vignette method and the overclaiming technique.

Keywords: PISA, questionnaire, reporting behavior, teacher support

Introduction

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a tri-yearly assessment administered to 15-year-old students across the globe, focusing on the three core school subjects of science, reading and mathematics (OECD, 2016a). This assessment provides data allowing researchers and educational policymakers to compare student performance across different countries. PISA data gives not only a snapshot of world-wide educational performance trends, but also has become highly influential in educational policy making (Rutkowski & Rutkowski, 2016). Although there is often a major focus on comparing the academic achievement of students from participating countries (Rutkowski & Rutkowski, 2016), PISA data also provides important information about a variety of non-cognitive factors such as students' attitudes, beliefs, interest, motivation, as well as their well-being (Bertling et al., 2016). These non-cognitive factors are growing in importance as they are seen as predictors of

scholastic performance, educational attainment, as well as labor market success (Bertling et al., 2016).

However, the accurate measurement of these factors is a challenging and inappropriate measurement of non-cognitive factors that can limit the validity of the findings and usefulness of the data for policy decisions (Bertling et al., 2016; Kyllonen & Bertling, 2013).

Differences in reporting behavior and paradoxical results in the PISA study

PISA study questionnaires rely on four-point Likert scale items which can be prone to inaccuracies due to the differences in reporting behavior between students from different countries (Bertling et al., 2016; Kyllonen & Bertling, 2013). Such differences have been suggested as the cause of the “attitude-achievement paradox” when questionnaire scales are found to correlate with achievement positively within countries at the individual level (hereinafter “within-country correlation”), but negatively at the country level (i.e., when correlating questionnaire scale and achievement values aggregated at the level of countries, hereinafter “between-country correlation”; Bertling et al., 2016; Kyllonen & Bertling, 2013).

For example, in PISA 2003, the mean within-country correlation between the mathematics self-concept scale and mathematics achievement was $r = .40$, while the between-country correlation was $r = -.20$ (Kyllonen & Bertling, 2013). This means that countries with lower achievement tended to have, on average, higher self-concept values and vice versa. Similar paradoxical findings have been documented, for example, by He and van de Vijver (2016) who found, using PISA 2012 data, a median within-country correlation between mathematics achievement and intrinsic motivation $r = .17$ and extrinsic motivation $r = .13$, while the between-country correlations were $r = -.53$ and $r = -.52$ for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, respectively. Further, Vonkova, Zamarro and Hitt (2018) found, using PISA 2012 data, a negative between-country correlation between math teacher's classroom management levels and math achievement $r = -.33$.

Teacher support in the PISA study

Teacher support behavior is one of the contextual factors commonly studied in the PISA assessment. Teachers' support of and care for students have been recognized as a relevant factor in a number of positive outcomes such as, for example, lower anxiety, higher academic motivation, higher engagement in learning, and better well-being (e.g., OECD, 2016b; OECD, 2019). In PISA study, a teacher support scale is commonly included in a student questionnaire, asking students to report whether their teacher shows interest in every student's learning, whether their teacher helps students with their learning, etc. (OECD, 2016b; OECD, 2019). Based on student's responses to these items, an index of teacher support is created and included in the student questionnaire data set (OECD, 2016b; OECD, 2019). In our study, we focus this data concerned with student-reported teacher support.

This study

In this study, we aim to investigate whether the paradoxical findings documented for a number of PISA questionnaire scales, which were found to correlate positively

with student achievement within countries but negatively at the between-country level, could also be found for teacher support scale and whether the pattern of paradoxical results would be the same across three PISA cycles.

Specifically, our research question is: What is the correlation between teacher support and student achievement in PISA 2012, 2015, and 2018?

Methodology

We use student questionnaire data from 3 cycles of PISA testing: 2012, 2015, and 2018. In each cycle, a teacher support scale was included in the questionnaire, asking about teacher behaviors in lessons of the subject which was the major tested subject in that cycle (note that in each cycle, one of the three subjects is tested in detail, taking almost half of the total testing time; OECD, 2016a).

The major subjects were mathematics, science, and reading in 2012, 2015, and 2018, respectively. For each cycle, we examine the relationship between the teacher support scale and student achievement in the corresponding (i.e., major) subject. Below we provide more information about the data for each cycle.

PISA 2012

We use data from 480,174 respondents from 65 countries and economies (hereinafter we use the term “countries”). In PISA 2012, teacher support was measured through question *ST77* where students reported the frequency of teacher supporting behaviors in mathematics classes on a scale *every lesson* (1), *most lessons* (2), *some lessons* (3), and *never or hardly ever* (4). The items for question *ST77* were as follows:

How often do these things happen in your mathematics lessons?

ST77Q01: The teacher shows an interest in every student's learning.

ST77Q02: The teacher gives extra help when students need it.

ST77Q04: The teacher helps students with their learning.

ST77Q05: The teacher continues teaching until the students understand.

ST77Q06: The teacher gives students an opportunity to express opinions.

In our analysis, we use the TEACHSUP index from the student questionnaire data set as an indicator of teacher support. The index was based on student responses to the *ST77* items above. The index was created so that the higher the index value, the higher the teacher support (for more details on the calculation of the index see OECD, 2014).

As the indicators of student achievement in mathematics, we use the first plausible value (PVMATH) for within-country analyses and the country achievement scores in mathematics (*math score*; the values were taken from PISA Data Explorer; OECD, n.d.-a) for between-country analyses.

PISA 2015

We use data from 514,119 respondents from 72 countries. In PISA 2015, teacher support was measured through question *ST100* where students reported the frequency of teacher supporting behaviors in science classes on a scale *every lesson* (1), *most lessons* (2), *some lessons* (3), and *never or hardly ever* (4). The items for question *ST100* were as follows:

How often do these things happen in your <school science> lessons?

ST100Q01: The teacher shows an interest in every student's learning.

ST100Q02: The teacher gives extra help when students need it.

ST100Q03: The teacher helps students with their learning.

ST100Q04: The teacher continues teaching until the students understand.

ST100Q05: The teacher gives students an opportunity to express opinions.

In our analysis, we use the TEACHSUP index from the student questionnaire data set as an indicator of teacher support. The index was based on student responses to the *ST100* items above. The index was created so that the higher the index value, the higher the teacher support (for more details on the calculation of the index see OECD, 2017).

As the indicators of student achievement in science, we use the first plausible value (PV1SCIE) for within-country analyses and the country achievement scores in science (*science score*; OECD, n.d.-a) for between-country analyses.

PISA 2018

We use data from 566,793 respondents from 75 countries. In PISA 2018, teacher support was measured through question *ST100* where students reported the frequency of teacher supporting behaviors in test language classes on a scale *every lesson* (1), *most lessons* (2), *some lessons* (3), and *never or hardly ever* (4). The items for question *ST100* were as follows:

How often do these things happen in your <test language lessons>?

ST100Q01: The teacher shows an interest in every student's learning.

ST100Q02: The teacher gives extra help when students need it.

ST100Q03: The teacher helps students with their learning.

ST100Q04: The teacher continues teaching until the students understand.

In our analysis, we use the TEACHSUP index from the student questionnaire data set as an indicator of teacher support. The index was based on student responses to the *ST100* items above. The index was created so that the higher the index value, the higher the teacher support (for more details on the calculation of the index see OECD, n.d.-b).

As the indicators of student achievement in reading, we use the first plausible value (PV1READ) for within-country analyses and the country achievement scores in reading (*reading score*; OECD, n.d.-a) for between-country analyses.

Analysis

As for within-country analyses, teacher support (TEACHSUP) and student achievement (PV1MATH, PV1SCIE, and PV1READ for PISA 2012, 2015, and 2018, respectively) were correlated at the individual level in each country using the *final student weight* (W_FSTUWT). As for between-country analyses, we first calculated the weighted mean of the TEACHSUP index using the *final student weight* (W_FSTUWT) for each country and then correlated these weighted means with the country achievement scores (*math score*, *science score*, and *reading score* for PISA 2012, 2015, and 2018, respectively). Note that participating countries differ across the PISA cycles, so the between-country correlations from different cycles are not directly comparable.

Results

For 2012, the correlation of TEACHSUP and PV1MATH within countries ranges from -0.164 to 0.219 with a median correlation of 0.006. In total, 30 countries had a negative within-country correlation between TEACHSUP and PV1MATH, while 35 countries had a positive within-country correlation between TEACHSUP and PV1MATH. The lowest within-country correlation was found, for example, in Serbia, Montenegro, Tunisia, Slovakia, and Austria. Contrarily, the highest within-country correlation was found, for example, in Norway, Denmark, Australia, Jordan, and Korea. The country level correlation for TEACHSUP and country *math score* is -0.479.

For 2015, the correlation of TEACHSUP and PV1SCIE within countries ranges from -0.124 to 0.161 with a median correlation of -0.010. In total, 43 countries had a negative within-country correlation between TEACHSUP and PV1SCIE, while 29 countries had a positive within-country correlation between TEACHSUP and PV1SCIE. The lowest within-country correlation was found, for example, in Uruguay, Slovakia, Romania, Tunisia, and Peru. Contrarily, the highest within-country correlation was found, for example, in Malta, Vietnam, the Chinese provinces of Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Guangdong, Norway, and Finland. The country level correlation for TEACHSUP and country *science score* is -0.461.

For 2018, the correlation of TEACHSUP and PV1READ within countries ranged from -0.106 to 0.186 with a median correlation of 0.020. In total, 24 countries had a negative within-country correlation between TEACHSUP and PV1READ, while 51 countries had a positive within-country correlation between TEACHSUP and PV1READ. The lowest within-country correlation was found, for example, in Austria, Germany, Israel, Slovakia, and Panama. Contrarily, the highest within-country correlation was found, for example, in Malaysia, Sweden, Norway, Jordan, and Korea. The country level correlation for TEACHSUP and country *reading score* is -0.528.

A closer analysis of the countries that participated in all three PISA cycles (54 countries) has revealed that if we rank their mean TEACHSUP and achievement score for each cycle, some countries consistently rank among the top 10 countries when it comes to teacher support, yet they tend to be among bottom 10 countries when it comes to achievement score. Such countries are for example Brazil, Costa Rica, Jordan, Mexico, and Peru. Curiously, the opposite paradox (i.e., ranking bottom 10 in teacher support and top 10 in achievement score) is not present in the data.

Conclusion

In PISA, paradoxical findings are commonly found when questionnaire scales and student achievement correlate positively within countries at the individual level, but negatively at the country level. These findings have been attributed to the differences in reporting behavior between students from different countries. In our study, we documented consistent moderate negative between-country correlations between the teacher support index (TEACHSUP) and the countries' achievement scores in PISA 2012, 2015, and 2018. This means the higher the country's score on an achievement test, the lower the student-reported level of teacher support and vice versa. The within-country correlations are both positive and negative and weaker in strength compared to the between-country correlations. Thus, our study suggests that there is an unexpected paradox also in the case of teacher support scale and shows its consistency across different PISA cycles. Interestingly, some countries, which participated in all three

PISA cycles examined in our study, have been found to consistently contribute to this paradox by having quite high levels of student-reported teacher support but rather low achievement scores.

Our findings indicate the need to take into account the differences in reporting behavior between students when making cross-country analyses. Future research could thus consider the application of methodological approaches, such as the anchoring vignette method (King et al., 2004) and the overclaiming technique (Vonkova, Papajoanu & Stipek, 2018), to identify differences in student reporting behavior and adjust student-reported data for these differences. The previous analyses of PISA data have shown that these approaches have the potential to explain some of the paradoxical findings and improve the cross-country comparability of student-reported data (e.g., Kyllonen & Bertling, 2013; Vonkova, Zamarro & Hitt, 2018).

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Angie Moore, M.A., Charles University, Czech Republic

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hana Voňková, Charles University, Czech Republic

Ilse Doyer, Wilna L Bean & André du Plessis

A Time-on-Task Analysis of Teaching and Learning Productivity

Abstract

This paper presents the use of the time-on-task analysis (TOTA) diagnostic model as an instrument to improve the efficient management of allocated academic time in schools and focuses on the descriptive analytics produced by the TOTA model. The model aims to analyse how time is spent during the school day to enable school leaders, managers, and teachers to identify opportunities for improving teaching and learning ‘uptime’ in their schools and classrooms. The theoretical underpinning of the TOTA model is overall equipment effectiveness (OEE), a powerful analytical productivity metric used widely in manufacturing, and thus provides a novel perspective on how time is spent in the school day. The descriptive analytics are based on a data set of 450 observations taken during a time-series classroom observation study in the intermediate-senior phase of a primary school. It is argued that the TOTA model can be a valuable tool for school managers and teachers to improve teaching and learning productivity through the efficient utilisation of allocated academic time. The time-on-task analysis presented in this paper further underscores the importance of teachers’ classroom management competencies and has the potential to be a valuable tool to enhance the instructional and transformational leadership practices of school principals.

Keywords: time-on-task, time management in schools, classroom management, effective teaching and learning, education productivity, quantitative classroom management studies, instructional leadership

Introduction

Schools and universities supply the economy with one common resource: educated labour. Hoxby (2004, p. 209) calls it the quintessential upstream industry. However, it is noted that where most industries have seen a rapid and consistent increase in productivity over four decades (Creighton, 2016), the pedagogues, economists and policy makers agree that the education sector’s productivity has been steadily declining (Hoxby, 1999; Ahlgrim, 2010; Creighton, 2016).

The productivity metric most dominant in literature, and generally used at policy level, is that of learner achievement on standardised tests per dollar spent (Ahlgrim, 2010; Lafortune et al., 2018; Hoxby, 1999). Even after moderating for school expenditure inflation, Gundlach et al. (2001, pp. C135-C147) found that education productivity had indeed declined in the countries in the scope of their study.

Because the world of work is placing an increasing demand on both cognitive and non-cognitive skills that are to be developed by education systems, economies cannot afford the education sector falling behind in its delivery of these skills. In the school

context, Brauckmann et al. (2023, pp. 4-15) argue that meaningful research-based knowledge of local school contexts and action-specific interventions are required through for example instructional and transformational strategies by school principals to improve education's productivity problem. Among others, school leaders and managers can positively influence teaching and learning productivity at school level by effectively organising and planning instructional time to promote efficient 'time-on-task' (Leithwood et al., 2020, pp. 5-22).

This research demonstrates how the TOTA model can be used to study the local school context to highlight opportunities for action-specific intervention by principals and teachers to increase productivity through the reduction of time-on-task losses. The TOTA model does this on a more detailed, systematic and practical level than what has been done to date in similar studies (Doyer & Bean, 2023).

This paper will present further literature on productivity in schools, after which the research methodology used will briefly be described, before the results of the study are discussed.

Literature review

A wide range of factors influence productivity in education and come from fields of study as diverse as policy, sociology, genetics, leadership and pedagogy. However, at school and classroom management level, two factors dominate others: the quality of teaching, and the amount of time spent on task, the latter especially in those subjects addressing literacy and numeracy. Quality of teaching, for example, trumped class size, aptitude-based grouping of learners, and type of school system (Sanders et al., 1997, pp. 57-67) as well as learner achievement (Sanders et al., 1997; Gerritsen et al., 2017).

Financial expenditure per learner and the type of school governance had a relatively small impact on learning (Ahlgren, 2010; Hoxby, 2003), but along with teaching quality, time-on-task had a significant impact on learner achievement, especially in literacy and numeracy (Hoadley et al., 2009; Stallings, 1980). Hoadley et al. (2009, p. 378) argue that organisational aspects such as time management and the structuring of the school day are fundamental to enabling good quality teaching.

A literature review on quantitative classroom observation studies revealed that such studies are relatively rare, but where they do exist, they have a pedagogic or sociological focus, but time-on-task has received little focus to date (Apter et al., 2020; Wragg, 2011). The Stallings (1980, pp. 11-16) studies were one of the few examples where quantitative classroom observation studies had a time-on-task focus. Although focused and widely representative, the studies did not do a systematic and analytical study of the complete school day, but rather focused on specific factors.

Expanding on the practical work of Stallings (1980, pp. 11-16), and building on the theoretical basis of a widely-used diagnostic productivity metric used in manufacturing, Doyer and Bean (2023) developed the time-on-task analytical (TOTA) model. This paper showcases the descriptive statistics produced by the model to give empirical feedback to principals and teachers on opportunities for maximising time-on-task in the school day.

Research methodology

A secondary data set was obtained from a private school in South Africa, which contained 450 observations made during a total of 44 school periods, or 1320 minutes,

of the intermediate-senior phase of the primary school. The observations were made by shadowing three different teachers as well as a grade 5 class while doing a time-series observational study.

In terms of time observed, the secondary data set was between 20% to 66% in scale to what Apter et al. (2020, pp. 367-385) describe as the “mass” or “large” quantitative classroom studies done to date internationally. Although this data set covered eight different teachers, using a combination of nine different instructional styles and methods at various points of the school days observed, to teach ten different groups of learners in seven different subjects, the data set was taken over four school days and is thus not representative of all school days, but does demonstrate the abilities of the TOTA model in analysing a school day from two different perspectives.

The school observed is well equipped with teaching resources such as projectors in all classrooms. Tablets are available but used for specific subjects and assignments only. Class sizes range between 20 and 25 learners and all classes are made up of learners from at least three ethnic groups. Teaching follows a mostly traditional approach, but the school incorporates more progressive approaches such as learner-led projects, 21st century skills training, etc.

The data set contained the starting time of each sequential activity, as well as the description of the activity observed, and additional field note observations. The detailed, time-series observations provided a rich source of data to be processed into the different school day loss and activity categories of the TOTA model.

Once the data had been coded into the TOTA model categories, descriptive statistics were used to visualise the school day from two different perspectives: that of the teacher and that of the learner. The insights gleaned from the TOTA model are presented next.

Results and discussion: a day in the life of a teacher

Table 1 contains the results of the TOTA and indicates how the TOTA model systematically breaks the school day into more and more detailed categories to provide principals and teachers with detailed feedback on how a teaching day is typically spent at the school. As can be seen from the analysis, this school had 75.4% of the school day scheduled for academic time, but only 32.4% of the teachers’ school day was spent ‘on task’. Time on task is defined by Doyer and Bean (2023, preprint, p. 14) as “Time spent paying attention, or trying to learn. The amount of time students are engaged in academic work.”

The purpose of the TOTA exercise is, however, NOT to measure teacher productivity, but rather to diagnose productivity losses in such practical detail that makes improvement opportunities apparent to both teachers and school management. Referring to the detail level of Table 1, the five biggest losses of allocated academic time for the teachers in the school days observed were:

1. Set-up academic (capturing marks).
2. Set-up academic (work instructions), typically a teacher explaining an assignment or class activity.
3. Time-on-task losses (speed loss / idling), which Doyer and Bean (2023) define as learners being disengaged (idling).
4. Interruptions – external (administrative), with the field notes indicating that these were conversations with school management and the study officer.
5. Set-up logistics (class changeovers).

Together, these five losses constitute 32.7% of the teachers' school day. It is interesting to note that none of the teachers' days were spent preparing for lessons during school time, although the teachers were clearly well prepared. This could mean that teachers prepare for lessons after their sporting duties in the afternoons.

Table 1: Breakdown of teacher school days using the TOTA model

Scheduled non-academic time 24.6%			Events 6.5%	Routine	0.9%
				Non-routine	5.6%
			Breaks 10.1%	Formal	7.6%
				Informal	2.5%
			Set-up allowance 8.0%	Teaching preparation	3.0%
Scheduled academic time 75.4%	Availability losses 34.8%	Interruptions 7.4%	External 6.7%	Administrative	5.2%
				"Drive-by"	1.5%
				Maintenance	0.0%
			Internal 0.7%	Resource availability	0.0%
				Discipline issues	0.0%
				Off-topic discussions	0.7%
		Set-ups 30.2%	Set-up logistics 7.8%	Class changeovers	4.7%
				In-class configuration	3.1%
				Progress monitoring	1.6%
	Set-up academic 19.2%		Work instructions	5.5%	
			Capturing marks	12.1%	
			Set-up non-academic (administration)	3.2%	
	Available academic time 42.2%	Time-on-task losses 5.4%		Short stops	0.2%
				Speed losses / Idling	5.2%
		Time-on-task 32.4%	Instruction 3.2%	Revision	1.9%
				New Content	1.3%
			Application 17.4%	Group work	10.9%
				Individual written	4.6%
				Individual tablet	1.9%
			Assesment 11.8%	11.8%	

Another interesting fact gleaned from the analysis is that, although a lot of literature is spent on classroom management, internal interruptions constitute only 0.7% of the school day. The field notes indicate that all of the off-topic discussions had been initiated by the teacher during on-task learning time.

Looking at the time-on-task, an interesting data point is that only 1.2% of the 1080 minutes observed was spent on introducing new content – less than 13 minutes and 4.0% of total time-on-task observed.

The analysis was presented to the teacher of the school and received an overwhelmingly positive response with 93.2% of teachers indicating that they had thought of improvement ideas after the presentation, and 90.4% saying that they think their school could benefit from further such studies (Doyer & Bean, 2023).

Although the combined teacher data gave more observations to analyse to get the most representative view of the data, it was interesting to note the variations between the days of the three different teachers.

The field notes described the first day as a “traditional” teaching day following the formula of revision, teaching of new concepts and application. The second observed day consisted only of maths assessments. This day is therefore referred to as an “assessment” day. The last day was spent on facilitating group work with the teacher walking between groups supervising and guiding and the learners engaged in collaborative and creative planning. This day is described as a “group work” day.

The analysis highlighted some interesting observations when comparing the structure of the three different days. As can be seen in Table 2, the traditional day had the least available time-on-task. This was due to the varied activity types within the lesson plans, creating the need for frequent instructions and in-class changeovers of books and equipment. The traditional day also had the highest time-on-task losses, which were observed during written individual (workbook) activities, which the field notes indicated were a challenge for the learners to stay engaged with.

The two other days had fewer changes of activities during the periods, and thus more time was available for on-task activities. The “assessment” day contained prepared assessments and thus the learners knew what to expect and few instructions were necessary. The time-on-task losses were due to many students finishing the assessment early and thus “idling” for the rest of the test period. The “group work” day, called “Fantastic Friday”, required learners to continue with a second-language group project of creating a play about cyber safety. This day saw the highest time-on-task engagement levels, with relatively few instructions needed, but time also spent on some other work and arrangements.

Table 2: Comparison of the time-on-task of three different school days

		Available time-on-task	Actual time-on-task	Lost time-on-task
Traditional day	in minutes	111.13	73.37	37.76
	as % of school day	30.9%	20.4%	10.5%
Group work day	in minutes	129	129	0
	as % of school day	35.8%	35.8%	0.0%
Assessment day	in minutes	168.1	147.9	20.2
	as % of school day	46.7%	41.1%	5.6%

The field notes revealed another interesting observation: although the group work teacher spent little time on instructional teaching, the learners were fully engaged in learning. The traditional day teacher was most actively teaching and facilitating yet had the lowest time-on-task result, with the lowest engagement levels. This poses the research question of what the relationship is between the amount of teaching activity and the amount of learning activity.

Although the analysis of the teaching days is useful for teachers to identify improvement opportunities in how they spend their time, productivity in schools is ultimately measured by the amount of learning that takes place. The next section thus investigates how much of the school day a learner spends on task.

Results and discussion: a day in the life of a grade 5 class

The secondary data set also contained a set of observations of the activities engaged in by one class of grade 5 learners during the course of one school day.

Although the school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic made further observations impossible, this data set could be read together with that of the teachers to gain a broader understanding of the school's time-on-task levels.

The grade 5 class observations covered 11 periods and a total of 360 minutes and consisted of 84 separate observations. The data was coded into the TOTA template, enabling another set of descriptive statistics to be produced.

This analysis indicated that 38.4% of the school day was spent on-task, almost half of time scheduled as academic time (80.1%). As can be seen in Table 3, the three biggest losses of the scheduled academic time were as follows:

1. Speed loss / idling due to learners not being kept busy while others are still finishing tasks, as well as learners not participating in a double swimming lesson.
2. Set-up academic (in-class configuration), which included a double swimming lesson requiring learners changing.
3. Set-up logistics (class changeovers).

Table 3: Breakdown of learner school day using the TOTA model

Scheduled non-academic time 19.7%			Events 0.0%	Routine	0.0%	
				Non-routine	0.0%	
			Breaks 8.1%	Formal	7.3%	
				Informal	0.8%	
		Set-up allowance 11.6%	In-class configuration	3.1%		
			Class changeovers	8.5%		
Scheduled academic time 80.1%	Availability losses 23.6%	Interruptions 3.1%	External 1.4%	Administrative	0.0%	
				"Drive-by"	0.0%	
				Maintenance	0.0%	
				Internal 1.7%	Discipline issues	1.7%
					Off-topic discussions	0.0%
			Set-ups 32.1%	Set-up logistics 27.9%	Class changeovers	7.3%
	In-class configuration	9.0%				
	Set-up academic 4.2%	Progress monitoring		0.4%		
		Work instructions		3.9%		
				Other	0.0%	
			Set-up non-academic (administration)		0.0%	
		Available academic time 56.5%	Time-on-task losses 18.1%		Short stops	0.0%
					Speed losses / Idling	18.1%
		Time-on-task 38.4%	Instruction 1.4%	Revision	1.4%	
				New Content	0.0%	
			Application 36.9%	Group work	7.6%	
				Individual written	10.2%	
				Individual tablet	19.1%	
		Assesment 0.1%		0.1%		

When combining all 4 observed days, thus 1440 minutes, 33.9% was spent on-task, with 99.0% of the on-task time used for revision and application of concepts previously introduced. The data were subsequently analysed to determine which of these time-on-

task activities were the most successful in engaging the learners. Counting the number of learners on task during the learning activity at two- to three-minute intervals, produced a percentage of on-task engagement.

Although the secondary data would need to be supplemented by more representative observational data, this analysis indicated engagement levels during the four days of classroom observations. The best engagement (100%) was achieved through group work, individual application of learning on tablets, and interactive revision (teacher asking the learner group questions to test for retention and understanding). The formal assessment, as well as group work, achieved only 64% engagement, with the physical education lesson (swimming) showing only a 31% engagement level due to non-participating learners, as well as speed differences amongst the swimmers, causing waiting time for the faster swimmers. The instructing of new concepts achieved an 83% engagement level, and the field notes indicate that the teacher used a combination of instructional methods, including audio-visual material.

The descriptive analytics described here thus demonstrated how systematic, quantified classroom observational data can be analysed using the TOTA model. Analysing the secondary classroom observation data set through the TOTA model, showcased what kind of information the model could produce.

Conclusion

To increase productivity in the education sector, efficient use of available teaching time must be ensured. This means that from a school manager's perspective the teaching programme must be planned and implemented in such a way that disruptions and interruptions to classroom teaching activities are avoided.

From an individual teacher's perspective, good classroom management competencies are essential to ensure optimal use of teaching time. For this to occur, good planning and thorough preparation are required. In this regard the TOTA model is a valuable tool that school managers and teachers can utilise to diagnose unnecessary time losses so that time-on-task can be improved. It therefore has implications for the instructional and transformational leadership practices of educational leaders.

With Society 5.0 and Industry 4.0 unfolding, the education sector needs to play an agile, efficient, and effective upstream role to the workplace. By using the TOTA model to analyse and diagnose the school day, practical steps can be taken to improve productivity at grass roots level.

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Ilse Doyer, M.Eng., University of Pretoria, South Africa

Dr. Wilna L Bean, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Dr. André du Plessis, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Tshepo T. Tapala

Professional Development Programmes: Learning Platforms for the Advancement of Departmental Heads and Schools as Organisations

Abstract

For organisations to thrive, their employees need to be trained and developed. The training must be specific and targeted to the benefit of both the individual employee and the organisation they serve. The training and development can be for the development of the individual which will directly benefit the organisation. In reverse, whole organisations can be targeted for development which in turn also benefits the individual employee. Schools are no exemption. During the implementation of training and development, the individual teachers gain through enhanced and accelerated career advancement, their leadership skills and knowledge will be boosted, and they will also develop supervisory skills to mentor those serving under them. It is incumbent upon organisations like schools to invest heavily in the development and upskilling of their teachers to benefit from organisational growth and advancement based on such an exercise. The implementation of training and development programmes is not an easy task, but one that requires careful planning and management. Departmental heads will gain immensely if such programmes are implemented in their schools.

Keywords: professional development, organisational development, career advancement, leadership, supervision, departmental head

Introduction

Developing professionally using professional development (PD) platforms is vital for the improvement of results of schools as formal organisations. It is a fundamental task of management and leadership which rest mainly with the school principal. It is very important that school principals and their management teams (SMT) invest over a prolonged time huge amounts of resources and much-needed energy in the development of the capacity of others like departmental heads (DHs). Departmental heads are those teachers who are either formally promoted or occupying informal positions but are critical to the school leadership hierarchy (Tapala, 2019). They are called differently in different countries around the world. What is of a common definition for them is that they are the information peddlers between the highest office in the school and the teachers in the classrooms, leading from the middle, hence the middle management (De Nobile, 2018).

Basset (2012, p. 17), adverting to puts it wisely that “leadership development is specialised form of professional development through which leaders of all levels may develop competencies and capabilities to perform leadership functions effectively”.

Implementing leadership development for individuals like DH develops their ability to be effective and current skills wise as leaders. It cannot be argued anymore that being trained for management in the classroom alone be used as a stepping stone for assuming leadership roles such as that of a DH and being expected to learn on the job. Principals by virtue of being school leaders must have succession plans for middle managers like DHs through identification and development of future leaders (Mense et al., 2018) at all the school's leadership levels (Basset, 2012, p. 17). Programmes that produce the intended outcomes of progression from classroom management to leadership for the entire school are an obligation for education systems worldwide.

The target of PD programmes is to equip employees with work related skills. Organisations such as schools choose who, when, how, what, and why to train, depending on the requirements of the establishment and the employees' priorities and needs. For this paper, the following four most relevant PD programmes are deliberated on:

- (a) Organisational development;
- (b) Career development;
- (c) Leadership development; and
- (d) Supervisory development (Gagnon & Collinson, 2014).

These PD programmes are preferred for their relevance both to this paper and to the work of DHs who are required to have an understanding of their organisations. For DHs to grasp the ideals and vision of their schools, they should be well trained and developed. The DH, like all employees, needs career advancement at some point. As teachers, they must be competent to be promoted to higher leadership levels or to be the next cohort of leaders in schools (Mense et al., 2018). DHs manage cohorts of teachers in their departments during their incumbency as leadership. They, therefore, require training in managerial roles and be prepared to deal with all the barriers of being an overseer, irrespective of this as an individual or as a team player (Mense et al., 2018). Leading is not an isolated skill. Leaders are trained for the appropriate milieu of the organisation such as a school, which is why the development of numerous approaches and styles in leadership for the new incumbents is imperative and needs to be afforded.

In summary, DHs should be afforded PD slots for up-skilling and receive the latest and current knowledge while the entire school benefits too. A discussion about the selected training programmes and their value ensues below.

Programmes for the development of organisations

Gagnon and Collinson (2014) state that the development of organisations is grounded on behavioural disciplines where skills and knowledge of the staff are utilised to appraise structures of the organisations, subsequently, deviations are made to improve the effectiveness of all organisations. As schools as organisations are appraised for academic output and progress, similar mediations and targets are utilised for their efficiency are also used for the advancement of teachers and support staff, and teams within the school (Gagnon & Collinson, 2014). Schools as organisations invest lots of capital in training and developing teachers to preserve and advance performance (Sung & Choi, 2014). During the drawing and designing PDs, schools and other organisations mix the current with new material in the quest for modernisation and future survival (Sung & Choi, 2014). Organisational inventions and expansion take place through the participation of employees and teams who drive the modernisation of

such organisations. Schools and DHs are not spared from development. When schools perform self-evaluation, they not only concentrate on specific areas for efficient operation, but also on the progress and performance of key staff such as DHs occupying strategic positions which oversee the implementation of the curriculum. In the South African context, Whole School Evaluation (WSE) is the process used to evaluate schools (RSA, 2001). As a requirement, schools must annually self-evaluate using the nine areas for evaluation (RSA, 2001). Sampled schools may be evaluated externally by a quality assurance unit from the Provincial Department of Education (PDE). One of the nine areas is the evaluation of school staff at different levels of their careers, a key area for the organisational functioning of the school. The DH in a school requires training for the entire school to develop.

Programmes for career advancement

Development for career advancement creates prospects for employees to assess and strategize their future, advance their professions and improve their knowledge and skills base (Gagnon & Collinson, 2014). Teachers as staff members in organisations such as schools need growth opportunities for career improvement. When formal training opportunities for leadership development present themselves, teachers should be allowed to participate to prepare them for future incumbency. Individual training should be an extensive strategy to benefit both the organisation and staff members (Sung & Choi, 2014). When giving opportunities to employees like teachers and DHs for articulating their future wishes, organisations address what is of concern and the well-being of such employees. Here, teachers who aspire to become members of the SMT can be used as examples. The teachers need to be given a chance for development to ascend to higher levels of leadership without setbacks when such opportunities are available. Gaps for career advancements must be determined by watching the staff attrition rate due to occurrences of resignations, staff retirement, or death cases. Seamless transition can be established when replacing an outgoing employee by providing training on time. This can be achieved by looking into the future and establishing who will retire, or who may be looking at resigning before their retirement age. Otherwise, death cases cannot be predicted, but readiness is a necessity as career advancement can be used to plague such unforeseen occurrences. Future DHs need to be trained when a new cohort of curriculum leaders is needed.

Programmes for leadership development

The talents and abilities of new leaders need to be developed by experienced ones. Principals of schools need to guard jealously the future prosperity and survival of their schools (Satiani et al., 2014). Those identified to nurture future leaders need to have an eye to recognise such talent from the aspirant crop of teachers at their disposal. The experience and matching competency of the identified personnel is very key to leadership development (Hor et al., 2010). As Hor et al. (2010, p. 529) argue further, “leadership development programmes include both experiences and leadership competencies which project what the organisations needs are”. In essence, the developing of the organisation encompasses the development of personnel to aspire for the envisaged vision of an organisation such as a school. The leadership development programme aims at staff members aspiring to or occupying higher positions while

looking at growing the leader's capability to be effective in leadership roles and processes.

The leadership development programme is appropriate for teachers like DHs who are part of the hierarchy in the school leadership. The programme aims at equipping incumbent or potential leaders with the required abilities to carry out their work with ease (Gagnon & Collinson, 2014). The development of leaders targets leadership and management of personnel relating to the organisation's plans and ideals (Lárusdóttir & O'Connor, 2017; Ogina, 2017). During leadership training, setting goals, taking decisions, communication strategies, the allocating and management of resources, working in teams, drawing and management of budgets, the management and monitoring of people are some of the skills transferred to the prospects (Gagnon & Collinson, 2014). Prospective or incumbent DHs require training and development in all areas of departmental or whole school leadership and management. It is not something to doubt that when the incumbents are well trained, they will also provide good leadership training for the next cohort of school leaders. Closely interrelated to the programme for the development of leaders is one for the development of supervisors.

Programmes for the development of supervisors

According to Bernard and Goodyear (2009, p. 7), supervision is when a senior person intervenes over a junior person who is in the same profession as themselves. Here, the relationship is evaluative, occurs over a set period and where the junior can benefit professionally. The programme for developing supervisors aims at the personnel who form links between the higher leadership (principals and deputies) and lower ranked employees in e.g., teachers. DHs are the perfect example for such employees, hence the importance for them to be trained as supervisors.

As supervisors, DHs are expected to have relevant capabilities relevant to supervise others (Meyer, 2015). These skills include among others the ability to demonstrate high level skills in managing teaching and learning and the implementation of the curriculum in their departments. To supervise is a great distinctive opportunity, one which should be cherished but also carried out with due diligence (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Meyer, 2015). Supervision demands from the incumbent learning to implement skills attained from other roles qualitatively divergent from the present, e.g., a new DH having to supervise teachers in a department with little or no training but having learned related skills from a different orientation such as a leading of a committee in a local church. Personnel occupying the in-between positions in organisations like DHs are called middle managers or leaders. Some of the supervisory skills for the development of DHs are interpersonal, understanding leadership and management processes, and understanding productivity and quality improvement skills (Gagnon & Collinson, 2014; Satiani et al., 2014). Supervisors are geared toward productivity and for the DHs, their production and quality improvement points to the performance of learners and teachers, and the excellence of their results, which points to quality.

DHs supervise curriculum implementation in their departments and by default in the school. For every training that happens for the DH, supervision skills must be provided as they are in contact with teams of people which they need to have full control over and be able to advise. It is therefore worth noting that it is imperative to provide supervisory skills to DHs through continuous training and development, to

equip them with the know-how of supervising teachers in their departments. The following section is on knowledge management and teachers' professional development, based on two models by Zhao (2010) on the school knowledge management framework and strategies: the new perspective on teacher professional development, and Chen and Chang (2006) whole teacher approach to early childhood professional development.

Conclusion

DHs are some of the most neglected sectors in the education system when it comes to the provisioning of training and them knowing what is expected from them. It is important to note that while there is much training offered for principals and deputies of schools, the DH is a forgotten legion. Training programmes like the ones discussed in this paper can assist to put this to rest. When well developed and presented with a particular aim, they can go a long way in plugging what a vacuum for training for school-based DHs.

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Dr. Tshepo T. Tapala, North-West University, South Africa

Shantha Naidoo

South African Educators' Responses to Racial Integration in Public Secondary Schools

Abstract

The paper examines the role educators and members of school management teams (SMTs) play in transforming schools towards integrative learning environments. Data was collected through a survey and individual interviews that were administered to educators and members of SMTs (N = 88) in four multiracial schools. The survey included open-ended questions that focused on what was happening in schools, in racially diverse classrooms, and the interaction between racially diverse groups. SMTs and SGBs are seen as always advancing strategies that lead to racial integration at school. The results showed that racial integration was not evident in these schools but rather there was a heightened racial conflict and racial incidences were prevalent in former White, Indian and Coloured schools.

Keywords: educators, management, racial integration, Critical Race Theory, Lewin's Change Management Theory

Introduction

There is a growing call in South African schools for new approaches to integrate learners from racially diverse backgrounds in education that engage in nuanced ways of power, privilege and difference (Reygan & Steyn, 2017). This includes an increasingly urgent need for educators to be sufficiently trained to equip both educators and learners with the skills and knowledge to engage competently with issues of oppression, discrimination and diversity (Reygan & Steyn, 2017). This need, which is not unique to South Africa, foregrounds diverse classroom pedagogies and educational practices that focus on diversity and on challenging oppressions such as race, racism, and jurisprudence. The purpose of this paper is to ascertain the effectiveness of educators' and school management teams (SMTs) in managing and facilitating racial integration in public secondary schools.

According to Carrim and Soudien (1999) there is an ongoing spread of institutional racism as well as severe levels of inequality that continue to detrimentally impact the life chances of the Black learner. At national policy level, the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995) highlighted the need for:

... new education and training policies to address the legacies of under-development and inequitable development and provide learning opportunities for all will be based principally on the constitutional guarantees of equal educational rights for all persons and non-discrimination...

The White Paper and the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996) formalised the desegregation of schools as redress for the legacy of apartheid policies and mandated schools to provide equal educational opportunities to all learners regardless of difference. The process of desegregation is a pertinent challenge internationally as it is in South Africa (Vandeyar, 2008). Subsequently, racial integration was driven as part of education reform to accommodate the diverse nature of learners in society.

Research has indicated that desegregation in schools has resulted in schools adopting diverse ways of responding to the racially diverse learner population (Meier & Hartell, 2009, p. 181). Moletsane, Hemson and Muthukrishna (cited in Reygan & Steyn, 2017, p. 69) stipulate that many educators and schools are either unwilling or unable to implement the urgent necessity for interventions and approaches to adequately prepare young learners to embrace diversity.

Studies by Vandeyar (2008) established that many educators lack the knowledge of the backgrounds of diverse racial learners and have limited knowledge of teaching in racially diverse classrooms, where the onus is upon the educator to create an equitable educational environment. The important role of SMTs in leading change efforts is evident but there is a lack of perception in literature regarding the role of SMTs. The lack of research on school management in managing racial integration has resulted in a lack of empirical guidance that SMTs may possibly utilise to assist educators to close this gap and so enhance racial integration among racially diverse learners in mixed-race schools.

Racial integration in post-apartheid South Africa

Inequality, division, and segregation have been features of South Africa's history of education. According to Vorster (2005), this can be defined as a social process of transforming an undeveloped, poor, and divided society into a peaceful community with equal opportunities within which individuals were able to enjoy dignity and basic human rights in harmony with other people who may function within different racially populated groups. However, years later the era of social harmony, development and prosperity still seems far-fetched. The media frequently report that schools are characterized by racial tension, ignorance, misunderstanding and aggression because of the poor management of diversity (Meier, 2005).

According to Sayed and Soudien (2003, p. 11) 'equal opportunities' have had a minimal impact on the disadvantaged learners from the inherited apartheid education. Instead, this has resulted in major structural inequalities, with learners from former black schools being labelled incompetent, illiterate and ignorant. Despite years of reform effort, South Africa continued to lag in international comparisons and has failed to significantly integrate learners from racially diverse backgrounds.

Jansen's (2004) assessment of effective leadership for change has identified a lack of the 'essentials', notably educators need to be suitably qualified and motivated, allocation of appropriate teaching and learning materials and sufficient time allocated to tasks. International literature over the last quarter of the century has identified that effective management and dedication is a critical issue in managing change and purposely integrating racially diverse learners. Therefore, educators needed to become more involved in providing an interactive learning context in which commonality and diversity would be embraced. This process aimed to develop independent and

responsible learners and to make educators realize that they are accountable for this reconciliation process.

Numerous post-1994 policies and legislative enactments that directed desegregation in South African schools took on the responsibility to racially diversify their learner population in varied ways (Meier, 2005). By contrast, township (Black) schools remain largely excluded from the process of integration, while previously “Coloured” and “Indian” schools now have a substantial number of Black learners, however White learners are mostly absent from them. Integration can be understood as the fundamental change in the attitudes of learners and educators as well as the institutional governance of the school, meaning the policies and ethos of the school (Naidoo, Pillay & Conley, 2018).

A major problem with racial integration in South African schools as noted by Sayed and Soudien (2003, p. 11) is the range of approaches to racial integration being used. These approaches create inequalities by requiring Black learners to adopt the language, ethos, and values of the school, thereby undermining Black learners' racial backgrounds and heritage. Consequently, racial segregation persists, therefore, strong education and leadership is needed to facilitate racial integration in public secondary schools. The major goal of these approaches is to “divert attention away from racism” (Bank, 1984, p. 44).

The need for strong leadership and management to facilitate racial integration

Currently, South African school leaders are concerned with the continual search for quality education (educators' duty to learners) and public accountability (duty to community) (DoE, 2001). Issues in South African schools can be attributed to the apartheid policies during the previous dispensation (DoE, 2001). According to the DoE (2001), post-apartheid education was driven by two imperatives: firstly, the government had to rescind all apartheid legislation in the need to redress past racially discriminatory laws and practices and provide a system of education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality, and social justice. Secondly, a system of lifelong learning needed to be established. Nkomo, Twala-Mkwanazi and Carrim (1995) stipulates that racism persists in schools despite school desegregation. Racism remains a “reality in the modern world even in democratic societies where discrimination is illegal, human rights are entrenched, and racism routinely censured and denied” (Painter & Baldwin, 2004, p. 12).

Theoretical frameworks

The theories of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Lewin's Change Management Theory were selected as the frameworks for this study because of the applicability of CRT in the discourse of racial integration, and in relation to this study, is the social justice framework that it attempts to maintain. Lewin's Change Management Theory expresses aspects of South African schools that are undergoing major social and organisational changes due to poor school management and governance structures in some schools, ineffective policy formulation and implementation, lack of commitment from staff, unsuitable interrelationships between racially diverse learners, a lack of social justice that forms an integral part of democratic educational change and underperforming educators (Naidoo, 2014).

Research design and methodology

A quantitative research design was used with the goal to identify the educators' and SMTs perceptions of how management effectively manages and facilitates racial integration in public secondary schools. The researcher collected quantitative data using a self-developed structured questionnaire that focused on the qualitative data which allowed participants to engage in a discussion about their perceptions and experiences without denunciation. Data was analysed employing a statistical package that was used by statisticians to analyse the quantitative data. This data corroborated the findings from the qualitative feedback from interviews.

Data analysis

The data collected from respondents was presented in the form of scores and percentages that were tabulated and analysed. The advantages of selecting a survey approach gathers information from large, representative groups of school community members on specific school issues, and catalytically elicited responses to predetermined questions through the application of a structured data collection instrument (Duncan et al., 2007). In relation to the study, descriptive statistics give simplified summaries of the data collected, with the task of reducing large masses of data to meaningful values. Thus, the purpose of descriptive statistics was used to form a basis on which to produce information about the characteristics of the data that was collected, followed by further extensive statistical analysis.

Discussion of findings

Five sub-themes were identified, namely:

- policy and practice;
- school curriculum and quality of education;
- interrelationships;
- the need for capacity building of educators; and
- racial conflict.

Policy and practice

The quantitative results showed that educators from previously White, Indian and Coloured schools indicated that they had in place policies on racial integration and that these were implemented to enhance racial integration among the learners. Further findings from the quantitative study indicated that SMTs and SGBs were committed to managing racially integrated schools with the implementation of extra-curricular activities that promoted racial awareness and racial understanding among learners. Although the quantitative results showed that SMTs and SGBs had developed these policies it does not mean that schools were effectively practicing them. Educators from previously Indian and White schools perceived the various SMTs as effective in implementing policy and addressing racial issues through the school Code of Conduct.

Contrary to the quantitative results the qualitative findings showed that White and Indian educators agreed that policies on racism and racial integration did exist and were adequate. Coloured educators complained that these policies were inadequate and vague, whereas Black African educators indicated that policies of this nature did not exist in these schools. Educators, and members of the SMT indicated through focus

groups that these policies were on 'paper', which meant that they were formulated by school management, initially inculcating a sense of enthusiasm, with positive and supportive attitudes. However, SMTs agreed that these policies did nothing to change the negative attitudes or behaviour of educators. Educators still ignored the issues surrounding race, whether it was racial discrimination, stereotyping or racial prejudice.

School curriculum and quality of education

The quantitative results of the study showed that former Black and White schools both believed that the quality of education had improved as a result of racial integration. On the other hand, former Indian schools believed this was to a reasonable extent only, however SMTs used the curriculum to promote racial integration by including learners who do not speak English as their first language in class activities. School management are aware that several policies inform the curriculum and managing teaching and learning is about curriculum delivery. Educators develop lessons that include racial awareness and implement assessment practices to accommodate the needs of racially diverse learners.

There is a discrepancy in the qualitative data that shows that educators from the former White, Indian and Coloured schools believed the low academic performance of the school could be blamed on the admission of Black learners and the problems of a poor socio-economic and educational background of their family, including their home language being Nguni and Sotho rather than English. Principals and educators claimed to have an 'open door policy' but expected learners to conform to the ethos of the school as well as the curriculum, which focused on Ubuntu (human dignity). These superficial and pretentious changes, made to suit the needs of their learners, were insufficient to bridge the chasm between racially divided societies.

Interrelationships

The quantitative results showed that educators have good relationships with their learners and can communicate in an environment in which there is no racial prejudice or bias. Meanwhile, the qualitative results showed evidence of stereotyping in a few of the learners' and educators' discussions. They both indulged in ridiculing, name-calling, racially stereotyping, and derogatory labelling of many Black learners in the classroom and on the playground.

Need for capacity building of educators

Educators and SMTs from former White, Indian and Coloured schools indicated in the quantitative results that racial integration was managed amongst all learners at their schools. Educators applied teaching strategies to facilitate racial integration in their diverse classrooms. School management and governance structures work collaboratively in implementing policies that promote racial integration and in addressing racial issues. This evidence shows that, overall, educators, school management and governance structures were well capacitated in teaching racially diverse learners and in managing racial integration effectively.

The qualitative study, meanwhile, showed otherwise, with educators feeling deeply agitated and frustrated when facing racially diverse classrooms. In the focus group discussions educators from former White, Indian and Coloured schools conceded that a common problem was that they did not know how to teach racially diverse learners.

Racial conflict

The crux of the educators' subjective reality in a changed education environment is a belief that their racially diverse classrooms are active, collaborative and racially inclusive, so allowing learners to indulge in behaviours that enhance racial integration.

The qualitative research showed concern that learners knew more about the management issues pertaining to racial integration and whether it was happening in their schools. Learners experienced marginalization of some form of racial discrimination or victimization at school.

Combat racism and promote racial integration

One of the primary tasks of South Africa's democratic government was to reform the education system by creating a barrier-free and supportive environment for all learners in all education institutions (Daniels, 2010, p. 632). Most of racially diverse learners were affected by ignorance about and lack of commitment to school management and governance structures on implementing policies based on race, colour and ethnicity, and as a result had become targets for racial abuse.

The central view of this study is that if educators and schools do not honestly address and confront racial issues in their schools, they will do an injustice to the social reconciliation and transformation of the democratic education system.

Conclusion

The quantitative findings were presented with the use of a questionnaire in this study. The results illustrated that racial integration was taking place in ex-White, ex-Indian and ex-Coloured secondary schools. However, and since Black schools were mono-racial, these schools had not experienced racial integration because there were no other race groups besides Black African learners only. Learners and educators also had the perception that racial integration was practiced and constructed in policy. It was found that interactions between learners from different racial backgrounds seldom rested on the issues of race.

The presence of racially diverse learners prompted educators to adopt different strategies, therefore encouraging racial integration in diverse classroom. Hence, the results indicate that in the previously White, Indian and Coloured schools, the SMT was effectively managing racial integration, whereas in Black schools, the SMT could not implement any racial integration initiatives because there was no need for racial integration because there was only one race group. Effective policy on racism and racial integration needs to be enhanced and implemented. The current thinking, behaviour and attitudes of educators need to be balanced with a change in capacity building and understanding of learners from racially diverse backgrounds. Racial issues need to be addressed to achieve racial integration and the elimination of racism. SMTs need to apply correct procedures when handling issues of race, racism, and jurisprudence. Therefore, enriched professional practice is deemed prominent for the promotion of racial integration.

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Dr. Shantha Naidoo, North-West University, South Africa

Part 3

School Education: Policies, Innovations, Practices & Entrepreneurship

Gillian L. S. Hilton

Teaching a Female Profession: Is That a Problem?

Abstract

This paper explores the move towards an all-female teaching force, particularly in the developed world, where men are turning their backs on the profession. It attempts to gather the evidence as to what is affecting men's choice to reject teaching as a career. It explores the possible causes of this change, which has been increasing over the last few years and examines its causes and the effects on schools and on their pupils. In particular, it looks at the effects on boys and young men of a school world, with a lack of male role models and explores what can be done by governments, schools and the teaching profession to halt this worrying trend. Pupils need both male and female teachers as girls speed ahead in education, leaving boys behind in schools dominated by women, with few male teachers, to gain boys' interest and so become involved in their own education. Suggestions are made as to what can be done to overcome this problem, which is now moving into developing countries too. Governments need to act and society value more, the contribution teachers make towards the success and growth of a country, whilst being in many cases ignored or disregarded by politicians, some parents and in some cases their pupils.

Keywords: feminisation of education, boys, male teachers, role models, teaching profession

Introduction

Men it appears, do not in many cases, consider teaching a sensible career path. Schools at all levels in most developed countries, are dominated by women and possibly as a result, the whole profession is overworked, under paid and 'enjoys' low status. The success of males is often measured by other men, by the remuneration they receive and unless they rise to, for example, the height of administration of a large Academy Chain, in a job remote from the classroom, they are very unlikely to obtain the financial rewards that other males look up to. Of course, the often criticised long holidays and short hours commented on by parents and media, may provide some

compensation, as the myth still remains in many societies that teachers only work from nine till three o'clock, when teachers call it a 24/7 job, that takes over one's life. What then are the effects of the so-called feminisation of teaching on students and on those who might consider teaching as a career? In some parts of the world, men are still proud to become teachers as they did formally in the UK. Indeed here, there was a ban on married women teaching in UK which was not removed until World War II, when men were conscripted to fight. Gradually women have taken over the teaching role and now dominate. What has caused the change in men's interest in training to become a teacher and staying in schools in front of a class until retirement? This paper explores some of the reasons for this feminine domination of the teaching profession in developed countries and the effects of the lack of males working in classrooms.

Feminisation of the profession

UK, Australia and Canada, are often pointed out as having a problem with the feminisation of the teaching profession. However, some developing countries have far fewer women in the teaching workforce than men and fewer opportunities for females to enter the profession. Much of the research on the feminisation of the profession has been targeted on countries in the northern hemisphere. The concerns over this domination by females and the possible effect on school cultures and particularly, worries about recruiting policies, education policy at government level, how in particular boys in school are affected by mostly female staffing and the effect of the over representation of females on the status of and the rewards given to the teaching profession, have raised questions about the organisation of the profession (Kelleher, 2011).

Teaching is a female-dominated occupation across the OECD. While men have, historically, been overrepresented in senior positions, the school workforce in England is no different. The latest data shows that the school workforce is becoming even more female-dominated in England. The proportion of male secondary school teachers is at a record low (35 per cent) and has stagnated in primary schools since 2016 (14 per cent). (Fullard, 2022, Blog)

Where are the men?

All this concern is not new, in that for several decades developed countries have been in many cases, attempting to equalise the gender balance in the teaching profession. Buie (2005) reported that men in primary schools were a diminishing breed as in 2003, only ten per cent of entrants then to primary teaching programmes were male and that action was required to alter this trend. This author also claims that at the time it appeared that 'soft skills' were seen as more appropriate to early years and primary teaching and they were more likely to be natural in women. However, this author also claims that traditional stereotyping and moreover, the status of the profession are what influences men against choosing to become teachers, particularly in primary schools, but also at secondary level too. She laments the lowering of the status of the profession in comparison to other more graduate male dominated ones, which generally offer much higher salaries. Also, it appears from several sources that men can feel isolated in primary schools; often being the 'only man' is not an easy task.

A report on male teachers in Scottish schools (Denholm, 2013) demonstrated that men saw teaching, unless they gained quick promotion and rose to be a head teacher, as

one where pay levels and status were too low. This, coupled with the high workload, affected their choice of career, giving them a negative perception of the profession. In addition, in some primary schools some parents had concerns over male teachers working where children needed help with toileting and changing for PE. None seem to address these issues with women's involvement. Gender stereotyping was and is still strong in many communities and there is concerns felt by men over possible safeguarding issues, where accusations of incorrect behaviour can be devastating to anyone in the profession. This paper's author notes that a male tutor who is a maths graduate and coaches local secondary and university students, when volunteering at a local primary school (the only male apart from a caretaker on the staff), was taken to task over his behaviour. This error was it appears, pulling his fleece over his head in front of the class; this move also pulled up his shirt displaying his stomach. The headteacher quickly criticised his actions, saying he had not taken enough care and thought and should not display his body to the class like that. He apologised, but wondered if his misdemeanour had really been so bad, as to result in a 'ticking off' from the headteacher.

The number of male teachers in secondary schools is also falling in England, down to its lowest ever level with thirty five percent of teachers in secondary schools being male (Savage, 2022). Research by ISER from the University of Essex, claims that the nine percent drop in the real value of pay in a decade, played a large part in present teacher under-recruitment (Fullard, 2022). The research found that three in ten classroom teachers would be better off in other graduate jobs. Even more alarming is that the teachers leaving the profession are the more experienced teachers, who schools cannot afford to lose.

One other issue raised by various voices is the negative image given to teaching by the media, constantly reporting violence and bad behaviour in schools, for example school stabbings, shootings and also child exploitation or sexual interference by teachers. In addition, there is concern over boys in private schools in the UK sexually harassing teenage girls and later news, that this was also occurring in state schools. This resulting, in many girls making complaints to authorities. More male teachers setting examples of positive treatment of the female sex, is an advantage and could influence the behaviour of boys and young men. A further problem can be seen in many countries with large varied ethnic groups, where a strong case can be made for encouraging men from those minorities, to teach children in diverse communities. It is important for children from ethnic groups to see teachers who come from similar backgrounds who are now working and contributing their expertise and knowledge back to the communities they represent. It appears to be particularly noted that black teachers in the USA, are successful in encouraging black boys to perform well in schools (Reeves, 2022).

Williams (2019) raises a further issue, complaining about the lack of female voices in the education media which she claims is dominated by men, who are commenting on women in the workforce rather than both sexes. The dominance of males in the media discussing education, as opposed to women, who make up the majority of the workforce has to be questioned.

In addition, Williams (2020) writing about the effects of Covid in her school, discusses the reactions of male and female teachers to the challenges faced in performing day to day activities and the difficulties teachers faced. She comments on an Education Policy Institute Report which pointed to the over ten percent drop in men

remaining in the classroom from 2010 onwards. However, she brings to our attention, the numbers of women that have left teaching and queries the apparent inherent belief held by politicians and parents alike, that there will always be an endless supply of eager young women, anxious to take on the massive burden and difficult job of being a teacher, as well as running a home and raising children. Particularly, she notes that men are the ones who get promotion to higher roles, certainly because they are more likely to apply than women, but also because the women are so weighed down with, in addition to the teaching workload, supporting family life, so they have no time to take on more responsibilities.

Brown (1960) in Heubeck (2021) raises the questions as to why any man would volunteer to train as a teacher in elementary school in the USA, as the challenge to social stereotyping would make any such person an almost social pariah. Heubeck (2021) questions if these thoughts are now outdated, but also points to the three to one ratio of women to men employed in elementary schools in the US. The reasons she says are given by men, to being attracted by or for moving into teaching were varied. Boredom in first jobs, as a result of days spent in front of a computer and special programmes to attract more black men into teaching, with financial support, were commented on. In addition, some men found that as a male in the classroom they seemed to have a positive influence on boys, in that they demonstrated that learning and working in education was rewarding and fulfilling. All the men who responded to Heubeck's questions said they had all been asked when they expected to move into an administrative role. Some wished to, but several said they would prefer to stay in the classroom, as it was so rewarding. Possibly this positive point is rarely explored by national media, apart from odd advertisements on UK TV, attempting to recruit to teaching programmes, showing the difference a teacher can make to a child's life. Several men in Heubeck's research appeared to prefer to foster and support the educational experience of pupils and hope that by their example, some of the boys will consider teaching as a profession.

Although this lack of male teachers is now a serious problem in developed countries, developing countries are starting to record the same problem. Wanzala (2018) discusses The Kenya National Examinations Council (2018) report that men were starting to turn their backs on teaching as a possible profession. The number of female candidates taking the examinations to qualify as teachers for the primary sector, was fast out-pacing males. In the five years up to the publication of the report, more women than men had taken qualifications to teach. In addition, standards appeared to be lowering, with a high number of candidates having to re-sit the exams and far fewer distinctions being awarded. This is causing concern over the quality of candidates applying to be teachers, which appears to be lower than previously and the Ministry of Education has had to reduce the entry grades required from those wishing to train, a worrying step when quality is at stake.

Why we need men to teach boys?

Boys are struggling in school attaining lower grades, showing less commitment to learning, fewer getting degrees etc. Is this partly due to the feminisation of the profession and why is this happening? In the USA (Reeves, 2022) points to the sex of teachers there, three out of four are women and this percentage is rising. He and many other researchers, believe that this ratio can have a negative effect on males, who perceive learning and education are for women. Pay, conditions of working, long hours

and traditional perceptions that women work with children, appear to affect the choices of the genders. In particular it can influence women who want to raise children, as school holidays are difficult to cope with, when working outside the sector. Women make up eighty percent of all staff in schools in the UK, which sends clear messages to boys about who is interested in learning, males or females (Ponsford, 2018). We need more men to act as role models for boys, to demonstrate that learning is important, manly and of use in the future; not merely for the 'soft sex'. An OECD (2015) report in the US demonstrated that more boys are likely to be suspended from schools, drop out and fail to complete education than girls. Similar figures are to be found in the UK and South Korea. The ratio of females to males is particularly bad in early stages of education, nursery, primary and middle schools. However, there is in secondary schools, and Academy chains, despite the higher numbers of female classroom teachers a higher proportion of men in leadership roles than women and the same phenomenon is to be found in universities (Hilton, 2019). In addition, research shows that eighty three percent of parents would like to see more men in primary schools teaching roles, currently only 15.7% are male (Phillips, 2021).

The Children's Workforce Development Council (Clark, 2009) conducted a survey of parents in early school settings and the overwhelming result was that they, (particularly those in single parent families with fathers missing), wanted more male teaching staff in all settings, to act as good examples for their children. There is an urgent need to alter perceptions, as roles in society are changing fast. Work roles are now seen as being open to both sexes, gender neutral and we need to see more men in caring, nurturing occupations. The time for men to use strength in factory related employment is disappearing, more jobs are available in social work, education and health areas and men need to be in those sectors, or possibly may finish up as employed (Reeves, 2022; Teaching Expertise, no date).

Recommendations to improve male recruitment and retention in teaching

- Involve more fathers in school life – social media chat places not just for mothers (author's daughter's recommendation she was furious that men were not welcomed into the social media chat for her children's classes).
- Changing patterns of work can allow men to work with after school clubs or sports fixtures and school trips, involve them.
- Offer advice to fathers or secondary male students to visit primary schools if they are interested in a possible career in teaching.
- Involve schools with teacher training programmes to help encourage male recruitment.
- Be inclusive in any staff planned social events and staff room chatter to prevent men feeling excluded.
- Encourage visits from both males and females from secondary education to explore the idea of training for teaching this should be encouraged by primary heads. Work experience for boys really counts.
- Raise the pay for the profession to put it onto par with other professionals or trained and experienced teachers will leave.
- Consider reducing or removing the fees for undertaking a year training for teaching post a first degree.

Conclusion

So, what is the answer to the question ‘is feminisation of the teaching profession a problem?’. Undoubtedly it is yes. Boys in schools need the influence of men and particularly in subjects such as English and literacy, as it appears boys perform better in those areas with male teachers (Reeves, 2022). How do we overcome the social stigma felt by men in working with the youngest children?

Single parents families so common in many developed countries have boys without a father figure, male teachers can to a small extent give them examples of maleness and acceptable male behaviour, possibly lacking in their lives. For adolescent boys affected by hormones and with a tendency to be highly impulsive, without considering the consequences, can benefit from a teachers who have has gone through that stage of life (Reeves, 2022). However, to attract more men into the profession it has to be made financially more attractive, with incentives to stay in the classroom rather than going into administrative roles, in order to progress. Possibly, the structure and reward system in schools needs to change to keep men in the classroom. More attempts should be made by media and governments to explain the importance of male teachers to young boys and young men. Their influence can change lives. Action is needed or many boys will keep losing out.

At present we are confronted with a scenario of vanishing male teachers and education seemingly being of interest to only the female of our species. This is not helping boys’, girls’, or countries’ progression; we need more men in classrooms, demonstrating that learning is for both sexes and important for the future. On a sobering note Fuller (2022) reported that a quarter of schools in England do not have a single male teacher. Something needs to be done and at present little action appears to be happening! We are moving to a teaching profession devoid of half of humanity and the future is not looking good for schools, boys, or many countries’ progression and growth.

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Dr. Gillian L. S. Hilton, University of West London, United Kingdom

Godsend T. Chimbi & Loyiso C. Jita

Nurturing Learners' Research Skills Through Project-Based Learning: A Capability Approach Traversing Three Countries

Abstract

Summative assessment is often criticised as an unfair representation of learner effort and aptitude. In summative high-stakes examinations, economically privileged learners consistently outperform marginalised counterparts, perpetuating inequitable social class reproduction. But UN Sustainable Development Goal No.4 calls for equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all learners, irrespective of socio-economic status and aptitude. Consequently, many education systems are adopting project-based learning to reduce dependency on summative exit examinations and nurture learners' lifelong research and problem-solving skills. Informed by the capability theory, the current literature-based study casts a bird's eye on how teachers are capacitating learners with research skills in South Africa, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe – three former British colonies with a shared heritage of dependency on summative high stakes examinations. Teachers in the three countries are worried by unclear implementation modalities, inadequate capacitation and heavy workloads that undermine project-based learning and the formative assessment it entails. While commendable progress in utilising the project-based approach has been recorded in South Africa and Lesotho, teachers in Zimbabwe are struggling to implement the change in an authentic and ethical manner due to poor remuneration and the government's power-coercive dissemination strategies. If the UN goal to achieve equitable quality education is to be attained, dual communication, consultation and teacher capacitation are imperative.

Keywords: curriculum reform, project-based learning, research skills, UN Sustainable Development Goal, quality education, 21st century skills

Introduction

Globally, project-based learning (PjBL) and problem-based learning (PBL) are often misconstrued to mean the same and are frequently used interchangeably (Du Toit, 2021). While there are common threads meandering through the two closely related concepts (like prolonged engagement with an identified problem, self-regulated learning, collective collaboration, and the search for a solution to a given problem) the two are not the same. What ultimately distinguishes PjBL and PBL is the final product at the end of each process. "The production of a learning artifact is what consequentially distinguishes project-based learning from problem-based learning", notes Grant (2011, p. 38). In PjBL, a tangible artifact is produced in response to the question driving the project. The artifact can be a prototype scientific product or a model, a creative piece of art, or a research write-up that provides a solution to a clearly defined problem. But in PBL the product is a solution to a theoretical problem (like a

mathematical, scientific, or historical question) which does not entail the production of an artifact as a final product of the research process.

PjBL has a longer tradition in the developed global North than the developing global South (Walde, 2016). Dating back to the 1990s, the last three decades have witnessed phenomenal growth in the acceptance and use of PjBL in North America, Europe and Nordic countries (Larmer et al., 2015). This is mainly because this learning approach reduces dependency on summative high stakes examinations, develops learners' critical thinking abilities, and helps students learn and practice problem-solving skills needed for college, career, and life success. Federal and state governments, school boards and parents in the developed world are encouraging schools to adopt PjBL as a complementary assessment approach to summative examinations.

But in the developing global South, PjBL is a relatively recent reform initiative which can be traced to the turn of the 21st century. It is still struggling to gain traction in the school curriculum and to be accepted by school administrators, parents, teachers and learners as a progressive, beneficial and fair teaching-learning-assessment approach (Walde, 2016). The current struggle to institutionalise PjBL can be partly attributed to the legacy of summative high stakes examination inherited from colonial education systems. But shambolic post-colonial curriculum reforms are also to blame. Where PjBL has been attempted in developing countries like Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa, the outcomes have not been as expected, breeding scepticism (and at times outright revulsion) among stakeholders for this learner-centric curriculum innovation (Firomumwe, 2022).

Consequently, the reputation of PjBL has suffered terribly because of poor implementation modalities. Larmer et al. (2015, p. 10) point out that: "Poorly designed and poorly executed projects can result in wasted time, misdirected student energy, and failure to achieve learning goals." This appears to be the case in most African countries where curriculum reform authorities have experimented with this exciting (but often misunderstood) curriculum reform innovation.

Purpose of the study

Several studies on the implementation of PjBL have been conducted in developing countries. Quyen and Khairani (2017) for instance, reviewed 21 studies conducted in Asian countries on the implementation of PjBL. 80% of these studies reported that teachers had inadequate knowledge of PjBL and the formative assessment it demands, making the reform unpopular with teachers and students. Research done in Africa tends to focus on the trials and tribulations of this initiative in a particular country. Walde (2016) focused on PjBL in Ethiopia, Firomumwe (2022) and Gama (2022) researched on Zimbabwe, while Forcher-Mayr and Mahlkecht (2020) and du Toit (2021) researched on South Africa, and Lekhanya and Raselimo (2022) cast their radar on Lesotho. Despite the promise held in PjBL to transform classroom and assessment practice, there is paucity of comparative dual and tripartite country studies on this reform initiative in contemporary Africa. This is the research gap the current tripartite country study intends to narrow by conducting a scoping literature review of monolithic country studies conducted over the last decade (2012–2022) in South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. These single-country studies are juxtaposed to search for patterns and divergencies in a novel tripartite country narrative on the implementation of PjBL in classrooms in the three former British colonies.

As such, the research question driving this study is: What are the teachers' common and divergent experiences in implementing project-based learning in traditional classroom settings?

Project-based learning in a globalised 21st century

Literature abounds on the benefits of PjBL in a globalised but volatile 21st century (Du Toit, 2021; Habok & Nagy, 2016; Lekhanya & Raselimo, 2022). The new millennium is characterised by rapid technological change and rabid nationalisms that ignite deep fissures. Conversely, the global village demands co-operation, collaboration, critical thinking, diverse problem-solving skills, and decisive individual decision making. These paradoxical demands of the 21st century position PjBL as an appropriate pedagogy for preparing learners for unpredictable life inside and outside the classroom.

Project-based pedagogy is “a compelling alternative to traditional instructional approaches considered to be dry, fact-based, disconnected from students' lives, and teacher-centered”, notes Duke et al. (2021, p. 161). Teachers become facilitators of learning and students active creators of knowledge. By scaffolding learners' individual and collaborative research skills, and metacognitive processes, teachers facilitate PjBL (Habok & Nagy, 2016). Students seek solutions to real-life problems experienced in their schools, communities, and the global village.

Through collaborative projects, students learn to respect divergent opinions and contributions from peers (Duke et al., 2021). Collaboration is one essential attribute in a globalised 21st century which is dependent on effective communication, planning, reflective thinking and lifelong learning. Research shows that PjBL increases learner motivation by catering for diverse interests and learning capabilities (Du Toit, 2021), while allowing for the transfer of knowledge across different learning areas.

However, PjBL often faces challenges which militate against its effective implementation in traditional classroom settings. Generally, both students and teachers struggle with PjBL as they are used to didactic instruction which reduces learners to passive recipients of processed knowledge.

Theoretical framework

The current literature-based study on teacher experiences with PjBL is illuminated by the capability theory (Sen, 1997). The theory holds that humans have potential to improve their personal and community lives; if the latent energy and talent embedded in them is identified, unpacked, and utilised positively. People have capabilities and freedoms to make choices that can promote individual development and societal well-being, provided a conducive environment is created by those in leadership positions.

In the current study, the capability approach is used to mirror what teachers are doing (or not doing) to tap into learners' potential to conduct research and nurture creativity as they engage in PjBL – an official curriculum reform prerequisite in South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. Evidence emerging from published research is used to glean insights into how teachers are nurturing (or failing to nurture) learner capacity to identify researchable challenges in their schools and communities; engage with them to collect relevant data and produce artifacts or ideas that can resolve or reduce the challenges.

Methodology

To generate data for this qualitative desktop study, literature available on the internet and Google Scholar on the implementation of project-based learning in South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe was searched, selected, and analysed. This included government policy statements, reports from the Ministries of Education in the three countries, and peer reviewed articles published in internationally accredited journals. A review of these documents availed nonreactive data that can be read, re-read, and reviewed several times without being changed by the researchers' subjectivities and inherent biases (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Thus, the current study can be replicated in similar contexts using similar documents, thereby (re)affirming the trustworthiness of literature-based studies.

A process framework (Imaduddin et al., 2021) was used to select articles for inclusion in this tripartite country study. The framework evolves in a four-step linear sequence:

1. **Identification:** Using the keywords project-based learning, schools, South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and 2012–2022 as the time limitation, scientific articles were identified on Google Scholar.
2. **Screening:** By reading (and re-reading) the abstracts and introductions, the identified articles were scanned to assess whether they focused on teachers' experiences while implementing project-based learning at classroom level.
3. **Eligibility:** Only articles that analyse teachers' classroom experiences while implementing PjBL were selected for intensive review and analysis in line with the research question driving the current study.
4. **Inclusion:** Scientific articles meeting the eligibility criteria were reviewed to form the corpus of the data presentation, analysis, and discussion in the current study.

Findings and discussion

This section presents findings on teacher implementation of PjBL in South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. It later discusses how a capability approach to PjBL can empower learners with research and problem-solving skills needed in the 21st century.

Project-based learning across three territories: An overview

Official curriculum documents in South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe are clear on the rationale for PjBL. For instance, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in South Africa outlines the need for learners to do projects that "have a strong focus on field observation and research in the local environment" (DBE, 2011, p. 14). Curriculum policy expects teachers to guide, scaffold, and assess learners continuously as they work on their research projects. But South African teachers' responses to PjBL are a mixed bag.

Using the human capability theory, Forcher-Mayr and Mahlkecht (2020) spearheaded a student entrepreneurship project in 20 rural South African primary and secondary schools. Student projects targeted "South African real-life challenges of food insecurity, youth unemployment and rural poverty from a classroom perspective, by linking agriculture, food and entrepreneurship as main learning areas" (Forcher-Mayr & Mahlkecht, 2020, p. 119). With teacher support, learners collectively set up Entrepreneurship Learning Gardens (ELG) which promote learning, food security and

income generation; ultimately reducing poverty in rural Eastern Cape where the project was piloted.

However, not all is rosy. More than a decade ago, Lumandi (2011, p. 27) concluded that PjBL was “a bitter pill to swallow” because South African teachers were incapacitated to assist learners. Recently, Osman and Kriek (2021) found that poorly resourced schools in South Africa lacked ICT infrastructure (like the internet) to support research projects, and time allocated to projects was insufficient. Teachers also complained of increased workload as they supervise projects in addition to conventional teaching duties. One teacher suggested that “The Department of Basic Education needs to change the curriculum to suit the PBL approach” (Osman & Kriek, 2021, p. 157). This is something policy reformers in South Africa need to consider.

In Lesotho PjBL is a reform initiative embedded in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) disseminated into schools in 2009. The project-based approach involves the development of portfolios by learners with teacher support as part of continuous assessment meant to reduce dependency on summative high stakes examinations. A study conducted by Chere-Masopha and Mothetsi-Mothiba (2022, p. 2) showed that “teachers were not using this strategy effectively or as recommended by the policy because they had limited knowledge and skill”. Due to limited capability, teachers in Lesotho pay cursory attention to PjBL while concentrating on traditional teacher-centric pedagogies to enhance learner performance in summative high stakes examinations.

In Zimbabwe, the project-based approach is marred in controversy, confusion, and policy inconsistency vacillating between enactment and withdrawal. In September 2017 projects were disseminated into schools, despite contestations from stakeholders: only to be withdrawn in March 2018, much to the relief and jubilation of teachers, parents, and learners (Gwaze, 2018). But in May 2021, projects bounced back as Continuous Assessment Learning Areas (CALA). Without adequate stakeholder consultation and consensus, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education forcibly rolled CALA into schools (Kwami, 2022).

As an act of resistance and survival technique to supplement meagre salaries, most teachers in Zimbabwe are turning PjBL into an income generating venture. Unethically, teachers produce mediocre artifacts and write-ups which they sell to students for as much as US\$20 each (PTUZ, 2021). They record dubious formative assessment marks and submit to the Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council (ZIMSEC). The examination board has no mechanism to crosscheck the authenticity of the continuous assessment marks submitted and, therefore, cannot refute them. Unsurprisingly, PjBL remains unpopular with school administrators, teachers, learners, and parents in Zimbabwe.

Capacitating learners with 21st century skills

Traditional standardised assessment neither caters for individual learner needs nor essential 21st century skills of research, creativity and collaboration (Habok & Nagy, 2016). Low-achieving learners, and those with special educational needs, are often excluded in traditional classrooms and standardised tests. These are some of the shortcomings PjBL addresses. Research shows that PjBL benefits low-achieving students and those from racially diverse groups (Bell, 2010; Habok & Nagy, 2016; Oakley et al., 2004). For instance, to prevent at-risk minority students from getting isolated and dropping out, three to four students with diverse abilities can be grouped to

work on a research project. As a collaborate, members set rules which the group must adhere to, promoting a sense of belonging, teamwork, and project ownership.

In contrast to traditional classroom practice, careful planning by both teachers and learners is needed if learner capability to conduct meaningful research and produce a final artifact is to be nurtured. Increased planning burden and workload, responsibility to supervise learners and generate formative mark records are the major complaints from teachers in South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. The magnitude of grievances varies from country to country – depending on teacher remuneration, motivation, and morale.

Conclusion

PjBL must not be misconstrued as the magic bullet that nurtures learners' life-long research and creativity skills by reducing dependency on summative high stakes examinations. Blending learning with the capability approach can empower learners with skills and opportunity to choose what to research and select an appropriate methodology that can produce a final artifact that resolves or reduces the identified problem. Teachers also need capabilities to support learners as they conduct research so that they can assess them objectively and continuously; instead of fabricating formative assessment marks when they are due for final submission – as is largely the case in Zimbabwe. A capability perspective can foster teacher and learner competencies that promote the acceptance of PjBL in the three countries that are struggling to institutionalise a pedagogical approach that holds promise to nurture 21st century skills.

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Dr. Godsend T. Chimbi, University of the Free State, South Africa

Prof. Dr. Loyiso C. Jita, University of the Free State, South Africa

René Beyers & André du Plessis

The Application of Professional Discretion by South African Public School Principals

Abstract

This paper reports on a section of the findings of a study of which the purpose, among others, was to investigate and analyse the application of professional discretion by public school principals. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach from within a pragmatist research paradigm. Data was collected by means of quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, namely survey questionnaires followed by semi-structured interviews within the Gauteng province. The findings suggest that there are multiple scenarios in which principals are required to apply professional discretion. Factors that influence principals' professional discretion were also identified.

Keywords: professional discretion, school context, decision-making, duty of care, learners' best interests, contextual intelligence

Introduction

Professional discretion refers to the ability and obligation of a principal to determine what actions are appropriate, and the capacity to take certain actions (Boote, 2006). Pinkele (1985, p. x) explains the application of professional discretion as follows:

When an individual or a set of individuals has the capability of making decisions based on personal choices or preferences without being behaviourally constrained in their actions by rules or by others in positions of greater authority, the resulting behaviour is discretionary in nature.

According to Heilmann (2006) principals are expected to and called upon to use their discretion many times each day. It is imperative for principals to be knowledgeable about legislation applicable to schools as it could empower them to apply adequate professional discretion in a less restrictive manner.

When are principals required to apply professional discretion?

The participants indicated various scenarios in which they apply professional discretion. These are discussed in the following sub-sections. For the purpose of the discussion, participants' responses are paraphrased and not indicated as direct quotations.

Professional discretion is applied on a daily basis

It is important to recognise that principals are constantly confronted with situations in which they are expected to apply their discretion. This study revealed that the participants exercise professional discretion every day and that they often apply their discretionary power unknowingly. While Principal 13 acknowledged that it is difficult to determine when and how she exercised professional discretion, she often felt obligated to do so.

Principals apply professional discretion when policies are vague

Heilmann (2006) asserts that discretion exists when rules and regulations do not provide a clear indication of how to proceed in certain situations. One of the participants (Principal 12) who has between 11 and 15 years of experience as a principal, explained that principals frequently face difficulties and situations that are not addressed by policies and regulations. This study found that laws and policies serve as the foundation for all decision-making by the participants; nonetheless, a principal's judgement should be subject to the situation and context. It is worth noting that it is impossible to incorporate all potential scenarios and situations into policies. Therefore, it is evident that discretion should be used when policy descriptions are ambiguous.

Principals apply professional discretion when immediate action is required

Principals are advised to be cautious in emergency situations as they will be held accountable when instant action has the wrong outcome. Their responses to emergencies will be measured against regulatory and policy prescriptions. This is supported by Principal 7 who explained that typically, principals would be inclined to take immediate action in emergency situations.

The data also suggested that in emergency situations, some principals are not hesitant to contravene or deviate from regulations or policies (*ultra vires*), to act in the best interests of learners. According to Principal 4, it is occasionally necessary to make either minor or significant decisions right away. For example, Principal 13 had to act immediately when one of the learners had an epileptic fit. She decided to act *in loco parentis* and accompanied the learner in an ambulance to the hospital because the learner's parents were far away from the school when the epileptic fit occurred.

Principals apply professional discretion in the best interests of the learners

Generally, the participants indicated that they apply discretion in the best interests of learners while also taking into consideration their duty of care and *in loco parentis* obligations. In addition, the data indicated that principals should take responsibility for a learner's physical and educational well-being and must be conscious of being potentially liable for the consequences of decisions made for the learners in their care. Principal 7 argued that a principal cannot apply professional discretion without considering the issue of accountability. As a result, it is essential that when principals exercise professional discretion in the learners' best interests, they should not only be competent to do so, but must be able to justify their decisions.

Principals apply professional discretion for the academic well-being of the learners

According to De Waal (2011), principals should accept accountability for a learner's academic and psycho-physical well-being. It is expected of an educator to adapt to situations with regard to school curricula in order to meet a learner's academic needs. Similarly, Principal 9 explained that she expected her educators to apply professional discretion when it came to the implementation of the curriculum. Her educators are given freedom to choose the tools and instructional materials they want to utilise as long as it is in the learners' best academic interests. Boote (2006) confirms this notion by stating that educators and principals' professional discretion should be centred on being able to decide what should be taught and being able to teach it. It therefore seems as if the participants are appropriately applying professional discretion with regard to curriculum decisions aimed at the academic well-being of the learners.

Principals apply professional discretion when promoting learners to the next grade

Several participants apply professional discretion when they have to decide whether to promote, or retain a learner in a grade. It is worth noting that this subsection can be linked to the principals' application of professional discretion in terms of the academic well-being of learners. The data suggested that when considering whether a learner must be promoted to the next grade or retained in a grade, principals often rely on experiential knowledge when applying professional discretion. Principal 4 argued that he has the discretionary power to retain or promote learners in a grade, if it is in their best interests. However, he acknowledged that he must first determine if learners meet all the prescribed requirements and standards before exercising his discretion, to promote or retain learners. Nothing prevents a principal to, in the best interests of a learner, recommend to the education authorities and parents that a learner who for example do meet the criteria to be promoted, be retained in a specific grade and vice versa. In addition, nothing prevents a principal consulting with the educators of such a learner. It is also important that principals consider the context of individual learners, in order to make recommendations that are in the best interest of a learner. The most important aspect that principals should remember when promoting or retaining learners, is that they must be able to justify their decisions.

Principals apply professional discretion when admitting learners to their schools

Various factors come into play when principals decide whether to admit learners to their schools. For example, Principal 14 indicated that she had turned down the district official's request to increase learner enrolment at her school. She asserted that having a class of more than 35 learners may present challenges with discipline, health, and safety. This implied that principals do have some discretionary power to deviate from the provincial education department's admission policy. This notion is recognised by the courts. For instance, in *Member of the Executive Council, Eastern Cape Province and Others v Queenstown Girls High School* the court stated the following:

Nor, for that matter, is it the responsibility or function of other officials in the department to second guess the principal's decision. If, [for example] in the

administration of the school's admission policy, the Head of the Department appoints the principal of the school to act under his authority in giving practical effect to the school's admission policy, other officials in the department have no authority to instruct the principal to change his decision or to instruct him to admit a particular learner to the school. (Court Case 2007) (Paragraph 72)

One could argue that a principal would be violating learners' right to education if they were to refuse them admission to a school. Therefore, while exercising their professional discretion in terms of admissions, principals must not only be knowledgeable about the legal and policy requirements, but also be able to balance their decisions between what is best for the school as a whole and what is best for individual learners.

Principals applied professional discretion during the COVID-19 pandemic

It is apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic presented various challenges to schools. The majority of the participants indicated that they often applied professional discretion in matters pertaining to COVID-19. Principals were initially prohibited from opening their schools during the initial lockdown period that commenced on 26 March 2020. This rationally limited the principals' professional discretion. After the restriction levels were lowered, the Department of Basic Education wanted schools to resume. As a result, principals were permitted to use some professional discretion in deciding when their schools would reopen to their full capacity. While many school principals exercised their discretion and decided to gradually allow their learners to return to school, some participants were hesitant to return to full capacity since it could compromise the health and safety of both the staff and the learners.

Principal 14, for example, indicated that she applied professional discretion by allowing staff members to take additional sick leave, due to being ill with COVID-19, even when it extended beyond the allocated 36 days. Principal 12 contended that the Department of Basic Education should acknowledge that schools have unique COVID-19 contexts and that principals should be free to manage their schools in accordance with those contexts. Therefore, enabling principals to exercise discretion in their specific COVID-19 situation (allowing them to make decisions in the best interests of their learners' health and safety) seems necessary.

Factors that influence when a principal applies professional discretion

A principal's application of professional discretion is influenced by several factors. For the purpose of this paper, three factors are discussed, namely:

- Principals apply professional discretion in terms of legislation;
- Principals rely on intuition and common sense when applying professional discretion; and
- The situation or context matters.

Principals apply professional discretion in terms of legislation

All the participants acknowledged that the legal framework applicable to schools in particular and education in general, is a major factor which influences how and when they apply professional discretion. The Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act, 4 of 2013 is used as an example in this discussion.

The POPI Act gives effect to the constitutional right to privacy by safeguarding personal information when processed by a responsible party, subject to justifiable limitations that are aimed at balancing the right to privacy against other rights, particularly the right of access to information, and protecting important interests, including the free flow of information within the Republic and across international borders (RSA, 2013). The POPI Act requires school principals to establish an information committee and information officer to ensure the proper protection and use of personal information (RSA, 2013). It came to the fore that the POPI Act has added to the complex legal environment in which principals must apply their discretion. It has underscored the importance of principals being legal-wise.

Principals who have received adequate POPI Act training are more confident in their decision-making processes. This was echoed by Principal 4, who asserted that by being knowledgeable about the POPI Act's procedures, he could apply appropriate professional discretion and preserve learners' and staff members' right to privacy (Section 14 of the Constitution) (RSA, 1996). He further explained that if entrusted personal information is disclosed, he will be held liable. However, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 requires principals to notify relevant authorities if they suspect abuse of a learner (RSA, 2005). Hence, principals will be permitted to share personal information in these situations to safeguard the learners' psychological and physical well-being.

Principals rely on intuition and common sense when applying professional discretion

Principals are often expected to intuitively exercise their discretion while upholding expert standards of judgement. According to Kutz (2008), this implies that principals must be able to extract wisdom or knowledge from different and possibly unrelated contexts. In making decisions and applying discretion, several participants appeared to be comfortable with their knowledge, experience or personal intuition, as opposed to one participant who never seemed to use common sense or intuition while exercising professional discretion. This study found that principals' intuition and common sense guide them through situations where there are no obvious answers available. Most participants seemed to comprehend that they are empowered to use their decision-making autonomy and common sense to influence a situation by deciding when and how to behave, think, and when to act.

According to Dane and Pratt (2007), intuition as used to describe contextual intelligence and involves being proficient at instantly assimilating past events into the current context, irrespective of the context in which the original event occurred. Intuition seems to be an asset for principals to make appropriate decisions in the best interests of their learners. Principal 3 emphasised that principals should use "cautious amounts" of common sense to evaluate circumstances and contexts while remaining within the boundaries of the law. Moreover, Principal 9 argued that she only relies on her common sense when there is no proper policy in place to guide her decision-making. Principal 4 explained that common sense may only be applied if it is written in certain policies. Hence, he argued that school policies should be open and transparent.

A number of the participants believed that there is room for discretion or space of autonomy in professional decision-making and that common sense must be used when policies do not explicitly dictate what should be done in particular scenarios or contexts. Every situation provides its own challenges. Therefore, principals should be

confident in and trust their intuition when making decisions in order to ensure the well-being of the learners and staff members.

The situation and/or context matters

The majority of the participants indicated that the application of their professional discretion is dependent on the situation. Boote (2006) agrees that professional discretion should be appropriate to a specific context. In exercising professional discretion, participants used the terms ‘situation’ and ‘context’ interchangeably. Marishane (2020, p. 4) argues that the concept ‘context’ is one of the most used concepts in the field of education where it is used interchangeably with concepts such as ‘situation’, ‘conditions’, or even ‘environment’. The definition of context varies from physical space ‘geographical’, and time ‘temporal’ to an individual’s state of mind ‘psychological’ (Marishane, 2020, p. 4). Although Principal 12 believes that he has enough experience, contexts and situations often change. Molander et al. (2012) argue that the same case can be judged differently at different times, in different situations and by different persons, even if it is an unchanged case and the case has been handled in a thorough, conscientious, and reasonable manner. For this reason, it seems crucial for principals to adapt their discretionary decision-making to suit the situation.

Concluding remarks

In view of the aforementioned, there seem to be countless situations in which principals apply their professional discretion. Therefore, applying professional discretion or appropriate judgement in decision-making is an essential component of a school principal’s role. It was evident that principals are expected and relied upon to frequently exercise discretion during the course of a day, and that discretion is applied in a particular context. Hence, it is important to provide principals with some freedom to apply their professional discretion. Without discretionary powers, it would be impossible to be a principal. However, it is also important that principals weigh every decision they make carefully to comply with the expected standards.

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Ms. René Beyers, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Dr. André du Plessis, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Bonjeer Tamilka

Conducting Experiments in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) in Remote Learning Environments during the Global COVID-19 Pandemic: Approaches and Policy Implications

Abstract

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced school closures, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teachers were left with the challenging task of devising ways for students to conduct experiments at home. This was necessary because experiments and other hands-on activities are integral to STEM education and are linked to the development of students' critical thinking skills, academic achievement, and science-related real-world skills. Based on a literature review, this study examines the methods used at the time to conduct STEM experiments remotely and provides recommendations for educational policy and practice. Findings indicate that experiential and immersive learning were the two main strategies used to accomplish home-based STEM experiments. However, experiential learning appeared to be the most prevalent and easiest to implement, especially in disciplines such as biology and environmental science. Based on the successes and limitations of the two approaches, the study concludes that consciously incorporating experiential and immersive learning into educational policies and practises would be a significant step toward better preparing teachers and students to employ them in emergency situations when teaching and learning have to be conducted remotely.

Keywords: COVID-19, STEM, experiential learning, immersive learning, place-based learning

Introduction

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant shift from traditional face-to-face classroom instruction to online or remote learning. The transition for certain subjects and courses in schools and universities was relatively easy and did not present too many problems. However, it was particularly difficult for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, STEM-related fields were among the most resistant to remote learning, due in part to the need for more hands-on and practical lab instruction and a lack of experience with online STEM education (Hou et al., 2022).

Gya and Bjune (2021) provide a synthesis of research that may explain STEM's emphasis on hands-on learning and resistance to remote learning. They contend that engaging in practical activities is associated with improved academic performance, increased academic self-esteem, and increased independence in learning environments. It prepares students for their future careers by providing them with authentic science-related skills and competencies. Further, it promotes critical thinking in students,

enabling them to pose novel questions and hypotheses, design experiments, and analyse data, thereby leading to the discovery of novel results and the advancement of scientific fields. The closure of schools and learning centres as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic separated teachers and students from labs, implying that these numerous benefits of STEM practical lessons were supposed to be lost. However, some teachers employed certain strategies to give students hands-on experience. This paper reviews these strategies and discusses their implications for education policy and practice.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, how were STEM experiments conducted outside school-based laboratories?
- What are the policy and practice implications of the learning strategies employed during COVID-19 to conduct STEM experiments outside school-based laboratories?

Methods

The study was based on an analysis of English-language studies that looked at how STEM hands-on lessons were delivered in online and remote settings as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown. The search for literature was restricted to the Web of Science Core Collection. The query that produced the most relevant results was: (“STEM education”) AND (“COVID-19” OR “pandemic”). Although no publication years were specified, this query showed that the earliest articles were published in 2020. In addition, no restrictions were placed on research fields because preliminary analyses revealed that the topic was relatively new and being studied across diverse disciplines. The search was conducted on December 19, 2022.

Article selection procedure

The query yielded 103 articles, the abstracts of which were screened to determine their relevance to the study. Articles eliminated during preliminary screening were: 5 review articles, 3 duplicates, 3 on STEM boot camps, and 46 general articles (they either dealt with or mentioned STEM, online learning, distance learning, and COVID-19 in passing or concerned regular in-person teaching). A few of the remaining 46 articles appeared to be pertinent to the study’s objectives, while others dealt with teachers’ and students’ experiences with remote and distance learning in general; however, it was unclear from their abstracts to what extent they met the paper’s objectives. Therefore, all 46 articles were downloaded for further screening. Only 14 of the 46 articles were finally determined to be pertinent for the study’s goals after carefully analysing their methodologies and findings.

Analysis

The extracted articles were meticulously analysed to determine their STEM field affiliations. In addition, the broad pedagogical approaches that were used to conduct the STEM experiments described in the articles were identified. Methods sections of the papers provided the majority of the information necessary for this task. In the results section, examples of articles representing the various pedagogical approaches are provided.

Results

Nine of the articles were based on a sample of university students, while the remaining five involved primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary students. The papers were distributed according to STEM fields as follows: physics (3), biology and environmental science (5), engineering (2), chemistry (2), aviation (1), and interdisciplinary (a mix of STEM and social sciences) (1). Ten of the articles were also based on pedagogical practices implemented in regular classes, while the remaining four were experiments or tests of technological applications in remote settings. Where an article appeared to bestride two or more STEM disciplines, it was assigned to the one to which the majority of the article is devoted.

In terms of pedagogical approaches, two major categories were found, which are conveniently described in this paper as experiential learning (nine articles) and immersive learning or experiments in virtual environments (five articles). The experiential learning group included all of the biology-environment articles, two of the engineering articles, and two of the physics articles. The remaining five articles fell under the immersive learning category. Nearly all of the articles made it abundantly clear that their preferred pedagogical approaches were necessitated by the inability to conduct in-person STEM experiments due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Experiential learning and its implementation

Nine of the pedagogical practices identified in the reviewed studies fall within one or more of the five experiential teaching approaches proposed by Wurdinger and Bezon (2009). They suggest place-based learning, project-based learning, active learning, problem-based learning, and service learning. All of the articles under this learning approach utilised at least the generic concept “experiential” or one or more concepts that are synonyms with experiential learning or some of its various types. Only Arroyo et al. (2022) purposefully and explicitly labelled their study as service-based learning, whereas Songer and Ibarrola’s (2021) approach involved the same service-based learning but is not explicitly described as such in their article.

The most prevalent of the five aforementioned types of experiential learning was place-based education. Sobel (2004, p. 5) defines place-based education as “using the local community and environment” to teach concepts in multiple curricular areas, with an emphasis on “hands-on, real-world learning experiences” that improve students’ achievements and social skills while fostering a deeper appreciation for the environment. Gya and Bjune (2021) are an example from the reviewed articles. They assigned experiments on bryophytes’ water-holding capacity and seed germination in a plant biology course. Students were instructed to use household items in the experiment. Students collected, dried, and weighed bryophytes using kitchen scales to determine their water retention capacities. Some students used tomato and apple seeds from home for the seed germination experiment. The authors plan to repeat the experiment in their regular classes due to its success.

Service-based learning was the next common approach. According to Kaye (2004), service learning is an educational approach based on research that incorporates community service into either guided or classroom learning. The study by Arroyo et al. (2022) is an example. To teach fourth-year civil engineering students about seismic vulnerability assessment, they utilised a remote service-based learning approach. The assignment required students to conduct a seismic vulnerability assessment of their own homes. By allowing students to complete this assignment at home, they

discovered they had a vested interest in doing so, not only to fulfil course requirements but also to evaluate their living space, identify its strengths, weaknesses, and structural flaws, and communicate this information to their families and neighbours (Arroyo et al., 2022).

The benefits and limitations of experiential learning

According to the reviewed studies, experiential learning is associated with greater levels of student dedication to learning and achievement (Arroyo et al., 2022; Songer & Ibarrola, 2021). Additionally, it is associated with increased levels of autonomy in both teachers and students (Baptista et al., 2020). Moreover, experiential learning is essential for fostering positive and robust school-community engagement. It provides one of the few opportunities for families to become acquainted with their children's educational pursuits; the practical activities students perform at home also serve as impressions to the children and their families of what their future careers might entail (Arroyo et al., 2022). The biology and environment-related studies also often concluded that experiential learning activities increase students' interest in conservation and environmental protection.

Some of the studies found that students who engage in experiential learning struggle with time management. This is especially true for students who had entire semesters to complete their experiments and observations but choose to procrastinate. According to a number of studies, students become frustrated when they are required to use skills they lack, such as video recording and editing, to complete experiential learning tasks (Schulze et al., 2021). Moreover, there are issues with the management of quantitative data, which a number of studies have identified as a challenge. In Baptista et al. (2020) as in the majority of studies, lower secondary students who had to measure neighbourhood noise levels as part of a do-it-yourself physics assignment were required to enter data using Excel, which was difficult for them; the inability to receive immediate assistance from teachers exacerbated students' frustrations. Some of the studies report similar instances of teacher frustration at having to supervise experiential learning projects or use unfamiliar technologies for the first time. According to Baptista et al. (2020), teachers also felt unprepared to adapt and transition to experiential learning.

Immersive learning: STEM experiments in virtual laboratories

Immersive learning is learning in technologically mediated environments that create a sense of presence in learners (Kuhail et al., 2022). Virtual reality (VR) is one type of immersive technology that was utilised during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance students' practical STEM experiences. VR environments provide students with "synthetic sensory information that leads to perceptions of environments and their contents as if they were authentic" (Blascovich et al., 2002, p. 105). Augmented reality (AR) is another immersive technology that combines virtual content with real images to illustrate concepts and principles in the real world in order to enhance learners' interaction with the real world (Kuhail et al., 2022). For each of the five studies on immersive learning, researchers either created new applications or systems from scratch or enhanced existing ones in order to achieve the immersive learning goals. An example of an AR article is illustrated below.

Rodríguez et al. (2021) created interactive augmented reality (AR) web-based applications that ran smoothly on smart phones, tablets, and laptops with webcams so

teachers and students could study organic, inorganic, and biological chemistry at home. Users could print and focus their webcams on 2D AR markers available on the website (such as atomic orbitals, hydrogen bonding, and molecular shapes). Once completed according to the instructions, users were able to visualise the models on their screens and interactively manipulate and investigate their structures and interactions.

Benefits and limitations of immersive learning

From the five studies, it is evident that AR and VR are indispensable for conducting STEM practical lessons remotely. For instance, according to Rodriguez et al. (2021), in-class and online surveys indicate that users find their platform engaging and useful for chemistry instruction and study. Qorbani et al. (2021) demonstrate that AVR environments permit students to practise chemistry lab procedures, make mistakes, and correct them, thereby decreasing the risk of accidents and poor performance in actual labs. Nevertheless, because AR and VR are based on technological mediums, it is not always possible to deploy them on a large scale, which limits their accessibility. For example, Rodriguez et al. (2021) discovered that more than half of the teachers and students who utilised their website to study chemistry had no prior experience with AR technologies.

Discussion and policy implications

Experiential and immersive learning are not new concepts in the field of education. Researchers have connected the works of early 20th-century authors such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget to the notion of experiential education (Miettinen, 2000). In addition, learning in virtual environments was proposed for the first time in the 1990s, but its theoretical models are significantly older (Blascovich et al., 2002).

It is unclear, however, how frequently these strategies are employed in schools and whether they are the result of intentional policy design. Regardless of how they are implemented in schools, this study argues that standard STEM curricula should intentionally incorporate experiential and immersive learning due to their demonstrated effectiveness and difficulties of implementation. This would better prepare teachers and students to employ them during crisis and as low-cost alternatives to doing experiments. Also, their intentional inclusion is important because when educational practises are one-time events, they are not as beneficial to educational systems as when they are part of ongoing intentional design practises (Cobb & Jackson, 2012). Additionally, their inclusion would help teachers recognise that their practises are part of larger learning frameworks with implementation principles. This would put teachers in a better position to not only evaluate whether students performed well in STEM do-it-yourself projects, but also to reflect on how their practises align with some stated instructional principles.

Regularly integrating experiential and immersive learning into teachers' activities may also afford both teachers and students opportunities to develop a sense of autonomy in the learning process. For teachers, autonomy is implicit in delegating duties—instructing students to conduct certain experiments outside of school—and for students, autonomy is implicit in undertaking such activities at their own pace and independently directing and monitoring progress. Increased autonomy is enormously important. For teachers, for example, this would increase job satisfaction and “perceptions of workload manageability and intention to stay in the profession” (Worth & Van den Brande, 2020, p. 3).

The following actions may be required in order to set policy objectives for experiential and immersive learning. Firstly, they need to be incorporated into teacher training programs. This would help avoid the situation where teachers feel unprepared to implement such teaching strategies as reported in Baptista et al. (2020). Secondly, STEM curricula and syllabuses should include mandatory at-home experiment activities for students. Furthermore, because immersive learning, in particular, necessitates technological mediums, increased funding for low-cost technologies is required.

This study recognises that not all STEM courses and topics can be taught using any of the identified methods, as their utility is likely to decrease as the complexity of the intended experiments increases. Consequently, the study contends that in times of crisis, educators should not be concerned with implementing STEM activities in a pre-determined order, but rather should look for simple and inexpensive activities within existing lesson plans and syllabuses and implement them using the appropriate approaches. This suggests skipping activities and returning to them when things return to normal, which, it should be stressed, is only appropriate for activities that do not build on one another.

Conclusions

The study was based on a literature review on the implementation of hands-on STEM lessons in remote learning contexts following the COVID-19 outbreak. Two approaches to remote STEM experiments were observed: experiential and immersive learning. It appears that experiential learning is the simplest to implement, particularly in fields such as biology and environmental science, though both approaches have implementation challenges. Specifically, the expansion of immersive learning would necessitate an increase in funding for the development of easily accessible virtual learning technologies. We discovered a scarcity of literature on this topic, which could be attributed to the fact that our search was limited to the Web of Science Core Collection. Therefore, we recommend that future research include additional citation databases to determine how thoroughly the topic has been studied.

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Mr. Bonjeer Tamilka, Charles University, Czech Republic

Claudio-Rafael Vásquez-Martínez, Francisco Flores-Cuevas, Felipe-Anastacio González-González, Luz-María Zúñiga-Medina, Idalia Castillo-González, Irma-Carolina González-Sánchez, Joaquín Torres-Mata

Pedagogical Trends, Various Approaches

Abstract

When talking about pedagogical theories, the first thing to stress is that it is difficult to find something new that has not been said before. In this field, much of what is called innovation comes from earlier times. Theories, conceptions and research have developed a great deal in the field of education. This means that educational systems face new challenges, with all the limitations that this implies. It is also evident that knowledge emerges with growing force that promotes social development. Therefore, it is necessary to implement pedagogical projects based on advanced forms of teaching that support the training of individuals, professionals capable of responding to the demands of the contemporary world.

Keywords: pedagogical trends, education, critical pedagogy, behaviourism, humanist paradigm

Introduction

The term ‘contemporary pedagogical trends’ designates a set of relatively systematized ideas that have had a significant influence on the educational field during the 20th and 21st centuries, and which start from the concept of a person that has served as a basis for understanding education, its purposes, its protagonists, the teaching-learning process, and ways of conducting it. These ideas have been formed under the influence of a series of socio-historical, techno-economic, political, social, psychological, ideological, rocrematic, and epistemological factors. This has led to the development of the development of the techniques and the sciences related to the field of education. These trends have appeared on the educational scene, not in a closed way, but have been configured and modified over time. Philosophical reflection helps in the discovery of the anthropology and ideologies, reforms, innovations, pedagogical conceptions and doctrines that inform educational systems, and the practice of education. In this study, we look briefly at the paradigms of critical pedagogy, behaviourist pedagogy and humanist pedagogy.

Pedagogical trends

Traditional pedagogy generally continues to influence practice, although other approaches have developed in parallel with it, since the end of the 19th century and during the 20th and 21st centuries. These new approaches have attempted, with more or

less success, to establish criteria of a scientific nature for the development of the teaching / learning process that go beyond their specific practices. This pedagogical trend has incorporated some advances and influences in the course of its development, including some of the postulates of the psychological model of behaviourism that emerged and developed in the twentieth century. This psychological approach is one of the most influential for traditional pedagogy in the 21st century. In the light of the task that today's society gives to education, to train young people to undertake the development of science and technology, one conclusion can be reached: traditional pedagogy is not the most appropriate way to address the task of teaching.

Critical pedagogy

Contemporary pedagogical currents are not limited to those derived from psychology. Other currents have their principles, their categories and their theoretical foundations in philosophy and sociology. Critical pedagogy, for example, has its source in the philosophical-social theory of philosophers and sociologists based on the postulates of Gramsci (2019), Freire (2019) and the theory of post-modernity of Habermas (2010). All these thinkers have made important contributions to explaining current problems in society and their possible solution.

Critical pedagogy focuses on the construction of a dialectical pedagogical language and discourse given in participatory, community and democratic social relations, through liberating actions and practices. It aims to enhance the role of subjects through the exercise of criticism and their imagination, so that they engage in educational action for the benefit of democratic, fair and equitable social organization.

The union between theory and practice is fundamental in education. The philosophy, the history and the sociology of education are inseparable. This union of theory and practice brings thought alive; it transforms.

Behaviourism

Behaviourism has its roots in the philosophical tradition of empiricism. According to this position, knowledge is a copy of reality, and is accumulated by simple associative mechanisms.

In empiricist epistemology, the knowing subject is the passive recipient of the deterministic impressions of external objects. According to the empiricists, knowledge is composed of sensations and ideas, and the associations between them. The origin of knowledge is in the sensations and impressions, which are mere copies or reflections of reality; any idea that the subject plays an active role in determining their own behaviour is dismissed.

Behaviourism (particularly Skinnerian behaviourism) is primarily anti-theoretical and consistent with empiricist epistemology. Behaviourists use the SR (stimulus – response) model as a fundamental scheme for their descriptions and explanations of the behaviour of organisms.

Behaviourism applied to education has created a strong tradition in educational psychology, starting from the earliest writings of Skinner (1989). According to behaviourists, the instructional process consists of the appropriate arrangement of conditional reinforcement, in order to promote student learning efficiently. Any academic behaviour can be taught in a timely manner, if there is an effective instructional programme based on a detailed analysis of student responses and their

reinforcement. Teaching is simply the provision of conditional rewards (Skinner, 1989).

Another characteristic of this approach is the assumption that teaching consists of providing content or information, that is, in placing information around the student, which he or she will have to acquire.

The humanist paradigm

The humanist paradigm analyses the socio-affective domain and interpersonal relationships. Like behaviourism, it is driven by a hypothesis, and its theoretical plans and schemes have been practised in the educational field, with adjustments made according to the context. Research focuses on the refinement and validation of practices derived from the paradigm.

The central issue relates to the problems of the whole person. The human personality is conceived as an organization that is in a process of continuous development. To explain and understand the person properly, he or she must be studied in their interpersonal and social context. Explanations must frame the person as the source of their whole personal development.

From the point of view of humanists, education should focus on helping students to decide what they are and what they want to become. Humanistic education is based on the idea that all students are different and helps them to be more like themselves and less like others. In this sense, it is considered necessary to help students to explore and understand themselves and the meanings of their lived experiences (Delgado-Linares, 2014).

According to Delgado-Linares (2014), the major goals of education are:

- To help develop the individuality of people;
- To help students to recognize themselves as unique human beings;
- To help students to develop their potential.

The students are seen as completely unique individuals, different from all others, and it is firmly believed that at the end of the academic experience this uniqueness of the students as people will be respected and even enhanced. Students are seen as beings with initiative, with personal needs to grow, to have feelings and to have particular experiences.

Teachers are seen as facilitators of the students' potential for self-realization. Didactic efforts must be directed to the goal of promoting activities of the students that are self-directed, and stimulate self-learning and creativity.

The teacher should not limit or put restrictions on the delivery of pedagogical materials, but rather should provide students with all that are available (Rogers, 1994).

Gutiérrez-Vázquez (2008) mentions the important traits that the teacher must possess:

- Interested in the students as whole persons;
- Openness to new forms of teaching and educational options;
- Ability to foster the cooperative spirit of students;
- Ability to engage with students as they are, authentic and genuine;
- Have an empathetic understanding of students, the ability to see things from their perspective, and have a sensitive attitude to their perceptions and feelings;
- Ability to reject authoritarian and egocentric positions.

The humanist educational programme does not offer a formalized theory of institutions, but proposes a series of techniques in order to achieve a better understanding of the behaviour of students, to improve the climate of respect, to give students the opportunity to develop their potential and achieve meaningful experiential learning in school.

To achieve the goals of humanistic behaviour, some steps are necessary:

- Programmes should be flexible and be open to students;
- Meaningful experiential learning must be provided;
- The creative behaviour of students should be given primacy;
- Students should be given autonomy;
- Students must be given the opportunity to cooperate;
- Students should be given the opportunity to evaluate themselves and their own work.

Rogers (1994) is a humanist who has most adequately analysed the concept of learning. For Rogers (1994), the human being has an innate capacity for self-development, and if this capacity is not hindered, learning will develop in a timely manner. Humanist education involves the person as a whole (affective and cognitive processes) and unfolds in a natural or experiential way.

Conclusion

Among socio-educational paradigms, critical pedagogy focuses on the construction of a language and a dialectical pedagogical discourse that supports participatory, cooperative, community and democratic social relations, through liberating practices and actions (Freire, 2019).

Behaviourism is regulated by the hypotheses, principles and laws of empiricism and the experimental analysis of behaviour. Behaviourists regard teaching as a simple arrangement of conditional reinforcement. The student is seen as a passive, isolated being whose participation is restricted by structured programmes and complex school controls. Teaching is transmitting knowledge; he who is taught learns faster than he who teaches himself (Skinner, 1989).

The teacher is conceived as a behavioural engineer who makes contingent arrangements to increase desirable behaviours and decrease undesirable ones. One of the contributions of the paradigm to education is programmed teaching, which is based on the systemic arrangement of the environment (books, online courses) which is designed using behavioural principles to achieve the desired results. Finally, behaviourists evaluate student behaviour using instruments that objectively measure behaviour (psycho-pedagogical tests).

The humanist paradigm is not monolithic, and is developed from the philosophical currents of existentialism and phenomenology, as well as from clinical practice and the reflections of humanist psychologists. It is configured as a theoretical / practical scheme with its own identity. The central problem of this paradigm is to analyse and study the processes of the whole person, since human personality has a structure and organization that is in a continuous process of development.

The two theoretical currents that serve as the foundation of the humanist paradigm are existentialism and phenomenology. From the former comes the idea that the person is created by their own choices, and from the latter, the study of external or internal perception as a subjective process. The theoretical assumptions of this paradigm

revolve around self-awareness and responsibility for human volitional acts. There is no single methodology, but the holistic approach to the study of the person is an important premise.

In educational contexts, humanists propose a comprehensive education to achieve the total development of the person. The importance of students' self-realization is highlighted. The student is a unique, unrepeatable being, with personal growth needs, who is not to be treated in a fragmentary way. The teacher is perceived as a guide and facilitator of the student's current trend. The teacher's activities should be aimed at strengthening learning and creativity (Delgado-Linares, 2014). Learning in this paradigm is significant when it involves the person as a whole. While there is no single methodology, there are several techniques to promote meaningful and experiential learning and the self-growth of students (Aizpuru-Cruces, 2008).

All people are different, and each has developed their socialization process in a different way and they have developed in different material conditions. Therefore, their learning needs are also diverse. It is not possible to treat all students in the same way, much less expect them to develop academically in a similar way.

The challenge, then, is in the capacity of the teacher and the educational system to work according to the needs of the students.

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Corresponding Author:

Prof. Dr. Claudio-Rafael Vasquez-Martinez, University of Guadalajara, Mexico

Siphokazi Kwatubana

The Role of Principals as Instructional Leaders in the Implementation of ICT Curriculum in South African Public Schools

Abstract

Education systems, including South Africa's, were forced to embrace remote schooling and online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of this dramatic change, the principal's role as an instructional leader has also changed. The hard lockdowns in South Africa forced schools to be creative in ensuring education continuity through digital technologies in online teaching. This became impossible in many schools due to a lack of resources and skills and the digital divide. South Africa is in the process of implementing the ICT curriculum in schools. Instructional leadership becomes crucial in such initiatives as it determines how the ICT curriculum is implemented and its subsequent impact on teaching and learning. However, many challenges hinder the effective implementation of the ICT curriculum, incorporating the lack of understanding of the pivotal role principals can play in ensuring its effectiveness. This study analysed publications on ICT curriculum implementation and instructional leadership to provide an overview of principals' roles as instructional leaders. Instructional leadership referred to in this study builds on experiences and learning acquired during COVID-19. Implementation of ICT is becoming more important to schools, and the success of such implementation is often due to effective instructional leadership.

Keywords: instructional leadership, principals as instructional leaders, ICT curriculum, roles of instructional leaders

Introduction

During COVID-19, most schools in South Africa adopted some level of remote schooling and online instruction, especially during strict lockdowns where schools were closed and face-to-face instruction was impossible. Learners were required to study at home to reduce the risk of being exposed to COVID-19. Amidst the pandemic, distance instruction was implemented as digital technologies mediated teaching. Teachers had to embark on online instruction, and principals as instructional leaders were forced to lead schools virtually and manage online teaching and learning. In 2020, during the pandemic, many, if not most, schools in developed countries battled to engage in virtual and online learning due to, among others, a lack of infrastructure and connectivity and, to a greater extent, limited knowledge on how to use ICT. It was clear that increasing ICT usage in the teaching and learning process post-COVID-19 would improve learning processes.

Thus, starting from the time of COVID-19, a certain level of technology has been introduced in South African schools, including the launching of the ICT curriculum recently by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), which includes coding and robotics. This is coupled with the training of teachers to empower them to advance their technological skills. Although there is an acknowledgment that the basic education system is not ready to fully implement the ICT curriculum because of considerable challenges that need to be addressed before this can be undertaken, the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2019 report (Cornell University, INSEAD & WIPO, 2019) ranks South Africa as number one in the top three innovation economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, a comparative analysis of basic e-readiness in schools reporting on ICT implementation in education in the African continent mentions South Africa as one of the countries in the African continent with ICT policies and plans in place to implement ICT in education (Pitan & Muller, 2019). This could mean that South African schools have better prospects of succeeding in implementing the ICT curriculum in schools, compared to other countries in the same region. There is a need to explore the opportunities and challenges of digital instructional leadership as schools implement the ICT curriculum.

In South Africa, policies on e-education view the ICT curriculum as an important part of the Government's strategy to improve the quality of learning and teaching across the education and training system. Its objective is to build digital and information literacy, so that all learners become confident and competent in using technology to contribute to an innovative and developing South African society (Department of Education, 2003). There is a need for principals to consider such changes and initiatives in education, as they demand an evolution of leadership practices to create schools that are effective. Principals can build on such initiatives when embarking on digital instructional leadership. Researchers agree that leadership is critical in promoting the use of technology, and the basic tenets of leadership are still valuable and needed for schools to succeed. The provision of leadership in implementing ICT in learning and teaching will accelerate its entrenchment in the leadership and vision of schools (Van Greunen et al., 2021). The four key strategies to improve ICT integration in education according to the action plan of the Department of Education involve: (a) establishing a link between the usage of ICT in the classroom and learning goals; (b) understanding the various types of technologies available; (c) establishing collaborations with stakeholders to drive e-education; and (d) analysing the status quo of e-education initiatives and their envisioned results (Department of Basic Education, 2015). It is evident that the Department of Education is calling for principals as instructional leaders to improve the instruction and thereby, the learning of students.

There are several challenges that schools in South Africa encounter when implementing an ICT curriculum. For instance, a pilot study conducted in nine provinces in South Africa by Veldsman et al. (2020), revealed that more than 75% of the 5199 schools that participated in the study were at a maturity level of awareness of the role of digital technologies, with some level of digital competency. Being digitally competent means that staff members develop their digital competencies and digital content and begin introducing innovative teaching styles (Van Greunen et al., 2021). These results indicate that most schools are far from reaching maturity where digital technologies are entrenched in their schools and the learning and teaching processes due to underdeveloped ICT infrastructure, lack of access to the internet, and limited

leadership and management. Although factors influencing the use of ICT in schools are complex and need a multi-pronged approach to address them, the principal's attitude and the understanding of the important role they play can be one of the drivers of the effective implementation of ICT in schools. Effective leadership improves academic performance. This necessitated examining the roles of principals as digital instructional leaders, in leading and managing the implementation of the ICT curriculum. This paper focused on the following research questions associated with implementing digital instructional leadership in schools by asking the following questions: (a) how do principals as digital instructional leaders influence the implementation of ICT in public secondary schools in South Africa? and (b) in what way does the school principal, as a digital leader, supports and motivates teachers to implement ICT curriculum, and enhance student learning? This study was prompted by several studies that have underemphasized the role of school leaders in ICT integration in South Africa.

Instructional leadership and technological leadership

According to Bush et al. (2010), instructional leaders focus strongly on overseeing curriculum implementation across the school. Instructional leadership is centred around curriculum and instruction. In general, the instructional leadership practices of school principals are the fundamental basis of influencing learners' academic achievement. The instructional leadership model refers to the role and the functions of school leadership in order to employ different management tasks concerning teaching and learning.

It is becoming apparent that instructional leadership is evolving to include technological leadership. Strong leadership is key if schools are to succeed in implementing the technology-based school curriculum. Technological leadership differs from traditional leadership theory, in that it does not focus on the characteristics or actions of leaders, but instead emphasizes that leaders should develop, guide, manage, and apply technology to different organizational operations, in order to improve operational performance (Chang, 2012). It can be argued that the advent of digital technologies has changed the instructional leadership roles of principals. Technological leadership has many dimensions, including vision planning and management, staff development, technological and infrastructure support, monitoring and evaluation, and communication and interpersonal skills. These dimensions of technological leadership are discussed below.

The role of principals in the implementation of ICT curriculum

Instructional leaders have a clear mandate in ICT implementation involving first having a clear vision, strategic guidelines, and objectives for ICT integration in their schools. This includes developing a shared ICT vision that is inclusive of all stakeholders. A shared vision is stimulated by communication and shared decision-making. Instructional leadership helps principals identify a school vision. The ICT vision would intend to answer the question: how does ICT fit into the vision of the kind of school we want to have? Realising the vision means integrating the vision into the school improvement and plan and considering how the needed investment will be secured (Schreurs, 2007). Thus, such a vision would enable a principal to harness school resources to promote ICT integration in the school. Furthermore, a clear vision and strategies would curb poor coordination of activities. Mingaine (2013) argues that

school leadership vision and strategic ICT plans should be driven by pedagogical and not technological considerations. In that case, instructional leaders would enable ICT to be part of learning activities with the potential to improve teaching, learning, and academic achievement.

Second, they must plan the programme of school development from the perspective of ICT. Planning as a managerial task is important in all the activities of the school, including the integration of digital technologies into classroom learning programs. Planning for ICT curriculum implementation includes the development of an ICT vision as indicated above, taking stock of the current infrastructure and areas for improvement, and identifying current ICT and target practices, aligned with learning and teaching goals. A strategic plan therefore, will address the learning and teaching goals of the ICT curriculum while adhering to a team approach that is inclusive of all stakeholders to allow the school community to consider how technology can change over time, for more effective usage of digital technologies. Planning also includes organising and securing resources to support technology use and integration in their schools, thereby, providing teachers with access to technology resources. This research regards resource allocation practice as central to the instructional improvement of the ICT curriculum.

Third, they must manage the integration of ICT in learning and teaching. Gauteng Department of Education (2011) guidelines for ICT refers to managing resources and infrastructure, acquiring hardware and software, timetabling for laboratories, and data management as important aspects in determining the e-readiness and e-maturity of the school. Poor management can lead to a failure of an ICT project in a school. This is prevented by embarking on managing the educational production function. The literature surveyed emphasises the importance of competence in technology use as the opposite would limit the ability to offer meaningful instructional leadership in teaching the use of ICT. This could mean that principals can improve instruction by staffing their schools with high-quality teachers and providing them with the appropriate support and resources to be successful in the classroom. In that case, the focus is not only on classroom instruction but mainly on organisational management. The major role of principals would be to develop the organizational structures in order to improve the instruction of the ICT curriculum. This paper's author believes instructional leadership should be combined with organisational management to promote school improvement and learning.

Fourth, promoting an academic learning climate. The principal, as the instructional leader, is required to set the instructional tone that must be followed by teachers and learners in pursuit of the attainment of expected digital maturity. The principal is expected to create a culture of ongoing improvement, high standards, and expectations for students and teachers. It is believed that principals who practice instructional leadership can influence the behaviour of teachers. One way of doing this is to model this behaviour. Effective role modelling allows teachers to learn from principals by observing how they conduct their professional duties and also be freely available for consultation, in case a teacher is experiencing difficulties in the classroom. A finding in a study conducted by Kozloski (2006) revealed that principals advocate that modelling is one of the best ways to show teachers to follow their lead in technology. In modelling the behaviour, principals must embrace technology and use it as part of their school's investment in technology, thereby modelling the use of technology for teachers and students. To that end, a technology leader must foster and develop a

unique set of skills and competencies that move beyond the traditional school leader's role.

Fifth, developing a supportive work environment. Among the issues that negate the integration of ICT curriculum into classroom activities in South African schools is a lack of clarity regarding the e-Education policy. This role includes being an active information driver and policy translator, as the new rules and regulations may not be clear to teachers and parents. The ICT curriculum implementation must be informed directly by the policy document. As an instructional leader, the principal and all staff members have to develop school-based strategies to guide and ensure that teachers align their daily activities and key activities, to the intentions of the government strategy on e-education. The implementation of ICT curriculum can thrive in a healthy, supportive environment, where teachers in a school have a similar understanding of the processes of ICT curriculum in line with e-education policy.

As a starting point, teachers need to be given time to participate in training activities, either by being allowed to and supported in attending workshops that are organised by the Department of Education, or by the school. Teachers need to possess the right skills and a positive attitude to integrate ICT into their teaching effectively. Lack of skills (Msila, 2015) and a lack of self-efficacy of teachers (Nkula & Krauss, 2014) have a negative impact on the use of ICT in classrooms. ICT self-efficacy describes self-confidence and beliefs about the effective use of ICT with respect to one's capability to perform a specific task (Hong et al., 2014). Muda et al. (2017) found that teachers' efficacy can also be increased with instructional leadership practice, to manage education changes. A high efficacy may translate to acceptance of change and commitment to implementing ICT. Acquiring skills and gaining more knowledge and understanding in ICT implementation will enable teachers to believe in their capabilities, exercise control over their own functioning, and improve motivation as they strive to master their craft. For principals, it would translate into ICT competence and frequency of use, thereby fostering their supportive behaviours. The onus is on principals to ensure that teacher development is managed, so that it focuses on the needs and interests of teachers for their professional growth.

Principals champion the implementation of the ICT curriculum and become advocates for technology use, that supports student learning. Furthermore, the development of communities of practice is crucial in enabling teachers to learn from each other's experiences and expertise, as a means to enhance their digital literacy and the development of best practices in integrating ICT in the classroom.

Conclusion

Research conducted during COVID-19 in South African schools indicated that the skills deficit was an impediment to ensuring that ICT transformed education in schools. The ICT curriculum implementation intends to address ICT skills deficits. The belief in this research is that principals, as instructional leaders, are at the forefront in ensuring that teachers are motivated and equipped with skills, to pedagogically integrate ICT into the teaching and learning process. It leans towards a broader view of instructional leadership that includes two dimensions. The first includes organisational management, school climate, supportive learning environment, and defining and communicating the school's vision. The second dimension assumes the principal's engagement in supervising, monitoring, and evaluating instruction-and-curriculum-based activities in

the school. This study does not focus on school technology leadership from a technology perspective, but rather from a school leadership perspective.

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Siphokazi Kwatubana, North-West University, South Africa

Part 4

Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training

Steve Greenfield

The Importance of Being ‘Pulled Up Short’: Can a Transdisciplinary Approach Help Deliver?

Abstract

Whilst the starting point is the impact of the pandemic the overall aim of the paper is to advance the case for the introduction of a transdisciplinary approach to learning. The justification for adopting this radical method is to deliver specific graduate outcomes in line with the 10 job skills for 2025 identified by the World Economic Forum. More specifically to promote creative and critical thinking amongst undergraduates. If the integration of skills is viewed as a key component of higher education the question is how they can be best delivered. A key point is to develop student self awareness of the limitations to their learning to introduce critical reflection. The possibility of students being ‘pulled up short’ and experiencing self-realisation is examined and how this may contribute to the advancement of their studies and the delivery of specific skills. Finally, the paper considers the idea of transdisciplinary teaching and learning and differentiates transdisciplinary ideas from other forms of crossing disciplinary boundaries. It explores the stated advantages, in terms of skills development, for adopting this type of approach noting the challenges it involves for both educators and students. It concludes that although there exist realistic challenges to transdisciplinary learning it is a strategy that promises significant outcomes.

Keywords: transdisciplinarity, graduate outcomes, skills, ‘pulled up short’, post-pandemic, employability, creativity, critical thinking

Introduction

The pandemic disrupted all areas of society forcing change in some and widening existing fault lines in others. In terms of the latter the hospitality sector, which was already facing serious economic pressures from several distinct sources including Brexit, found itself unable to operate. Post pandemic further decline, across the night

time economy, has occurred with serious economic pressures impacting viability. In terms of civil society all sectors of education were major casualties requiring a rethink about delivery and technology. Higher education was already in a state of flux with discussions about how to deliver material and the even more vexed question about 'what material'. This has led to fundamental debates around the very purpose of graduate study and the function of universities as vehicles of 'knowledge exchange'. The relatively simple model of providing students with knowledge of a specific discipline that was assessed using traditional methods has been put under pressure from different quarters. Primarily this was expressed as determining what skills graduates required to function and progress within a modern economy (Ndihokubwayo & Habiyaemye, 2018; Noweski et al., 2012). The pandemic inevitably paused some of these discussions as the immediacy of adopting a new method of delivery and assessment took priority. The key question is what happens now and how the pandemic experience has impacted the issues:

The COVID pandemic provided a significant rationale for technological innovation in the provision of university education, though it is not clear whether this will produce a more restricted and conservative approach to the curriculum and assessment.
(Greenfield, 2022, p. 1)

This paper has three distinct components, and the starting point is the fundamental graduate outcomes that higher education seeks to foster and develop in students. There is greater interest in competency driven education rather than pure knowledge acquisition though much will depend on both the cultural and subject context. Certainly, within UK Legal Education, there has been a significant shift away to embrace skills-based outcomes. The key issues are what are the outcomes sought and how are they best achieved?

The second point the paper explores is the idea of being 'pulled up short' whereby learners experience a moment of transformation in their education. Enabling students to reconsider the application of knowledge is an important tool to help develop reflective, creative, and critical students and indeed researchers. As a concept being 'pulled up short' has been explored within different disciplines and has been the subject of educational research. If the concept has validity, how do we introduce it more widely?

The third construct is the application of a transdisciplinary approach to learning. Going beyond a single discipline has long been seen, in some quarters, as desirable. Beyond the mono discipline, there are several potential variations; multi disciplinary, inter disciplinary, cross disciplinary and it is not always easy to draw distinct lines. A transdisciplinary method, that seeks to gather relevant knowledge and expertise wherever it lies, is an inclusive approach that has been utilised to address complex real world problems. It has not been widely applied to education and this paper argues that it has the inherent capability to provide students with the much sought after transformative sense of being 'pulled up short'. In turn, this supports the advancement of critical and creative graduates. It argues that to develop graduates and researchers with the necessary skills educators should consider how transdisciplinary principles can be incorporated.

Graduate skills and outcomes

A key debate within higher education, over a considerable period, has been the role of Institutions in delivering a range of skills to students alongside traditional

knowledge (Leckey & McGuigan, 1997; Fallows & Steven, 2013). A fundamental theoretical objection to skills teaching has been that it prioritises employment over academic sanctity, As Harvey (2000, p. 3) notes:

To address the relationship between the academy and employment is to risk, at least in some quarters of academia, being seen as an apologist for anti-intellectualism, for the erosion of academic freedom and as proposing that higher education should be about training graduates for jobs rather than improving their minds.

Some skills, such as research and (essay) writing within certain disciplines, are inevitably integrated into scholarly activities and without them, it may not be possible to pass. This doesn't though mean they are specifically taught. The debate is not around those skills intertwined with subjects but the more generic and often people centred competencies. These go beyond the subject based or professional skills taught within more vocational courses such as law. This debate has been keenly played out in law teaching in England and Wales where lawyering skills have been incorporated within some academic law programmes (Knox & Stone, 2019). There is an obvious risk that students develop an instrumentalist approach to their studies, though arguably this has always existed in some form, and that courses become measured through employment statistics. A virtuous circle could be created based on employment skills rather than academic content. The increasing development of technology and latterly artificial intelligence has heightened the discussion about what students should be equipped for post graduation.

The World Economic Forum (WEF, 2020) identified 10 job skills for 2025 under four headings: *Problem-Solving; Self-Management; Working with People; and Technology Use and Development*. The 10 skills listed are *analytical thinking and innovation; active learning and learning strategies; complex problem-solving; critical thinking and analysis; creativity, originality and initiative; leadership and social influence; technology use monitoring and control; technology design and programming; resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility; and reasoning problem-solving and ideation*.

It can be observed that the WEF list contains wide-ranging but generic employability skills though some will be more applicable in certain roles. Those such as active learning and learning strategies have a clear link to higher education studies. There does though need to be clarity around what such skills are and what they consist of. Creativity, for example, may have specific meanings or interpretations within different subjects. Furthermore, it is likely that the list will develop and change over time.

Thus, the debate is a wide ranging one, from what skills (if any) should be taught (and assessed) to whether they can even be taught and if so how. The other half of this equation is what training and support academic staff require to design and deliver relevant material given they may have little or no experience of what is required from their own studies. A key aspect is how to enable students to understand and develop their learning.

Being 'pulled up short'

If Graduate Outcomes, however, defined, become desired and identifiable consequences of a teaching and learning strategy the question is how they can be delivered and the relationship between knowledge and skills. There is a need to build a

framework to coordinate how and where different skills are acquired. One module or year of study cannot deliver all the required outcomes and the incremental building of understanding needs to be planned. This represents a challenge for those designing courses or programmes and there is a danger of becoming over-prescriptive which can stifle the ingenuity and creativity of educators. For example, requiring a common specific 'skill' in each first-year elective to deliver a course outcome may lead to a dysfunctional teaching and learning strategy for a specific module. Assessment needs to be integrated into knowledge and skills rather than 'bolted on' to fulfil an overarching course aim.

The parameters of the knowledge taught will be determined by several different factors, including external bodies in some professional subjects. In non-traditional or 'new' subjects there may be much greater freedom to construct a novel curriculum especially if the module or course is innovative and bridges two or more disciplines. For example, Legal Psychology may cover the interaction between human behaviour and the operation of law. It can consider issues such as stalking encompassing the psychology of such behaviour and how the legal system punishes it. Because the fundamental concepts are broad the topics chosen for analysis can be freely determined. Traditional subjects may have less flexibility.

The crucial development is the teaching and learning strategy that enables the delivery of the material to produce the desired outcomes. How can creativity and critically reflective skills be best developed? Educators can explain how they perceive the differences between descriptive and analytical writing within their subject area, but critical and creative thinking are far less easy to articulate and comprehend.

Kounios and Beeman (2009) explore the emergence of insight, in the context of cognitive neuroscience, what is referred to as the 'Aha! Moment'. They argue that: 'Insights are often the result of the reorganization or restructuring of the elements of a situation or problem, though an insight may occur in the absence of any preexisting interpretation' (Kounios & Beeman, 2009, p. 210). They argue that insight is significant as it can lead not only to successful problem solving but also self-realisation. It is contrasted with the more deliberate planned approach to problem resolution and has a creative dimension through; 'new non-obvious interpretation'. The undertaking then is finding a process whereby students learn to develop and be able to apply 'insight' to the tasks in front of them. The design of activities and their impact on student learning may require patience and constant re-evaluation. The fundamental method is to talk with students and one possibility is to design an activity that contains an integrated evaluation.

The idea of being 'pulled up short' was developed by Kerdeman (2003, p. 294):

I call this dimension of teaching and learning 'being pulled up short', drawing on an idea articulated by Hans-Georg Gadamer. Being pulled up short emphasises, not proficiency and power, but proclivity for self-questioning and doubt.

This suggests the promotion of self-reflection with respect to a better understanding of one's own learning process. This is expanded by Greenhalgh-Spencer et al. (2017, p. 73):

To be 'pulled up short' constitutes a moment where a person suddenly sees things differently, they become aware that what they thought was wrong, misguided, or not a full understanding, and they become more open to learning. The moment of being 'pulled up short' is often the aim of many educational interventions.

Lucas (2008, p. 384) applying the concept to accounting explains that it involves... 'both teachers and students and create moments of surprise and possibility within learning and teaching'. These two 'concepts', (the 'Aha! Moment' and 'being pulled up short') are based on the idea that students will advance their learning or rather understanding of the limitations to their learning by having a point of interruption. The difficulty for educators is how to design these points within their own subject area. With respect to legal study, a starting point is to explore the wider context of a case beyond the judgment and this is a process some judges may use (Greenfield, 2022). It also requires the educator to be prepared to reevaluate their own perspectives as Lucas (2008, p. 398) notes: 'a key issue that arises out of this reflection on my own teaching is that these activities would not have emerged without a willingness on my part to be 'pulled up short''. The question is whether adopting a different pedagogical strategy can more easily promote the acquisition of skills and create moments of change.

Transdisciplinary teaching and learning

Historically disciplines have been ringfenced to an accepted body of knowledge though some subjects are more open to developments than others. Legal study in England and Wales has been characterised by a longstanding central core that originally was required by the professions for validation as a Qualifying Law Degree (QLD). These fundamentals of legal knowledge have though been supplemented by a much wider range of eclectic options reflecting not just new areas of legal practice but also changes in society and academic thinking. Internal expansion, of a subject area, is limited when contrasted with the much greater, though more problematic, opportunities that exist by moving beyond the confines of a single discipline.

Other models, especially newer ones, accentuate historical change and dynamism, with companion images of networks, webs, and systems. They call attention to boundary crossing and blurring, integration and collaboration, cross fertilization, and interdependence in epistemological and social environments characterized increasingly by complexity, nonlinearity, and heterogeneity. The current heterogeneity associated with the growth of knowledge has profound implications for the taxonomy of fields. (Klein, 2006, p. 11)

It is a huge challenge for educators used to working within a set field to rethink the boundaries and move into new areas, this itself can be very daunting even in terms of the language used. One potential method is to explore an 'issue' that requires a broader or contextual approach in order to provide a more comprehensive or nuanced conclusion.

The essence is to first determine the concrete issue or challenge that requires this level of cooperative engagement. It is important to see beyond the disciplinary boundary, so the problem is not solely a legal one. Law or more broadly regulatory issues are one of the issues to be explored. At the outset we may have a prejudiced view about the importance of law privileging it above other subjects. Thinking beyond a discipline is part of the learning process and is a desired goal. (Greenfield, 2022, p. 10)

Thinking beyond a discipline is part of the learning process and is a desired goal. This is allied to identifying what 'knowledge' needs to be acquired and where it is located:

Solutions are devised in collaboration with multiple stakeholders. A practice-oriented approach, transdisciplinarity is not confined to a closed circle of scientific experts,

professional journals and academic departments where knowledge is produced. Ideally, everyone who has something to say about a particular problem and is willing to participate can play a role. (Klein et al., 2001, p. 7)

This is simultaneously a strength and a weakness. It provides a much richer vein of information but that first must be gathered from different sources and then critically assessed. The ability to quickly organise and sift through material become vital skills as does the capacity to identify gaps. It is though possible to develop subject matter that is less open and more contained. Exposure to a variety of stakeholders is, in itself, a positive outcome enabling students to gain a much greater contextual understanding. Work needs to be carefully managed and there may be a need for additional resources, but smaller transdisciplinary projects still have the potential to achieve positive outcomes for all those involved.

Conclusion

It might be considered a burden for educators, coming through the stress of the pandemic, to carry out a major rethink of their teaching and learning strategy. There are also other accumulated pressures notably around supporting students' well-being. The pandemic has though created a natural point to reflect and we encourage and expect students to critically reflect on their learning, reviewing teaching is the other half of the equation. If we are serious about delivering the crucial but ambitious skills agenda the teaching and learning strategy must be fit for purpose. A transdisciplinary approach acknowledges that the world has changed, and that knowledge is no longer naturally solely contained within traditional discipline defined spaces in universities. A move towards 'mutual learning without boundaries' will prove challenging as both an idea and a practice and the parameters need to be realistic and capable of delivery. There is though a lot to be gained from daring to stretch our own educational thinking.

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Dr. Steve Greenfield, University of Westminster, London, United Kingdom

Gordana Stankovska, Dimitar Dimitrovski & Imran Memedi

Psychological Well-Being and Mental Health among University Students

Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak has impacted all aspects of human life, including the educational settings. Online and hybrid learning carried out during and after the pandemic certainly has a positive and a negative side, especially when it comes to students' mental health. At the same time, psychological well-being problems have become increasingly common among students nowadays. Thus, the main objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between mental health and psychological well-being among university students. The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS) were administered to a sample of 240 university students (129 female and 111 male students). The results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between the level of psychological well-being and psychological distress. The students' psychological well-being had the highest rating in personal growth, self-acceptance, purpose of life and environmental mastery, while autonomy and positive relationship with others had lower levels. Simultaneously, there was a positive relationship between mental health and gender, but there was no correlation between psychological well-being and gender. The study concluded that those mental health problems have powerful predictive qualities with regard to changes in students' psychological well-being which reflects the implication of intervention programs and strategies that help students to better cope with and manage distress.

Keywords: mental health, distress, psychological well-being, medical students, support

Introduction

We need to be prepared when we reopen schools to ensure that social and emotional supports are a bigger part of the whole experience-not just this spring, but moving forward. We really need to think about how social and emotional learning and mental health support that our students need is the foundation of the programs that we provide and the schools that we use to serve our students.

(Dr. Miguel Cardona, U.S. Secretary of Education)

Commencing higher education represents a key transition point in a young person's life. It is a stage often accompanied by significant change combined with high expectations from students of what university life will be like, and also high expectations from themselves and others around their own academic process and performance (Pascoe, Hetrick & Parker, 2020). Relevant factors include moving away

from home, learning to live independently, and developing new social networks, with the additional greater financial burdens that students now face.

The recent global COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on mental health across society (González-Sanguino et al., 2020), and there is concern that younger people (ages 18-25) have been particularly affected. Everyone in one way or another has personally felt the effects of isolation, fear, loss or fatigue (Pheleps & Sperry, 2020). Recent evidence has revealed that stress, anxiety, depression, and poor sleep are common psychological reactions among students around the world (Rajkumar, 2020). Many students found emergency online education difficult to cope with and said they preferred face-to-face instruction (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). These changes contributed to a decrease in students' psychological well-being. Psychological well-being problems have become increasingly common among university students nowadays, because they are vulnerable to mental health problems which generated increased public concern (Son et al., 2020).

Mental health

Mental health is defined as the successful performance of the mental function, which results in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and capacity to adjust to changes and cope with difficulties and hardships (WHO, 2020). From early childhood until late life, mental health is considered the springboard of thinking and communication skills, learning, emotional growth, resilience for quick recovery, and self-esteem. Mental health is the balanced development of the total personality which enables one to interact creatively and harmoniously with society. Mental health is a state of mind characterized by emotional well-being, relative freedom from anxiety and disabling symptoms and a capacity to establish constructive relationships and cope with the ordinary demands and stresses of life. Even in the absence of severe mental health illness, the consequences of mental health problems among young people in high education may include disruption to their developmental trajectory, higher rates of academic dropout, and attrition (Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, 2017).

Students in universities generally experience a high level of distress, increased fear, anxiety, anger, sadness/depression, and conduct problems (Furr et al., 2010). This means that tertiary education is a critical environment to reach young people to promote and support mental health and influence lifelong outcomes. In addition, university students frequently have more complex problems today than they did over a decade ago. The common stressors at university include greater academic demands, changes in family relations, and changes in social life, exposure to new people, ideas, and temptations. Academic pressures of meeting grade requirements, test tasking, the volume of the material to be learned, and time management, have been shown to be a significant source of stress for students (Kumaraswamy, 2013).

Psychological well-being

The conceptualization of psychological well-being has been in a state of divergence ever since it was studied for the first time. Some researchers have associated psychological well-being with the fulfillment of life and potential and happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2008), while others associated well-being with the personal experience of individuals (Diener, 2009) or with the result of accomplishing goals

(Ryff, 1995). According to Ryff (1995), psychological well-being refers to the extent to which people feel that they have meaningful control over their life and their activities. He introduced six core dimensions of psychological well-being, specifically: 1) self-acceptance (state of having positive thoughts and feelings about oneself); 2) positive relations with others (ability to engage in warm and trusting relationships with others); 3) autonomy (ability to be independent and cope with social pressure); 4) environmental mastery (ability to adapt, change or create one's needs through physical and mental activities); 5) purpose in life (state of having objectivities and goals in life and working towards being goal-oriented); and 6) personal growth (continuously growing and developing as oneself).

These six dimensions, if fulfilled by students, imply that their psychological well-being is excellent and optimal. Students who have higher psychological well-being tend to have positive attitudes towards themselves, be independent in learning, have good social relationships with others, have life goals, and the ability to develop optimally (Ward & King, 2016). Meanwhile, students who have low psychological well-being lack independence in learning, they have poor social relationships, do not have clear life goals and feel inferior (Dogan, Totan & Sapmaz, 2013).

The impact of mental health on the psychological well-being of students in post-pandemic time

The COVID-19 outbreak has impacted all aspects of human life, including the educational settings. Online learning carried out during and after the COVID-19 pandemic certainly has a positive and a negative side, especially when it comes to the mental health of students (Barrot, Llenares & Del Rosario, 2021). Students feel unhappy with what is happening in their life and feel disappointed with their current situation. Petrie et al. (2020) found that students experience difficulties during online or hybrid model of learning. Loneliness and social isolation were strongly associated with poor mental health and a sense of belonging and strong support network associated with psychological well-being and happiness among students during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Voltmer et al., 2021).

Hence, during and after the COVID-19 outbreak a study on the psychology of well-being has become a crucial issue to research, because it is essential for students, particularly in a post-pandemic time. Students with high psychological well-being will achieve optimal development in their lives (Morales-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Poor psychological well-being and mental state may affect the positive learning and task performance of the students. Hence, the main goal of this study was to examine the possible relationship between mental health and psychological well-being among university students.

Research methods

Participants

The sample of students was randomly selected and all of them participated voluntarily. The participants included 240 university students between 19 and 23 years of age. The mean calculated age of students was 21.73 (SD=7.35). Of all participants, 129 were female (53.75%) and 111 were male (46.25%). In this study we used a simple random sampling technique. The study group of the research included first and third-

year students who studied medical sciences at the University of Tetova. The students from the first year started their studies with physical presence at the University, while the third-year students during the COVID-19 pandemic had online and hybrid model of learning, and this year continued their studies with physical presence.

Data collection tools

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10)

The K10 is among the most widely used short instruments for screening psychological distress (Kessler et al., 2010). It includes ten items measuring different emotional status (e.g., nervous, hopeless, depressed, and worthless) during the past 30 days. Participants indicate their symptoms on a Likert scale ranged from 5 (all of the time) to 1 (none of the time). The total score ranges from 10 to 50. The higher score indicates a higher level of psychological distress. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for internal consistency was 0.86.

Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS)

The psychological well-being scale consists of 42 items, each item has 7 closed answer choices, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance are the six dimensions of this scale. Cronbach's Alpha for 40 of 42 items was .784, which represents a good correlation between the items (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Data procedure and data analysis

Data collection tools were administered by the researchers during the winter semester of the academic year 2022/23. They were applied to the students in a classroom setting, with the permission of the researchers. The duration of the time for answering the scales was 30 minutes. Statistical analysis of the results obtained in the study was conducted with SPSS 20.0 for the Windows package program. The descriptive statistics were expressed as mean and standard deviation to describe the demographic information of our participants. Furthermore, Chi-square test with the course of study as the fixed factor was conducted to assess the relationship between psychological well-being and psychological distress. Spearman correlation coefficient (r_s) was estimated to determine the association between the psychological well-being, distress and gender.

Results

In our study we observed that the median score of psychological well-being was $M=196.50$, while the median score of psychological distress was $M=35.00$. The Chi-square test revealed that there was a positive relationship between the level of psychological well-being and psychological distress $\chi^2 (1 | n=240) = 24.710$ ($p=0.000$). Also, the students' psychological well-being had the highest rating in personal growth ($M=39.50$), self-acceptance ($M=37.00$), purpose of life ($M=35.50$), and environmental mastery ($M=35.00$). The dimensions they rated at the lowest level included autonomy ($M=27.50$) and positive relationships with others ($M=25.00$).

At the same time we observed that there was no significant difference between the scores of psychological well-being among the boys and girls. The median score of

psychological well-being among girls was $M=87.50$, while the boys had a median score of psychological well-being $M=86.00$. There was a negative relationship between the level of psychological well-being and gender ($r_s = -.356, p>.001$). On the other hand, the girls had higher scores of distress ($M=35.50$), while the boys had lower scores of distress ($M=17.00$). There was a positive relationship between the level of distress and gender ($r_s = .296, p<.004$).

Discussion

Students' mental health and psychological well-being have always been a hot topic in colleges and universities. This research explored various domains of students' well-being in post-pandemic period. In our research we found that the dimension with the highest mean score was personal growth, followed by self-acceptance, purpose of life, and environmental mastery. In this context, as university studies require students to constantly deal with challenges, students are able to experience a higher level of personal growth and self-acceptance. When students have good self-acceptance, they will be able to face the difficulties and challenges they face in times of a COVID-19 pandemic (Barrett et al., 2022). They need to self-actualize and realize that individual potential is central to a clinical perspective on personal growth. A vital characteristic of a fully functioning individual is an attitude that is open to new experiences.

Musifuddin and Aturrohmah (2019) explain that the meaning of life is closely related to happiness. Moreover, students have an excellent environmental mastery dimension when they can master their environment including a sense of mastery and competence and ability to choose a conducive situation and environment. But students are still distressed in facing their problems, during the hybrid model of learning, because most of time they learned from home, however in this post-pandemic period they have the possibility to analyze the demands of a complex environment.

Psychological well-being from the aspect of students' autonomy is very low, because during online or hybrid learning, they had limiting direct interaction with their friends and teachers. Thus, this study found that the students' ability to build relationship with other people after the pandemic was low. Distance learning forces students to stay at home making them frustrated and distressed. They experienced difficulties in establishing relationships with their peers, which affected their psychological well-being (Schwartz et al., 2021; Galea, Merchant & Lurie, 2020).

In our study we found that there was no gender-based significant difference in the total psychological well-being score. This phenomenon has not been explained in other studies, which state that female students have a different pleasure of life than boys; girls have higher scores than boys (Heinsch, Wells & Sampson, 2020). On the other side, the results indicated that the female students have higher level of psychological distress than male students. Existing literature reveals that female students have more tension, anxiety and stress (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017).

Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between mental health and psychological well-being among university students. On the basis of the results, reported above, it can be concluded that mental health and psychological well-being are related i.e. good mental health will lead to psychological well-being or psychological well-being will improve mental health. This shows that students having good mental

health are happy, sociable, and emotionally stable. The students who are mentally healthy will accept challenges, make efforts for personal development and strive for their own growth. Psychological well-being helps in developing positive relationships with others and establishing better adjustment with the environment.

Overall, students' psychological well-being demonstrated higher levels of personal growth, purpose in life, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and lower levels of autonomy and positive relationship with others. Regarding mental health, the girls are more stressed than boys, because they have skills in understanding and revealing their feelings, but boys possess the ability to control impulses and tolerate stress.

Our study demonstrated that mental health problems have powerful predictive qualities with regard to changes in students' psychological well-being which reflects the implication of intervention programs and strategies that help students to better cope with and manage distress. Such programs include, for instance, mediation, mindfulness-based stress-reduction, feedback on various health habits, educational discussion, changes in the length and type of curriculum, changes in the grading system, or music therapy and muscle relaxation. The evidence suggests that with young people, early intervention can play a crucial role in outcome, so universities need to make it easier for students to access specialist treatment by ensuring they provide adequately resourced services. Hence, the higher institution should have a mental health policy covering mental health promotion, mental illness prevention and services for students with mental problems. The institution should have a strategy for communicating its mental health policy to staff and students. They need to make the well-being of their students a priority and ensure that the support services provided are sufficient to deal with the increased students' numbers. Students need to be psychologically healthy if they are to get the most out of their education and move confidently into employment. Based on this study's result, further research is suggested to examine the factors that affect students' mental health and psychological well-being.

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Corresponding author:

Prof. Dr. Gordana Stankovska, University of Tetova, Republic of North Macedonia

Part 5

Law and Education

Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu & Queen Chioma Nworgu

Examine Important Strategic Roles of Leadership and Management of Teachers' Retention and Impact on Organisational Performance with Reference to an HE Institution in Inner London

Abstract

The paper has focused on important leadership and management strategic roles in employee retention with reference to a London higher education institute. It analyses some of the reasons for high turnover and theories around effective leadership and management roles in retaining hard working employees, with reference to teachers in a higher education institution in inner London cities. When discussing teachers, it includes lecturers that teach in higher education. Retaining hard working teachers has been an issue in HE institutions, particularly, since the Brexit and Covid 19 crisis, therefore, important to explore the issue in the context of the leadership and management strategic roles to reduce high turnover. The mini research uses mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative data collection with thematic analysis of the key findings from literature and comments from teachers on why they will like to stay or leave their jobs for another employer. Having sampled the opinions of small sampled participants and the literature sourced, it is obvious that teacher retention is a big issue in education with some teachers wanting to leave or stay. Those wanting to stay will do so if they are motivated with better pay and compensation and effective leadership and management of education institute and those leaving would live due to poor pay and heavy workload. The most interesting to note is that most of the participants love the job they do as long as their students are achieving their qualifications.

Keywords: retention, achievement, students, strategies, teachers, leaders, management and organizational performance

Introduction

Every organisation has a purpose to do a successful business, be it a public or privately owned organisation, making money, and providing good services as primary

purpose. The same applies to education institutions in London. To be successful in any business, employee is key, which requires effective recruitment and retention strategy as important key to organisational success and for effective recruitment is leadership and management of talent and retention of employees. The focus of this paper will be based on effective leadership and management strategic role in retaining hard working and committed employees in an organisation with reference to teachers in a higher education institution in inner London cities. Employee retention is crucial for a successful business and without employee's commitment in an organisation; there will be challenges of high turnover that can lead to organisational failures. There are various reasons why we must take employee retention seriously. It helps us to prevent losing our talented employees from leaving (James & Mathew, 2012).

Talent management of employees stemmed from the 1990s based on the establishment of many multinational companies which affects education institutions globally, as they sort the best strategies for employee retention. This has become one of the most difficult jobs of education HR in relation to teacher retention, hence a big issue and challenge in the UK institutions, particularly in recruiting permanent staff in non-traditional universities (newly formed universities in partnership with traditional universities).

Employee turnover is crucial and recognised worldwide, hence most organisations thrive to find out the problems behind high turnover and seek for strategies to manage and improve employee retention, particularly in a UK education with reference to teachers.

Literature review

In the early 20s, the key focus of the retention studies was on student attrition where the previous research examined 9 key strategies promoting student retention in FE Colleges in London (Achinewhu-Nworgu, 2007). It is time to extend the studies to teacher retention strategies in higher education. Reading journal articles, books and work done by other researchers and teachers' comments, employee retention began to make sense. The idea is to find out why some of the UK non-traditional universities have retention challenges for potential and permanent teachers, hence, leading to using more of the associate teachers instead of full time permanent to cover classes. From the literature, many factors emerged that focused on examining the strategic role of leadership and management in retaining hard working teachers and impact on organisational performance. The key objectives are to:

- Explore the importance of employee retention;
- Analyse the reasons why employees (teachers) leave an employer;
- Evaluate some models and concepts on strategic leadership and management roles in retaining hard working employees in relation to teachers' retention;
- Present participants' comments on reasons why they will stay or leave an employer;
- Suggest measures to improve retention of hard working employees.

Employee retention is essential in gaining competitive advantage and helps in developing a high performing team in the field of specialisation of tasks and in collaboration amongst team members, speaking from observation of the impact of high turnover as an employee in education, hence leadership and management role to reduce high turnover is vital.

Why some employees (teachers) leave their employer?

Herzberg's two factor theory helps us to answer the question raised. There are several reasons to why employees may leave their employment to another employer or even decide not to work anymore. Some employees would leave a job because of job dissatisfaction as in the theory of Herzberg motivation, known as hygiene factors that can affect employees at work, such as company policy, supervision, interpersonal relationship with managers and colleagues, working conditions and salary that can motivate if positive in a job and can demotivate if in absence (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959), also, not happy in a job due to toxic environment (James & Mathew, 2012) can lead to demotivation. Other reasons could be leaving for better opportunities elsewhere or better pay, study, family or moving to leave in another country or dismissed by employer due to poor performance leading to two categories of turnover, turnover initiated by employees and turnover decided by employers. Turnover caused by employees is termed voluntary where employees have valid reasons to leave and turnover decided by employers occurs when restructuring due to challenges of work or changes taking place to reduce costs of labour (Allen, Bryant & Vardaman, 2010). In addition, bad attitudes and work pressure (Singh, 2019) cannot be controlled by organisation management. Maslow (1970) highlights the importance of meeting the basic needs of life and when employees are working and not able to earn good money to meet the basic needs of life, they would look for alternatives. Whatever is the reason behind high turnover of teachers in most of the non-traditional education institutions in the UK, imposes big challenges to the institutions and those staying as they have to take extra roles to cover for leavers on temporary basis in addition to their main jobs, for the institutions, is a brain drain, some employees face uncertainty as they are not able to meet up with the demands of the employers and also could lead to competition from other rivals (Terera & Ngirande, 2014).

Strategic role of leaders and managers in retaining hard working employees

Retaining hard working teachers is crucial in leadership and management strategic roles. As identified in the research, there are three important aspects of leadership role, maintaining corporate culture and values, fair and inclusive HR practices and full managerial support for employee development (Doh, Stumpf & Tymon, 2011). Added to this, is a good relationship with employees that is established by a leader or manager that can help improve retention. According to Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2002), a good boss can have the influence to persuade employees to stay in a job, however, when a manager lacks good relationship with employees or team, it will lead to demotivation and low morale, hence forcing employees to leave. On the hand, a leader's style can determine the success or failure of employee retention (Budhiraja & Malhora, 2013). This will depend on autocratic leadership style that tend to scare employees as the leader may impose his/her authority and manage with intimidation without employees contribution in decision making. A democratic leadership style is more favourable as the leader involves employees in some aspects of decision making, however, effective leadership style will depend on the situation and a leader that adapts to a style appropriate to the organisational environment will be more suitable in retaining employees, although this will also depend on type of employees and the environment of the business.

Education management is drifting from democratic to authoritarian management style that is geared to achieving results, increased student numbers and make profit and how much considered for quality and concerns for students are questionable. Hardworking teachers are much more concerned with quality education, student retention and achievement, therefore, derive their motivation from quality of teaching and learning, student retention and achievement, hence will like to remain in their jobs longer with their employers regard less of low pay and hectic working condition as long as the students are achieving their qualifications. The role of leadership and management in motivating hard working employees or teams cannot be ignored in retention.

Armstrong (2012) defines leadership and management as the practice of encouraging others to give their best in order to accomplish a set goal. This includes creating and sharing vision, inspiring people and engagement. Others have identified attitudes (Neese & Smith, 1995) and impact on employee commitments in an organisation, coupled with the styles adopted in managing and leading people that can contribute to success or failure, hence leading to retention issues (Budhiraja & Malhotra, 2013). When an organisation has high turnover as in the case of a London based education institution, it signifies a failure or poor management of employees, leading to lack of commitment, demotivation to perform and prolonged job dissatisfaction, all can also lead to employee leaving for better opportunities outside their institution. Some teachers are employed full time elsewhere, they take up part-time jobs to make up their pay, they are hardly committed fully to their part-time jobs, some will disappear after teaching to avoid marking in some cases, this creates extra work for permanent staff, hence leading to demotivation and in some cases decision to leave their jobs due to excessive workload.

An effective leadership and management role in recruitment and selection is also important in retaining employees as well as good policies put in place for talent management. Again, this is an important strategy that a leader needs to recognise the importance of embedding positive policies and practical implementation of good recruitment and selection that will be attractive to employees to remain in their jobs. Example of effective policy could be recruiting the right people and putting measures in place to retain them, however, the present challenges faced by non-traditional universities in recruiting teachers has meant getting some people from the industries to teach and manage education, which results to some not able to stay longer as they struggle to manage education activities that is different from managing a company. It is important for leaders and managers of education to ensure effective organisational systematic approach to recruitment and selection of teachers to improve employee turnover. However, there are some financial implications involved in attracting the right people in a job such as cost of advertisement, good pay and motivation of employees will make employee remain with an employer, although this will depend in employee preferences.

Employee training offered is an aspect of retention. Training helps employees to acquire skills and enhances their performance, ability to solve problems, builds their confidence and competence in the job. As identified in research (Bassi & Van Buren, 1999), employee competence and professional advancement is primary key to improve retention, acquired through training. Development on the other hand is also identified as an opportunity for employee's personal growth achieved through promotion (Horwitz, Heng & Quazi, 2003) that enables high commitment and in return, leads to

retention. This is an important role of a leader and manager in education working hand in hand with HR department, given teachers the opportunity for training and development to make them more compete that can lead to improved commitment and motivation to remain with an institution, particularly at the present time of hybridisation, delivering partly online and face to face expected from teachers, requires continuous training and development to keep abreast with technology heavily required in present day teaching and learning.

Job related training can improve the ability of employees in problem-solving, making the employees committed through the skills gained on the job which is likely to make them remain with the employer (Hong et al., 2012). For some institutions in the UK, including the HE institution used for the study, the option of investing on recruiting trainee teachers is helping to solve some of the retention problems, but can create more jobs for permanent teachers that mentor and support the trainees during their training period. Some do not complete the training due to workload and stress related issues that can lead to job dissatisfaction for the money they get while on training, compared to the workload and administrative duties involved in teaching. A transformational leadership style is highly effective in development of employees through training, investing on trainee teaches is a good option to improve problem of labour shortages, but retaining them can be also challenging, as some leave before or after their training for better opportunities elsewhere, hence still lives the institution with shortage of teachers and in most cases, high cost of training and yet may not retain the trainee.

Most employees, including teachers expect good pay and compensation in the job they do and when they are well paid, moral and performance increases. Whatever is the case, pay and compensation is an important aspect for employee decision to stay or leave their organisations. The challenges here is that leaders and managers in education are more cost conscious and keeping an eye on the budget, and when a teacher demands pay higher than budgeted, retention issue arises as pay is restricted by employer when it exceeds the proposed salary level (Menefee & Murphy, 2004). Performance related pay is another aspect of pay that improves high turnover. Monetary aspect of pay and compensation are important strategy for keeping employees in a job, although this will depend on individual teacher's motivating factor and expectations. Performance appraisal is a useful method that is used in different forms to retain teachers if the outcome is positive, also, it is used to identify training needs or increased pay. However, this will depend on management perception and outcome of the appraisal process. Most performance appraisal is for formality these days and paper documentations than its aimed purpose, although as affirmed by Hytter (2007), there is a correlation between reward and retention which is why education leaders and managers need to consider improving attrition and organisational effectiveness through increased pay and compensation for the hard working teachers.

Data collection

Having discussed the relevant literature, the research explored the views of staff on retention using mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative data collection. The interview targeted 15 teachers which is reasonable for the mini research and has enabled gathering good data which is reasonable to compare with the literature sources. Care was taken to ensure that participant's comments were protected using coding for

confidentiality as reassured them. Some staff declined the interview because of their time to complete the interview questions.

Conclusion

As discussed above, teacher's retention is important worldwide and mainly in higher education institutions in London. The research and comments from the teachers identified strategies to improve retention and teachers' morale in their jobs. What emerged clearly were the important leadership and management strategic roles in retaining hard working teachers through better pay and compensation. Those wanting to stay will do so if they are motivated with better pay and compensation, recruitment and selection of more permanent teachers to offset heavy workload, effective leadership and management and more training and development opportunities to embrace current changes in work practices. The teachers wishing to leave or left would do so due to demotivation based on low pay, poor working conditions, poor relationship with leaders and management of education.

Suggestions made by all the 15 participants interviewed to improve retention and teacher's morale were, more pay for teachers, effective leadership and management of academic environment that they believe should be different from managing a company or private sector business.

What was more interesting from the results was that most teachers love the job they do and achievement of their students will make them stay in their role. The future research will aim to present the full comments from individual participants, target bigger population and other institutions to compare with the current research findings.

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Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu, Ulster University, United Kingdom & Ireland

Queen Chioma Nworgu, M.A., London Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

Princess Adaeze Chuku-Ashiegbu

Labour Rights of Lecturers in Private Universities in Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated Nigeria's private university lecturers' welfare and their legal rights. The study adopted a doctrinal approach which enabled a proper examination of the extant laws applicable to a lecturer as an employee and the reviewed laws included: the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as Amended), Labour Act Cap L1, LFN 2004, Industrial Training Fund Cap 19 LFN 2004 (as Amended), National Health Insurance Scheme Act, Cap N42, LFN 2004, National Housing Fund Act, Cap N45 LFN 2004, Pension Reform Act 2014, Personal Income Tax Act Cap P8 LFN 2004, Trade Dispute Act Cap T8 LFN 2004, Trade Unions Act Cap T14 LFN 2004. The study made a case for lecturers with the private universities in comparison to their counterparts with the public owned universities. The findings showed that there is wanton disregard for the extant provision of the Labour Act in Nigeria amongst the lecturers working with the private universities. Similarly, the study likewise discovered that there is paucity of reported cases regarding enforcement action involving private university lecturers and their employers. The study perceives that the inability of private university lecturers to demand for their rights is because the Nigerian law also allows freedom of contract in upholding and binding employers and employees to their agreements. Recommendations from the study asserted that the lecturers are entitled to same right as every other professional employee in Nigeria. This exposes the lecturers in the private universities to a weak state where despite the existence of the laws protecting their rights, they are unable to leverage on the existing laws to advance their rights.

Keywords: labour law, legal rights, university lecturers, Nigeria

Introduction

The Nigerian employment laws are well diverse with the intention to capture every aspect associated with employee welfare. This spread of statute reflects in different legislation that has provided the framework in which they are explicitly stipulated. Over the years, specific legislation has been enacted to address different issues in the Nigerian employment industry. Notwithstanding, the employment laws still remain; the Labour Act enacted in the 1970s, the Factories Act, the Employees Compensation Act, the Trade Disputes Act and the Trade Unions Act. Yet, there exists disagreement between employers and employees.

Unfortunately, despite this provision of laws, trade dispute between employer and employees has bordered on the premise of unsatisfied welfare packages given to workers. A typical example is reoccurring dispute between the Nigerian government (employer) and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) where both parties have experienced several trade disputes which has resulted into disruption of planned academic sessions, diminished the quality of tertiary education in the nation and have

in recent times forced parents to seek alternative options in private universities both locally and internationally.

Interestingly, one wonders why the provision of welfare packages to employees has become a problem for employers, meanwhile, these set of employees are required to put in their very best at workplace (Hosseini, Mahdad & Golparvar, 2013). The most worrisome is the work relationship in the private sector, where workers are out rightly barred from constituting a legitimate union as compared to their contemporaries in the public sector. Such actions are inhuman and unconstitutional, because it is an infringement to the fundamental right of lecturers. Also, the disposition of the government as the first agency enacted by the people to protect their fundamental human right is failing in its duties in providing oversight and requisite enforcement of the extant laws which have been formulated to guarantee the provision of adequate welfare for employees.

It is on this basis that this study has been undertaken to advocate specifically, for lecturers employed in the private universities, with the intention that the recommendations provided will prompt required actions from statutory quarters to intervene in the plight of these set of workers.

Review of concepts

Who is a lecturer?

A lecturer is one who gives an organized lesson aiming to teach something. A lecturer educates university students, plans and directs the study of university students on one or more specific subjects and conducts their research in these areas. A lecturer also writes and delivers lectures, designs and supervises their studies and conducts research on topics that are closely related to their specialty. They also compile and mark essays, examinations and other coursework, provide students with advice on academic subjects, participate in meetings at places of study, schools or departments, and perform administrative tasks. A lecturer can also arrange and organize conferences. Depending on their level of knowledge, they can also work in libraries, laboratories or research centers, and they can offer practical training in practice. They can be used for full-time or part-time work. While full-time university lecturers work more or less on weekdays on campus, part-time faculty can study on campuses only during their teaching.

Interestingly, the Labour Act enacted in 1974, in the bid to explain the relationship between an employer and employee in Nigeria, uses the word "workers" to describe employees and it defines workers in Section 91 of the Act as:

any person who has entered into or works under a contract with an employer, whether the contract is for manual labour or clerical work or is expressed or implied or oral or written, and where it is a contract of service or a contract personally to execute any work or labour.

In order words, the lecturer as an employee of a privately owned institution is in-line with the tenet of Section 91.

Lecturer welfare

Lecturer welfare is an extremely essential factor and that is the reason employer provides workers, statutory and non-statutory benefits along with proper compensation for enhancing their motivation, which may likewise bring more loyalty and trust of

employees towards the organization. Welfare activities do not just provide motivating forces in a money related frame yet in addition by giving them consideration, enhance their abilities, improve their skills, understand their problems, allowances, housing, monitoring working conditions, creation of harmony through infrastructure for health, insurances against disease, accidents and unemployment of their families. Several studies have shown that an increased welfare facility can improve the job satisfaction and exert strong influence on the lecturer's performance (Nasiri, Tabibi & Habibi, 2012).

Lecturer's legal rights

This is enshrined in the labour law, and they are regulations that mediate the relationship between workers, employing entities, trade unions and the government. The basic feature of employment law in virtually every country is that the rights and obligations of the worker and the employer are mediated based on a contract of employment between the two and this has been the practice since the collapse of feudalism (Brown, 2015). The author emphasized that employment laws have a uniform purpose to protect employees' rights and set forth employers' obligations and responsibilities. Also, they have multiple functions, with core functions of providing equal opportunity and pay, employees' physical and mental well-being and safety and workplace diversity.

Employment laws in Nigeria are classified into Individual labour laws and Collective labour laws. While Individual labour laws cover: categories of employees, individual contract of employment, rights and duties, remuneration, working time, annual and maternity leaves etc., Collective labour laws deal with: freedom to form or belong to trade unions, relationship between trade unions and employers or their associations, collective bargaining, industrial actions including strikes and lock outs etc. (Ahmed, Ahmad & Idris, 2014).

Employment laws and the level of compliance by privately owned universities in Nigeria

Lack of legally constituted work relationship

It is unfortunate to mention that most lecturers in privately owned universities are yet to get their employment contract document issued to them by the institution that engage their services despite being engaged for more than three months. Meanwhile, Section 7 of the Labour Act provides that:

Not later than three months after the beginning of a worker's period of employment with an employer, the employer shall give to the worker a written statement specifying the following:

- *The name of the employer or group of employers and where appropriate of the undertaking by which the employee is employed.*
- *The name of the employee, address, position to be occupied, and the date of engagement.*
- *The nature of the employment.*
- *If the contract is for a fixed term, the date when the contract expires.*
- *The appropriate period of notice to be given by the party wishing to terminate the contract.*

- *The rate of wages and method of calculation and the manner and periodicity of payment.*
- *The terms and conditions relating to the hours of work, holiday pay, and conditions for incapacity to work due to sickness, injury, inclusive of provisions of sick pay.*
- *Leave allowance, medical and other special allowances to be accrued.*

Unlawful mode of employment termination

Another salient provision of the Labour Act that most privately owned institutions do not adhere to has to do with the mode of termination of employment relationship. It is clearly stated in Section 11 of the Labour Act provides that the termination of a contract of employment should be by the issuance of notice in writing. It states that either party to a contract of employment may terminate the contract on the expiration of a notice given by him to the other party of his intention to do so. Unfortunately, these set of university terminate the job of a lecturer at will without following due process. Meanwhile, Section 11 stipulated the following procedure to be issued based on the provisions of the law:

- One day, where the contract has continued for three months or less.
- One week, where the contract has continued for more than three months but less than two years.
- Two weeks, where the contract has continued for two years but less than five years.
- One month, where the contract has continued for five years or more.

Inadequate compliance of the reformed Pension Act 2014

Most organisations, especially privately owned tertiary institution, do not comply with the demands stipulated in this act. To some privately owned universities, no pension scheme is being operated, while most of the university that have engaged the services of a registered pension administrator do not remit their part of the contributory pension fund, meanwhile, the administrator constantly withdraw from the lecturers as their salaries are paid for the month. Section 1 of the Act provides that the objectives of the Act include establishing a uniform set of rules, regulations, and standards for the administration and payments of retirement benefits for the public service of the Federal Capital Territory, the public service of the state governments, the public service of the local government councils and the private sector. It also includes making provisions for the smooth operations of the Contributory Pension Scheme. Section 2 of the Act further provides that the private sector employers with fifteen (15) or more employees must establish a Contributory Pension Scheme for the benefit of the employees, wherefrom retirement benefits would be paid to the employees. Section 2(3) of the Act provides:

that notwithstanding the prescribed mandatory minimum threshold stated, private sector employers with less than three (3) employees or self-employed persons are also entitled to voluntarily establish schemes, following guidelines issued by the National Pension Commission.

The Act in Section 4 provides that the minimum rate of contribution payable by the employer is 10% of an employer's monthly remuneration and 8% of an employee's monthly remuneration to be contributed by the employee. The rate of contribution payable may also upon the agreement between the employer and employee be revised upwards from time to time and when such a situation arises, the Commission will be notified of the revision.

Inability to constitute a union

Trade unions in Nigeria and elsewhere represent important institutions through which collective labour relation is practiced. They regulate relations between employers on one hand and employees (through their elected representatives) on the other. Since the two parties to a contract of employment do not operate at arms-length i.e., the employee being the weaker of the parties, the only way through which the interests of the employees can be collectively and adequately protected is through vibrant trade unions which are the umbrella bodies of workers in particular organizations (Kenen, 2020).

Ideally, trade unions exist to foster industrial peace and harmony, the laws relating to trade unions showed that registered trade unions are to be compulsorily recognized by employers and adequately equipped to maintain equilibrium between employers and employees with a view to promoting industrial peace and harmony. But this seems to be a far cry for lecturers in privately owned universities in Nigeria, as such act is highly prohibited.

Meanwhile according to the statutory definition, in Section 1(1) of the Trade Unions Act, Trade Union means:

Any combination of workers or employers, whether temporary or permanent, the purpose of which is to regulate the terms and conditions of employment of workers, whether the combination in question would or would not, apart from this Act, be an unlawful combination by reason of any of its purposes being in restraint of trade, and whether its purposes do or do not include the provision of benefits for its members.

Also, Sub-section 2 of the Act further provides:

The fact that a combination of workers or employers has purposes or powers other than the purpose of regulating the terms and conditions of employment of workers shall not prevent it from being registered under this Act; and accordingly, subject to the provisions of this Act, as to the application of funds for political purposes, a trade union may apply its funds for any lawful purpose for the time being authorized by its rules, including in particular, if so authorized, that of providing benefits for its members.

Labour inspection and enforcement of employment laws

The strength of inspection and enforcement of the Nigerian employment laws is laughable. This is because punitive measures stipulated to correct defaulters as stated in the Factory Act 2004 make mockery of any serious government expecting adequate compliance of its laws designed to protect its citizens who have been gainfully employed. For example, the Factory Act 2004 states that the occupation of a factory without approval is punishable by a fine of 2000 or a 12-month imprisonment or both (Section 3(4)). False entries, false declarations and forgery are subject to a fine of 2000 (Section 72).

Also, where worker dies compensation is valued at 5000. Other crimes not expressly provided in the act (Section 70) are punishable by a fine of 500. The fine for the obstruction of an inspector is another paltry sum valued at 1000 (Section 65(5)). Where accidents occur and are not reported a fine of 1000 is payable (Section 51). The monetary value of these fines does not reflect modern day realities. These fines are too paltry and have no real deterrent effect in the 21st century. These fines can be easily paid over and again as such defeating its purpose in the first place.

Concluding recommendations

In conclusion, the following recommendations can be made:

1. The Nigerian government through the inspection functions of the Ministry of Labour should: (a) secure the enforcement of the legal provisions relating to conditions of work and the protection of workers while engaged in their work; and (b) supply technical information and advice to employers and workers concerning the most effective means of complying with the legal provisions. The government should rigorously enforce the provisions of the existing labour laws prescribing minimum conditions of employment and processes of collective bargaining. In this connection, the provisions of the labour laws relating to the protection of wages, contracts of employment, and terms and conditions of employment should be enforced in order to ensure that workers are not exploited by unscrupulous employers of labour.

2. Laws that do not guaranty the provision of adequately constituted welfare package for the lecturers should be repealed.

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Nigerian legislations

- Industrial Training Act, Cap. (L9), Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.
- Section (1), Trade Unions Act, Cap. (T14), Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.
- Sections (1) (2) (4) of the Pension Reform Act No. 64, 2014.
- Sections (3) (4) (61) (65) (70) (72) of the Factories Act, Cap. (F1), Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.
- Sections (7) (11) (91) of the Labour Act, Cap. (L1), Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.
- Trade Dispute Act, Cap. (T8), Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.

Princess Adaeze Chuku-Ashiegbu, Lecturer, Rivers State University, Nigeria

Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu

Black Lecturers Matter: Exploring the Views of BAME Staff in Education on Organisational Culture and Opportunities for Black Staff in Promotion to Higher Positions

Abstract

Legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 has ensured that considerable progress has been made in tackling discrimination in relation to the 8 protected characteristics that are defined in law. UK HEIs are well-versed in monitoring the diversity of their workforce and ensuring that recruitment is compliant with the legislation. However as HEIs become more diverse, we need to ensure that ‘cultural differences’ and ‘misunderstandings’, do not become barriers to genuine equality of opportunity for BAME staff. This small-scale research project explores these questions with BAME staff working in higher education in the UK. Implications for leaders and managers and Human Resources professionals are considered.

Keywords: culture, diversity, perception, people, minority groups, education, business, impact, solution

Introduction

Organisational culture and equality of opportunity

The main purpose of this paper is to critically analyse and evaluate the context of organisational culture and perception, the link to leadership and managerial roles to instil a conducive working environment to emulate by all working in an organisation. The understanding of cultural differences in business operation can enhance business performance in the context of working with our customers and colleagues. The global business operations are moderated by environmental variables such as culture, language, laws, misinterpretation and perceptions of which cultural diversity is one of the most pronounced challenges faced in business operations hence requires leaders and management intervention. Leaders and managers in business have roles to play to instil a conducive culture that can lead to employee motivation. The current business environment is becoming much modernised, unpredictable, and competitive and challenging, hence the need to adapt a positive culture will help motivate people that we do business and work with globally. The leaders and managers have important role to play to instil a conducive cultural environment.

Culture consists of shared thoughts; values and beliefs shared amongst employees and plays a great role in our understanding of the world of business and motivation. Cultural understanding is another challenge and important in a successful business. Culture consists of patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and

transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181). Culture therefore can be very difficult to erase from human nature. Culture responds to changes in internal and external environment, new technology, new products, new customers, new personnel, introduction of new systems and new procedures, as well as macro social and political trend and therefore can affect what we do and how we perceive things around us (Nworgu & Achinewhu-Nworgu, 2018). Spencer-Oatey (2008, p. 3), defines “Culture as a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour, perception and can lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of people based on interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour”.

Cultural understanding is obviously an issue that needs addressing as not providing the necessary support can frustrate people, staff and customers that interact with us in doing a business or working together. Some of the key factors that can impact on culture is misinterpretation, wrong perceptions and language barriers being major issues – understanding specific language and cultural needs (Bamford, 2008). This obviously imposes a big challenge to leaders and managers of an organisation, hence the need to find effective strategies to re-enforce cultural acceptance to cater for the diverse group of people that we do business with and interact with globally of which leaders and managers and HR have big role to play to accommodate all doing business with us to be successful.

Representation of BAME staff in UK higher education

A total of 1.9% of all academic staff employed in UK HE is Black while 3.7% of non-academic staff is Black. Across both groups the percentage of staff employed in HE who are Black is a little over 2.5%. To put this into context, around 3.3% of the UK population is Black. As seniority increases the issue of a lack of diversity increases. In 2018/19 there were 535 staff who were employed as academic managers, directors or senior officials across British universities. 475 of these were White, 25 Asian, mixed or other ethnicity, and none Black. The remaining 35 were of unknown ethnicity. Less than 1% of the professors employed at UK universities are Black and few British universities employ more than two Black professors (Ijoyemi, 2021).

In July 2020, 300 academics and students wrote an open letter criticising universities for their “tokenistic and superficial” support for the BLM movement given their poor record on tackling institutional racism. In the letter they said the sector had significantly underestimated the prevalence of racism and had failed to address its “systemic and structural nature”. Prof David Richardson, chair of Universities UK’s advisory group on stamping out racial harassment on campuses and vice-chancellor of University of East Anglia, said there was evidence of systemic issues that disproportionately affect students from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. Speaking on BBC Three’s documentary *Is Uni Racist?* He said: “There’s mixed experiences, but many aren’t good. There is a lot of evidence that points towards universities perpetuating systemic racism, being institutionally racist and I have acknowledged that on behalf of the sector.”

On the one hand, UK HEIs state that they heavily committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for both students and staff. On the other hand, BAME staffs are underrepresented within higher levels of academia and of the senior management of universities. The aim of this research is to explore why this might still be an issue in education particularly at this changing world with focus on globalisation, inclusive education and equal opportunities for all regardless of your age, race, disability and gender preached equalities. This small scale research sought to ask BAME staff in UK HEIs about their experiences at the present time and whether there has being changes in their recruitment and selection to higher positions in education.

Literature

Culture refers to the fundamental beliefs, philosophies, expectations, assumptions, norms, written and unwritten rules and regulations that guide our ways of interactions that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organisation (Cancialosi, 2017). It is about how we perceive things around us and can lead to misinterpretation of a person's character or behaviour which can have a drastic effect on those affected. Culture has a link to perception and subject to misinterpretation of character if not understood.

Perception is another contributor of cultural understanding as the organisational culture can be highly affected by the values prioritised in its operations centred on the sense of working and general behaviours amongst the workers and others that are part of the organisation. The way employees are perceived, treated and motivated in organisation can drive their moral and it is a major aspect that controls their perception and the effectiveness, therefore, understanding this aspect of human being in our business can help trust and create stability at work place or business which can impact on organisational culture (Al-Tit, 2016).

The culture of an organisation needs to be understood by leaders and managers and employees in general. The concept of organisational culture has many interpretations and some of the definitions have claimed that organisational culture to be a set of knowledge acquired by a group of people after solving a problem of adaptation to the external and internal environment (Schein, 1993) and consists of three layers namely, artefacts, values and behaviours of the organisation and assumptions (Schein & Schein, 2016, pp. 6-7). Culture is defined by Hofstede and Minkov as a collective phenomenon that comprises a set of unwritten rules acquired from the social environment of a group, distinguishing one group from another and seen as consisting of different layers and levels, namely, symbols, heroes, rituals and values (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, pp. 7-8). According to Mullins (2006), organisational culture is specific and denotes certain behaviour and attitudes of employees towards the organisation which makes them unique. It could be represented as the way a company works known as the entire organisational behaviour (Armstrong, 2009, p. 288).

It is noted in research that a strong and positive organisational culture is important to sustain the organisation and can increases performance (Nworgu & Achinewhu-Nworgu, 2018), also can be seen from employee, motivation and commitment to their duties and responsibilities. In a negative cultural driven environment, there is always tension and resistance to changes in working condition whereas in a positive cultural driven environment, there is presence of active involvement in what we do hence leading to positive attitudes to work by those in the organisation, employees or those involved to gain a sense of belonging, loyal and commit to work ethics (Mullins, 2006).

Organisational culture influences many aspects of the organisation ranging from top management to bottom (Garcia Martinez et al., 2016), as most organisations fail to maintain cultural supports for diversity in the workplace hence leading to cultural gap. Instilling a positive organisational culture influences employee smooth relationships and interaction (Evans, 2001), therefore building a positive culture can help resolve some of the issues and problems faced in organisation particularly with the minority groups that seem to be marginalised or discriminated at in organisations operating both national and international. Corporate culture has to present positive image as it carries the values, behaviour and practices (Kummerow & Kirby, 2013) that make them whom they are and what they do. If presented wrongly, it will scare customers and stakeholders, including the employees as negative culture can have a devastating effect on organisational performance.

What are the moderators of organisational culture?

When good people are misinterpreted and presented in a wrong way, it can have a drastic impact on their business and work. Misinterpretation can also be as a result of cultural misunderstanding, the way we do things, selfishness, hate; malicious gossip which can lead to misinterpretation of character resulting from cultural attributes. The language we speak can lead to misinterpretation; the body language of people can be misconstrued due to barriers in communication. The degree of organisational hierarchy has a big impact and must be maintained to avoid negative impact in the business operations with notion of growth.

How does the role of leadership and management impact organizational culture and implication for BAME staff in recruitment and selection to higher positions in education?

The core values of any organisation start with its leaders and their leadership style. Therefore the ability of leaders in shaping the culture of the organisation helps to create a healthy working environment. Understanding the culture of the organisation helps the employees to understand what is expected in relation to what is accepted and not accepted in relation to the organisational values, assumptions and practices (Sims, 2002). Working in an environment of uniformity in organisational value can lead to emerging strong organisational, hence it is vital for the leaders of any organisation to ensure consistency in our approach to working with people in a culturally diverse environment.

Appreciation of employee commitment to organisation complying with organisation standards and ethics in their business operations is very vital in instilling a conducive working culture, hence defining a culture to monitor and reward good employee performance, which could be done through training and development of skills, recruitment and selection and complying with the organisational ethos (Craig, 2018) and fairness.

Methodology

The study has used WhatsApp interviews to approach a small group of respondents who volunteered to participant in the interview of which work in education leadership and management or have their own education related business. The focus was to find out what they think about organisational culture, misinterpretation and perceptions and

impact on their jobs or business. The findings of research were relevant to compare and contrast with the literature, also inform conclusion that organisational culture can have either negative or positive impact and subject to misinterpretation and perception that can affect business performance if ignored by leaders and managers of organisation.

Findings and discussion

A selection of responses is shared below, before we discuss the themes arising from the responses as a whole.

What is your understanding of culture and diversity and impact on your jobs?

Culture is the programming of mind, the belief and values attached to things and it is very difficult to change the way you do things and see things. Diversity on the other hand is working with different sets of people with different culture, ethnic group and countries comprising male or female and categorised as black, white and Asian to mention a few. Culture is your religion and ethos that can be complex in organisational setting and when misunderstood, can lead to either positive or negative outcome. (AO)

The culture is how you see things around you, the values attached and belief that you cannot depart from or get rid of overnight regardless whom you interact with or work for, it is in every member of the organisation or society and therefore recognising the positive or negative impact on people, the institution and people around us is very important. Having a positive culture has good effect in working environment or business and interacting with people regardless of where they come from is the only way forward to creating a positive culture. Creating a positive culture that does not discriminate against certain group of people can create a strong culture. (AS)

I see culture as something that is part of you and does not leave you. It could be something that you are born with in case of religion that you practice, following what you do at work and how you perceive things around you. It is the value attached to way of life and what you do and how you do it. We are working in a diverse global world interacting with different people at work, on holiday and in business, we must recognise that they are not the same, don't think the same, speak differently, can perceive things right or wrong and subject to misinterpretation. It can seriously impact on organisational performance if presented negative by people that we interact with in our day to day activities or in business. Educating people about the difference in diversity and working together is the key to understanding. (UA)

Everyone should be responsible for creating a positive working cultural environment. I remember when I first came to the UK to work; language was a barrier as I spoke French. It was embarrassing to me that I made mistake in everyone sentence made. My boss was very understanding. He called me into the office one day and asked me if I needed extra English class which he paid for me. I took the advantage and here we are today. The training he offered as a manager did help me to speak better. He realised the language barrier affecting my job and he helped to resolve the problem through extra training. You can imagine how I would have felt if he did not realise the barrier to doing effective job. Within 6 months of my training, my performance increased and our department had the best results. (SU)

How do you see the promotion in your job in regard to your ethnicity?

Well, I am a black British and must admit that promotion of black people in education is very difficult in higher positions such as the Heads of Departments, Deans and Vice Chancellors. For me, it is not something that will change in my generation because it is there and all affected have accepted to live with it. You live with it because you can't complain to anyone; HR will not support you if you complain, you are seen as a trouble maker and could be isolated or being avoided for fighting for equality. I feel that it is

the culture of both HE and FE or education institution in general and not sure who id there to ensure fairness in recruitment and selection to ensure inclusion of all in hierarchy. Not in my generation. Think of Covid period, which were manly the frontline workers BAME Staff, yet when it comes to recognition and promotion to higher positions, they are the least. (OJ)

Have you been treated differently at work due to your cultural diversity?

Not sure if it is me alone or what I see happen to other people. Being black maybe more pronounced and does make you think about your colour or race. We get treated differently for sure but most foreigners experience racism in education when it comes to promotion opportunities. However, for black community, it is no more pronounced. (SS)

Do you think that the University is given black female staff opportunity to progress?

Since working in this University, the answer is no. However, I am not sure if they are applying because, some give up with the impression that the jobs will not be given to them which is true in most cases. However, we have few of the male blacks in the management team. More is needed from HR to give opportunities to more female black lecturers to move on to management positions particularly those who have being in the system for a long time. (SU)

How are you supported in your research and development activities coming from black British Background?

Nothing there for research and development opportunities for some minority groups, an experience for me as a Black person was very unbelievable. I told my colleague about a conference in Europe which we both applied for research funding that is available to all staff. It was surprising that mine was not approved and but they approved it for my colleague who secretly told me that hers was approved. I paid for myself and yet travelled with a colleague whom everything was paid for and yet we travelled together. This is why you see how coming from black ethnic minority can have impact on staff. I see it sometimes as a negative culture of education that can affect your progression. (SA)

Do you think that cultural diversity and inclusive in education in hierarchy could be achievable?

Nothing is impossible; it also depends on the environment, situation, strategies in place and those involved in managing cultural change and diversity inclusion. The first thing is the education of mind-set, making people realise their mistake on how they attach negativity to people believed him, when he realised this, he stopped. This is a way to change the mid-set of living on people. (BK)

Conclusion

This small scale research found that BAME staffs have experienced barriers to their progression in UK universities/colleges. Respondents also shared direct experiences where they felt they had been treated less favourably than white colleagues when it came to development opportunities and recruitment and selection for higher positions. The general view was that it will take a long time to turn the situation around and see real equality of opportunity and outcomes for BAME staff. However, respondents also spoke positively about their treatment and support from individual colleagues.

Although based on a small sample size, this exploratory work confirms that organisational culture can play a crucial role in improving the opportunities for BAME

staff in. Leaders and managers, supported by HR teams (which themselves should be representative), should seek the views and experiences of BAME staff and allow honest conversations about the issues. Educational leaders should look to other sectors where inclusion efforts have been more successful to identify lessons and transferable measures. A limitation of the research was that some staffs were reluctant to participate due to their busy workload, fear and sensitive nature of the research.

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Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu, Ulster University, United Kingdom & Ireland

Marius Smit

Social Media in Schools – A Comparative Legal and Educational Perspective

Abstract

The comparative research paper explores the use and risks of social media in South African, USA and European schools. It discusses the potential challenges that schools, educators and learners may face such as cyberbullying, sexting, identity theft, fraud, catphishing, cybercrimes, excessive online presence, and addiction to social media. The paper reports on the findings of a phenomenological study and purposive survey among school principals and educators in South African schools. The paper highlights the advantages of applying social media in the classroom, and provides recommendations for schools, educators, parents and principals to manage the use of social media in the education environment.

Keywords: social media, education law, freedom of expression, right to privacy, student misconduct, school policies, cyber law

Introduction

One of the effects of the internet and advances in smartphone technology is the pervasive use of social media in modern society. The speed and immense capabilities by which text, images, videos and audio information is shared on social media has obvious pedagogical advantages. However, children are among the most active users of social media, and while it has benefits, it also has risks and challenges that pose threats to their well-being. Workplaces and educational institutions must adapt and regulate the appropriate use of social media to prevent harmful or disruptive application of social media.

Incidents of cyberbullying, defamation, hate speech and fraud with social media have serious deleterious repercussions in the school environment (Russo, Osborne & Arndt, 2011, pp. 427-430). News events, court cases and academic literature in the United States of America, Canada and European countries confirm that inappropriate communication by means of social media can give rise to legal liability of teachers, learners, and other role players in education (Ireton & Posetti, 2018, p. 55).

In this paper, we will explore the uses and abuses of social media by school-going children in the USA, European countries, and South Africa, regarding the risks and challenges. This paper reports on research conducted at South African schools about the management of social media. The aim of this paper is to compare the legal, pedagogical, and managerial measures to deal with social media at schools in South Africa and other countries.

Defining social media

Social media is electronic digital communication by means of web-based technology and mobile applications that allow individuals and organisations to create, engage and share new or existing user-generated content in digital environments, in a multi-directional communication. Electronic digital communication includes text messages, audio communication, photos, images, videos, and other forms of visual communication as well as coding and programming of software related to social media. Social media platforms enable individuals and organizations create profiles to exchange information about various activities and interests. Examples of social media platforms on the internet and mobile applications include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, ‘blogs’ and emails.

Pedagogical advantages of applying social media in the classroom

Social media can be an effective tool for teachers to engage students in meaningful discussions, collaborative projects, and real-time feedback. Social media can also provide an alternative to traditional teaching methods, allowing for a more dynamic and interactive learning experience. Social media enables communication with friends and family, sharing of information, and accessing educational resources. Moreover, social media platforms can offer students an opportunity to connect with peers from around the world, creating an authentic global learning experience. Social media can also be used to develop social and technical skills, and to teach digital citizenship skills, such as online safety, cyber etiquette, and responsible social media usage, preparing students for the digital world they will inevitably encounter.

Risks of social media for school-going children in the USA

Schools face major challenges to ensure that the physical and digital spaces in which learning takes place are secure and that distractions and disruptions to their educational mission are minimized (Ballard, 2020, p. 468). Cyberbullying is a growing concern among school-going children, and social media platforms provide a platform for this behavior. According to Patchin and Hiduja (2012, pp. 13-36) the Cyberbullying Research Center in the USA found that approximately 34% of students had experienced cyberbullying.

Sexting is the practice of sending or receiving sexually explicit messages or images, and it poses a significant risk to school-going children. According to a study conducted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy (2008) in the USA, 22% of teenage girls and 18% of teenage boys of the survey had sent or received a sexually explicit images.

Identity theft and fraud is another significant risk associated with social media use among school-going children. According to a report by Pascual and Marchini (2018), approximately 1 million children in the USA had their identities stolen in 2017.

Catphishing is the act of creating a fake social media profile to deceive others. School-going children are especially vulnerable to this type of fraud, and it can lead to emotional and financial harm. Catphishing was the top scam reported by students in 2020. Excessive social media use can lead to various negative effects, including sleep deprivation, reduced physical activity, and impaired academic performance. According to a study conducted by Miller (2020), 50% of teens feel addicted to their mobile

devices. The fear of missing out (FOMO) is another growing concern among school-going children, and it can lead to anxiety, depression, and other negative effects. According to this study, 42% of teens feel that they have to respond immediately to social media notifications. Cybercrime is a growing concern, and social media platforms provide a platform for various criminal activities. According to a report by the FBI, cybercrime losses in the USA totaled approximately \$4.2 billion in 2020.

Uses and abuses of social media by school-going children in European countries

Social media use is widespread among school-going children in European countries. According to Smahel et al. (2020, p. 23) 77% of 9 to 16-year-olds in Europe use social networking sites. According to the same study, 19% of European children have experienced cyberbullying, and 12% of them have encountered negative experiences in social media. Social media is also one of the primary sources of sexting among teenagers, with more than 8% of European teenagers admitting to sending sexually explicit texts, images, or videos online. Over 30% of European teenagers experience cyberbullying or harassment on social media platforms. Teenagers who spend more time on social media tend to have lower self-esteem, increased levels of anxiety and depression, and an increased likelihood of developing problematic behaviors such as addiction and compulsive usage of social media. Excessive online presence, addiction to social media, and the fear of missing out are also issues that plague social media users, including children in European countries. According to Lad (2017), excessive exposure to social media reduces learning, and uncontrolled exposure to social networks and low quality social media sources leads to poorer academic performance.

Federal law regulating social media in the USA and Canada

While all 50 of the United States have some form of anti-bullying legislation, only 17 states had laws in 2016 that criminalises cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2016). The federal government of the USA enacted a federal law, i.e., the Megan Meir Cyberbullying Prevention Act. Ballard (2018) found that in the USA there is a lack of clear direction from the courts, an absence of meaningful social scientific data, and limited legislation about cell phones at schools which leaves schools and school leaders in a difficult position of enacting and enforcing policy relying on information that is ambiguous and open to mixed interpretation.

The Canadian federal government enacted the Canadian Protecting Children from Internet Predators Act, and the Canadian Federal Government's Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act, to address cyberbullying and analogous misuse of social media and the cyber space. Cartwright (2017, p. 23) is of the opinion that these statutes were ineffective to keep pace with the novel developments and harmful effects of misuse of the internet and social media.

Legislation regulating social media and electronic communication in South Africa

In South Africa there was a time lapse of more than a decade between the initial development and availability of social media technology, and the eventual statutory

regulation thereof. Currently, legislation in South Africa includes the Cybercrimes Act (SA, 2021), the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI Act) (SA, 2013), and the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act (SA, 2002).

The fundamental rights of freedom of expression, the right to privacy, right to human dignity, right to personal security, as set out in the Constitution of South Africa (SA, 1996) are interrelated and relevant to the proper use of social media in schools. A tension exists between social media users' rights to freedom of express and another person's right to privacy and human dignity. The right to freedom of expression is limited (not absolute) in terms of section 16(2) of the Constitution and common law principles that prohibit slander, defamation and hate speech. However, in view of word count restrictions it is beyond the scope of to elaborate on this. Section 2 of the Children's Act (SA, 2008) confirms that the best interest of a child is the decisive criterion to be considered before posting anything on social media that might affect children.

The POPI Act requires of schools to deal responsibly with the processing of personal information. This Act prescribes eight minimum threshold requirements that must be met to ensure the lawful processing of personal information relating to the data subjects. Schools are allowed to collect only the minimum personal information required for a specific and legitimate purpose. The consent of the person concerned is necessary to ensure that the processing of personal information is legitimate. Educators must be very careful with the photos and information they post on social media. Educators or schools therefore cannot disclose any personal information of learners or post it on social media unless the parents have given express permission. Imprisonment or a stiff fine to a maximum of R10 million can be imposed (SA, 2013, section 107). Educators' and learners' private cell phones are private, and they are not obliged to make their personal numbers public.

Chapter 2 of the Cybercrimes Act (SA, 2021) declares the following as cybercrimes: unlawful access to hardware, software (programs and information), unlawful interception of data, unlawful interference with data or computer program, or computer data storage medium or computer systems, unlawful acquisition, possession, provision, receipt or use of password, access code or similar data or device, cyber fraud, cyber forgery, cyber extortion, aggravated offences, and theft of incorporeal property. The Cybercrimes Act inter alia sets out the powers to investigate, search, access or seize, and establishes new procedures which specifically cater for the investigation and multinational law enforcement agencies and fostering multi-agency collaboration.

These statutes regulate the risks and unlawful conduct associated with abuse of the internet, information technological systems and social media. As a result, it has become even more essential for school leaders, educators, parents, and school-going learners to be well-informed and educated with regard to the legal principles that apply to social media in schools and the education realm.

A phenomenological study of social media at purposely selected schools in South Africa

A phenomenological study was undertaken by obtaining data at purposive sample of six secondary schools and four primary schools in the Limpopo and Gauteng provinces in South Africa. Creswell (2014, p. 76) describes phenomenological studies as qualitative research about the experiences of the participants' experiences,

perceptions, and observations of issues, and their perspectives, and opinions which are obtained by means of interviews. The research design entailed that schools with purported experience in managing the use of social media were identified by means of preliminary enquiries. Ethical clearance was obtained from the North-West University to conduct semi-structured interviews with the participants which included school principals, educators, school marketers and officers that were responsible for managing the school's information technology and social media. With the written permission of the school or educational authorities and the written consent of the participants the interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Only adults participated and all interviewees were given the assurance of strict confidentiality their identity. After transcribing the recordings, the text was checked by each respective participant for correctness, and on confirmation of its correctness the data was analysed by way of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding processes.

Data analysis and findings

The use of social media in schools and the workplace is currently still going through a process of development and refining policies, adapting social conventions (good manners, etiquette, customs) and the introduction of additional legislation. Although certain computer and mobile applications, colloquially known as 'Apps', are already available to enable users to manage and monitor social media availability going, the regulation of online service providers, censorship of illegal communications, control over the accessibility of pornography and other controversial or harmful sites and the prosecution of cybercrimes are not yet part of the general *modus operandi* of members of the public. The enforcement of statutory provisions and societal measures is still largely practiced by experts in the field of information technology and cybercrime.

The data from this study showed that there are beneficial as well as detrimental aspects regarding social media in education. There is a relationship between the proper management of social media and the optimal utilisation of thereof at schools. The management measures that bore fruit and expanded the benefits of social media included drafting and instituting written, tailor-made cell phone and social media policies for each respective school, proper communication by the principal, adequate training for educators about statutory and policy provisions, sufficient knowledge about the application of social media, and encouragement of learners and parents to use social media responsibly.

On the other hand, the data confirmed that in schools where there were no written school policies about cell phones and social media, where principals did not inform, train, communicate and monitor the statutory and policy provisions, where educators, learners and parents did not receive training or have sufficient knowledge about appropriate use of social media, and where parents were not encouraged to make use of parental control mechanisms and measures, more harmful or disadvantageous social media incidents occurred than schools who had taken the preventative or pro-active managerial measures.

However, in general the participants had no or superficial knowledge of the statutory provisions and legal principles that regulate social media and cybercrime. Parents and educators are by and large ignorant of the parental control features that are available for internet platforms and cell phones. Most of the participants were unaware of parental control features or cell phone applications such as Bark, Kaspersky, FYI

Play it Safe, Sonic Wall, Kahoot, Prodigy, Khan Academy, Vivi that can limit, control and monitor misuse of the internet or social media. For instance, the app known as ‘Bark’ enables a parent (or school) to block certain applications or websites when setting up the smartphone, schedule the time during which the smartphone may be used, place web filters on the phone, which are protected by passwords that are only known to the parents, and set alarms (‘flag’) by sending an SMS to the parent if certain search words or text appear on the learner's phone. The Bark app also has a time scheduling function that can be set to prevent the child from visiting the Internet during school hours and or after bedtime. Another valuable function of Bark is that the parent automatically receives an SMS or text message when a child uses certain words or text (such as crude language, words with sexual content, swear words, or even words that indicate emotional conditions such as depression, suicidal thoughts or victims of cyberbullying) used or received. It then notifies the parent without the child’s mobile phone having to be searched. The parent can then ask the child or learner about certain messages that cause concern. This protects the child’s privacy, but also offers the parent a mechanism to monitor the use of the smartphone remotely or unseen.

The age limit prescriptions (i.e., minimum 13 years old to subscribe) of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are intended to protect children against the risks of social media. Most schools or media officers were unaware that the settings of the Wi-Fi senders (‘router’) can be controlled or managed to limit the time of availability, prevent access to certain specified websites and platforms and limit the data usage if necessary.

Poor or ineffective management practices at schools contributed to the prevalence of negative conduct and incidents of abuse of social media. Incidents of misuse of social media, including cyberbullying, sexting, identity theft and fraud, catphishing, cybercrimes, excessive online presence by learners, addiction to social media, and fear of missing out, were reported by all the participants.

Conclusions and recommendations

Schools should draft written cell phone and social media policies and should update these policies annually to keep up with statutory requirements. School principal should be responsible for the planning of school policies and training opportunities, for communicating staff responsibilities and safety measures, for providing guidance and motivation and to supervise, monitor and implement the social media policies.

Educators should be trained to understand the mutual relationship between freedom of expression and the right to privacy, as well as the unlawfulness of defamation, the unlawfulness of cyberbullying through social media, and the prohibition of illegal social media activities.

It is crucial to educate children on the potential risks and challenges associated with social media use and teach them responsible social media usage.

Parents should be required to give written acknowledgement of receipt of the school's cell phone and social media policies. Parents should be informed and supported to educate their children regarding the correct use of social media and encouraged to make use of parental control measures such as age limits, internet settings and cell phone applications to monitor their children’s use of social media.

To address the risks and challenges associated with social media use among school-going children, we recommend that parents, educators, and schools should take

concerted steps to manage the use and application of social media in the education environment carefully.

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Prof. Dr. Marius Smit, North-West University, South Africa

Vimbi Petrus Mahlangu

Understanding Principled Leadership Through the Lens of Fraud Diamond Theory

Abstract

The paper emanates from the inaugural lecture that I presented on the 22nd of November 2022 at the University of South Africa. It is well known that “The Zondo Commission” revealed numerous crises with principled leadership poisoning organisations in South Africa. The world is becoming more conscious of ethics and ethical leadership because of the numerous scandals that have occurred in a variety of sectors, such as state-owned corporations and government institutions owing to unethical conduct by those organisations’ leaders. It would be wrong to think that because corrupt behaviour had been exposed, the golden era of frauds had ended and that organisations had reached a turning point due to democracy and open management. If fraudulent actions continue to deplete organisations of resources and offer difficulties for managers and leaders, I contend, principled leadership is becoming toxic in organisations. These leaders need to be visionary. They must be able to communicate with members of their team. When leaders and their teams communicate, trust and confidence are increased. They should inform team members of their decisions rather than forcing decisions upon them. Leaders should consider all relevant factors before making judgments. They ought to enforce their influence by persuasion rather than by pressure. They must be creative in coming up with new solutions to challenges, taking chances to support organisations in minimising toxic inclinations.

Keyword: corruption, principled leader, toxic, Fraud Diamond Theory, empowerment, honesty

Introduction

This paper uses the dimension Fraud Diamond Theory covered in literature study, by asking, “Why is principled leadership turning toxic in organisations?” The review’s theoretical foundation for understanding “Why is principled leadership turning toxic in organisations” is the fraud diamond hypothesis. Instead of traumatising and mocking employees, toxic leaders must recognise their shortcomings and eliminate them if they want to prevent their organisations from becoming toxic (Labhane, 2020). It is assumed that if corrupt behaviour can be exposed in organisations, then frauds can be minimised. Rustiarini, Nurkholis and Andayani (2019) found that corruption practices seem to have been institutionalized in the organizational systems and have become an integral part of organizations’ activities.

It is argued in this paper that employees that are dealing with extreme unfavourable working conditions and job uncertainty need principled leaders for them to cope with their vulnerability in the workplace. Therefore, a good code of conduct for leaders and employees in organisations do not inevitably translate into principled leadership. It is

assumed that principled leaders can recognise and deal with the consequences of dysfunctional behaviour and leadership in organisation.

Methodology

Method

The paper is qualitative in nature and literature on principled leadership was reviewed and the Fraud Diamond Theory was used by relying on interpretivist paradigm.

Purpose of the paper

The purpose is to understand the concept of 'Principled Leadership' through the lens of Fraud Diamond Theory.

Research question

The overarching question this paper is trying to understand is: "Why is principled leadership turning toxic in organisations?"

Fraud Diamond Theory

It explains the occurrence of most frauds in organisations, and this theory acts as an "early fraud warning instrument". Individuals who are motivated to commit fraud in organisation not only need opportunities but also must have the capability to exploit existing fraud opportunities. The capability is an individual factor that must be possessed by each fraud perpetrator to commit fraud. It is assumed that corruption practices seem to have been institutionalized in the organization system and have become an integral part of organization activities (Rustiarini, Nurkholis & Andayani, 2019).

Principled leadership

The exhibition of normatively appropriate behaviour through one's actions and interpersonal interactions, as well as the encouragement of such behaviour to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making, are all components of principled leadership (Argyropoulou & Spyridakis, 2022). A code of conduct, a good institution or organisation, or a plethora of good intentions do not automatically translate into principled leadership. It is a decision made by an individual, or rather a sequence of decisions, that result from the intricate interaction of internal values and external societal pressures (McQuade, 2022). Honesty, generosity, fairness, and respect must all be regulated behaviours under principled leadership. Leaders who uphold ethics must act in a way that benefits others and refrain from bad behaviour. These leaders need to uphold morality in all their behaviours, attitudes, and values. They have a responsibility to lead by moral example. They must go beyond simply being trustworthy, disciplined, and fair leaders. They must promote moral behaviour among their supporters by outlining moral values and goals, providing moral guidance, and holding employees accountable for their good and bad deeds as supporters. They should resist temptations and serve as moral role models for their followers. Collective motivation, honesty, empowerment, and selflessness are traits of

principled leadership that are often seen as essential to effective leadership in organisations (Ejaz et al., 2022).

People of character who work to change the unacceptable habits can help to tackle the problem of toxic workplaces (Grace, 2022). To prevent organisational politics and lower the likelihood that someone would become a victim of workplace bullying, the leader's ethical leadership is crucial in fostering a supportive and ethical workplace culture (Tiamboonprasert & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). Employees that are dealing with extreme unfavourable working conditions and job uncertainty need ethical leadership behaviour. By acting fairly and openly in their decision-making, principled leaders are expected to encourage proper workplace behaviour. Employees may regard organisational regulations and processes as just and legitimate when leaders act ethically, to help relieve concerns about the instability of their jobs and working circumstances. The role of principled leaders in organisations or institutions is to act as reliable information sources to increase the accountability and predictability of organisational actions. With significant task and emotional resources, principled leadership behaviour can also lower employees' negative feelings and attitudes, if they care about employees' personal struggles and give them fair opportunity. This may also help them make meaningful contributions at work (Lee, Hur & Shin, 2022).

Organizations are becoming poisonous because of corrupt leaders

Although principled leadership is generally related to desirable workplace outcomes, it was found that ethical leaders who oversee employees high on narcissism may spur unintended negative emotions and attitudes. Indeed, principled leaders promote a work context in which normative, communal standards of behavior are consistently modelled, communicated, and championed over self-centred, risk-driven behavior, which narcissists prefer. Thus, narcissists, who are emotionally volatile and exhibit behaviors that prioritize the self over ethics and others, may react negatively toward principled leaders (Fox, Smith & Webster, 2023). Leadership that is destructive does not happen by accident. There is a 'toxic triangle' consisting of the leader, the follower, and the environment. This triangle must exist for corrupt and toxic leadership to flourish. Dominance, force, intimidation, coercion, and manipulation are examples of destructive leadership. On the other side, influence, persuasion, and commitment are traits of constructive and ethical leadership. Selfishness by toxic leaders in organisations serves as an example of destructive leadership (Cushman, 2022).

According to Baloyi (2020), leadership is one of the most important functions in life and should provide organisations or institutions with a competitive edge. It is believed that leadership is the process by which a leader motivates followers to work together to accomplish the organisation's objectives. Because of the toxicity at their jobs, people who work in toxic settings frequently have little to no choice, but to lose energy and become demoralised. An example is the tale of bosses who make fun of their workers in public, subject them to emotional and physical suffering, and encourage rivalry among workers while they are still considered co-workers. A poll of 14,000 employees and 800 managers concluded that the repercussions of workplace disrespect on people have grave consequences. Employees who worked in toxic settings reported exerting less effort, spending less time at work, and producing lower-quality work. Employee personality changes because of stressful workplace relationships, are the most alarming effect of workplace rudeness. People may alter

their beliefs during traumatic circumstances because of uncertainty, anxiety, and difficult choices (Grace, 2022).

Behaviours displayed by toxic leaders in organisations

Toxic leaders exhibit bad leadership traits such as dishonesty, unfair treatment of followers, lack of support for followers, distorting or withholding information, disloyalty, authoritarian behaviour, personal attacks on followers, being unapproachable, and acting heartlessly and insensitively. Individuals, when faced with potentially dangerous conditions, they tend to withdraw their efforts and involvement at work to reclaim their own independence. Employees could unwittingly lower their participation to reclaim their own liberty because of witnessing their superiors' abusive behaviour (Xia, Zhang & Li, 2019).

The toxic effects of corrupt leadership in organisations

The Fraud Diamond Theory identifies the following four elements/factors that cause moral leaders to become toxic leaders in organisations (Wolfe & Hermanson, 2004; Hart, Coate & Fischer, 2022), namely:

- *The Incentive*: They can be motivated by a need or a desire to deceive others to become toxic. Examples of the incentive or pressure component of the fraud triangle include money, vices, performance, financial issues, and addiction. The most common examples are closely based around money and other financial issues.
- *The Opportunity*: They might identify a systemic flaw in the organisation and take advantage of it. For example, they see the potential for fraud. Opportunity structure is important because if a fraud is more difficult to commit, the number of offenses will be reduced. When companies have weak internal controls, including ease of management override, frauds are more likely to occur and less likely to be detected.
- *The Rationalisation*: It is the most difficult element to both detect and control since it is internal and unique to the employee. An awareness of employees' attitudes and overall job satisfaction can help employers assess the risk of fraud. They may persuade themselves that the risks involved in their dishonest behaviour are justified. This justification gives the individual moral permission to commit the fraud even though it may go against their ethical beliefs.
- *The Capability*: They possess the qualities and skills required to be the most suitable candidate to pull it off. They might see the chance for fraud and be able to make it happen in their organizations. Although morally wrong, justification of frauds can convince the employee that they are doing nothing wrong despite knowingly engaging in fraudulent behavior. Suddenly, employees find themselves in denial; a behavior that can lead to a chain reaction where these employees find themselves repeating the fraudulent act. Fraudulent people deceive themselves into believing they are the victim in order to rationalize committing more fraudulent acts.

One of the most difficult problems affecting organisations and institutions in most of the world's nations, is fraud. Fraud indicates that corruption may occur because of insufficient professionalisation of the bureaucracy in institutions, a lack of oversight and control mechanisms, a lack of openness and accountability, and other factors

(Rustiarini, Nurkholis & Andayani, 2019). Because personnel working in these institutions are more likely to be exposed to fraud, there are risk factors that could motivate them to commit fraud. Therefore, institutions are more susceptible to the risk of fraud. White-collar crimes in organisations may result from ethical leaders turning toxic, damaging public trust in the organisations, and posing systemic dangers to the efficient operation of the organisations. The pressure that leads to fraud might come from within the individual, the organisation, the workplace, or from the outside.

According to Hart, Coate and Fischer (2022), the motivation for committing fraud is inducement or pressure. Some situations encourage or make it necessary for people to engage in fraud rather than control it. Incentives consider an employee's mentality to motivate behaviours that lead them to avoid managing fraud.

Personal issues like the cost of marriage, divorce, medical expenses, and other issues like unmanaged debt and greed can put a strain on finances. Some organisational leaders may be fixated on power and terrified of changing their lifestyle and losing their social position. In the context of an organisation, pressure is present when a leader instructs subordinates to engage in unethical behaviour (obedience pressure). For instance, the Integrity Survey results from 2008-2009 revealed that 59% of managers and employees felt pressured to do whatever it took to meet their goals; 52% of managers and employees think they will be rewarded if they achieve their goals; and 49% of managers and employees worry about losing their jobs if they don't (Rustiarini, Nurkholis & Andayani, 2019).

Occupational pressure is a type of pressure that is frequently present in the workplace and challenging to avoid. The internal organisation or outside parties who are still connected to the organisation are the sources of this pressure. While external pressure comes from high ranked members who hold power, internal pressure comes from leaders acting as superiors. When internal organisations put pressure on individuals, leaders of the organisation may manufacture fraud and drive it from the top down using potent tools like approval to authority. Employees will be forced to choose between refusing the leader's orders and doing so can result in fraudulent behaviour. If the employee does not follow such unlawful directive, they risk being terminated or changed (Rustiarini, Nurkholis & Andayani, 2019).

The opportunity in an organisation is the absence of structure and governance that would regulate how operations are managed and how assets are used. Where an effective structure exists, there is a chance, fraud won't happen, because the person will be under a lot of pressure to do it. Lack of organisational structure, poor monitoring, and the character of the organisation are the three components that make up the opportunity factor (Deliana & Oktalia, 2022). These flaws are the main factors that lead to fraud in internal control.

Managerial rationalisation or attitude may be used to justify deception with the goal of outsmarting rivals or reaping financial rewards. It is a defence that someone who cannot handle fraud can use it to justify accepting to conduct fraud. Deliana and Oktalia (2022) discovered that individuals who engage in fraud within organisations will defend their unethical actions and claim that committing fraud is a fair course of action.

The ability to conduct fraud is a matter of the knowledge, self-assurance, and position the manager as an individual possesses. The ability is connected to intelligence, and the authoritative position allows the holder to take advantage of internal weaknesses under pressure, by rationalising (Deliana & Oktalia, 2022).

According to the concept of capability, six factors enable people to commit fraud (Rustiarini, Nurkholis & Andayani, 2019).

These include:

- Key position/function;
- Intellectual capacity;
- Confidence/ego;
- Effective misrepresentation;
- Immunity to stress and guilt; and
- Coercive ability.

Allegations of state capture, corruption, fraud, and irregularities relating to tenders in organisations like the South African Airports Company, South African Airways Technical, and South African Express; Bosasa, Denel, Estina, Prasa, SABC, SARS, State Security Agency, and Transnet, were among the examples of unethical behaviour covered in the evidence presented before the Zondo Commission. The Zondo Commission's evidence showed how unethical leadership can poison an organisation, and higher education institutions are not exempt.

Findings

Toxic leadership syndrome leads to leaders' displaying lack of care for subordinates' welfare and negatively affecting organisational acceptable culture. The struggle in evaluating the honesty of individual leaders is the subjectivity inherent in determining which criteria to use and their relative importance. Principled leaders have characteristics of a moral person in terms of individual virtues such as honesty and integrity, and the moral manager by setting an example by communicating ethical standards to their followers. Integrity is also a key feature in personality characteristics of principled leadership in organisations.

Conclusion

It is argued that organisational leaders should work to improve the principled climate among their workforce by pursuing principled leadership. Theoretically, harsher fines can limit fraud and corrupt behaviour in organisations; however, dishonest leaders and managers who hold influential positions can typically demand bigger bribes. Institutions should set up strategies for reporting misconduct that is free from institutional control, by ensuring confidentiality, and offering protection to whistle-blowers. Principled leaders can help reduce toxic leadership in organisations. Leaders should have morals and integrity because they hold positions of authority.

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Prof. Dr. Vimbi Petrus Mahlangu, University of South Africa, South Africa

Chinuru Achinewhu

Law Practice and Education in Nigeria: The Importance of Technology

Abstract

Technological revolution has continued to permeate all aspects of society. Its roles and impacts cannot therefore be overemphasized. Nevertheless, the roles of technology in law practice and law education in Nigeria have not received considerate research attention. The aim of this paper is to fill this gap by examining law practice and education in the context of the roles technology plays. The doctrinal research method was adopted. The paper found that Section 1 of the Act established the Council of Legal Education and vests it with the responsibility for the legal education of persons seeking to become members of the legal profession. The role of technology in law practice includes documentation of client's instructions, case management, file management, personnel data management and the documentation of accounts of the law firm, research, filing of court processes and virtual court sittings. Similarly, technology plays important roles in law education including research and teaching aids. However, the integration of technology faces several challenges such as inadequate regulatory framework, inadequate infrastructure, lack of funds and technological illiteracy. The paper concluded that addressing the challenges will be critical to enhancing and expanding the roles of technology in law practice and education and that without a strategic long term approach, the roles of technology in law practice and education in Nigeria will remain very insignificant and slow to sustainable growth.

Keywords: technology, legal education, legal practice, law

Introduction

Human society has been dynamic as well as evolutionary. In its early stage often referred to as the state of nature, human society was theorised to be nasty, brutish and riotous. The State evolved as an institutional necessity to secure social, economic and political order by balancing the competing and often conflicting interests within the society (Freeman, 2008, p. 108). Here, the organised coercive power of the State which is exercised through the government is employed to regulate human actions either through prescription or prohibition of certain conducts.

Over time, three related instruments have remained consistently crucial in the effort of the State to uphold orderly human society. They are law, education and technology. The law provides the fundamental social framework without which there can be no order. Education on the other hand plays a pivotal role in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge including expected codes of human conduct (Ehiamezor, 2005, p. 260). Relatedly, technology is employed to address human needs and enhance the standard of living (Gabriel, Fagbenle & Jaja, 1998, p. 14). This paper examines law

practice and law education in Nigeria in the particular context of the roles and importance of technology, either in the promotion of law practice or law education.

Conceptual framework

Law

Law may be defined as the regime that regulates human activities and relations through systematic application of the organized force of the political society. It includes the aggregate of legislations, judicial precedents and legal principles which provide authoritative foundation for legislative, executive, judicial and administrative actions (Freeman, 2008, p. 962).

Law practice

Law practice incorporates the totality of the professional business of a legal practitioner in rendering legal services in return for profit. Within this field of law practice are specific areas such as legal drafting, advocacy in courts, corporate compliance, legal advice and dispute resolution. Law practice may be divided into two: public practice and private practice (Oluwatoyin, 1998, p. 7).

Education

Education is the formal process and institutional arrangements of acquisition and transmission of knowledge. It is a social good which promotes the overall development of a person. It is the corpus of instruction and social ethos, which hinge on the acquisition of abstract ideas, which makes for a refined mind and the acquisition of skills (Ehiametalor, 2005, p. 260).

Technology

Technology is the practical application of science to produce goods and services. That is, the practical transformation of scientific knowledge to use (Gabriel, Fagbenle & Jaja, 1998, p. 14).

Law practice in Nigeria

History of law practice in Nigeria

Law practice in Nigeria was a direct product of British colonial rule. Nevertheless, there is evidence that in pre-colonial traditional societies, there were persons who acted as advocates in traditional arbitral proceedings.

The first legal instrument which laid the framework for modern law practice in Nigeria was the Supreme Court Ordinance of 1876. Section 71 of the Ordinance empowered the Chief Justice of Nigeria to admit and enrol persons to practice as barristers and solicitors, persons who have been admitted to so practice in Great Britain, Ireland, Dublin and Edinburg. In addition, under section 72 of the Ordinance, a person who has served for a continuous period of five years in the office of a practicing barrister or solicitor may be admitted to practice provided the person passes the relevant examinations.

The Supreme Court Ordinance of 1943 was enacted and it repealed the earlier 1876 Ordinance. Pursuant to the 1943 Ordinance, the Supreme Court (Civil Procedure Rules 1945) was made which set new qualifications for entitlement to practice law. For instance, order 16, rule 1 of the Rules provides that a person aspiring to practice law in Nigeria must first qualify as a barrister or solicitor in England, Ireland or Scotland.

However, this system of qualification could not meet the peculiar needs of the Nigerian environment (Ojukwu, 1997, p. 91).

Consequently, in April 1959, the Committee on the Future of the Nigerian Legal Profession was set up. The recommendations of the Committee included setting up indigenous system of legal education (Okoye, 2015, p. 8).

Based on the above recommendations, the Council of Legal Education established the Nigerian Law School in 1962 although academic activities started in 1963. The Legal Practitioners Act and the Legal Education (Consolidation, Etc) Act provides the current framework for the regulation of law practice and law education in Nigeria.

Entitlement to practice law in Nigeria

Section 2(1) of the Legal Practitioners Act provides that a person shall be entitled to practise as a barrister and solicitor if, and only if, his name is on the roll. The roll is a register of all persons called to the Nigeria Bar. However, by section 2(2), the Chief Justice of Nigeria may allow a person to practice for the purpose of a proceeding.

Entitlement to practice law is limited by rules 7 and 8 of the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners 2007. Both rules when read in community generally prohibit a lawyer from doing the following:

- i. Practice any other profession at the same time with the practice of law;
- ii. Engage in the business of buying and selling commodities;
- iii. Engage in the business of commission agent;
- iv. Engage in business which is incompatible with law practice or undermines the high standing of the law profession;
- v. Practice of law while in salaried employment.

Governing bodies in the legal profession

The practice of law in Nigeria is governed by some bodies. Section 1 of the Legal Practitioners Act established the General Council of the Bar which is charged with the general management of the affairs of the Nigerian Bar Association. The Bar Council consists of the Attorney-General of the Federation, who is the President of the Council, the Attorneys-General of the States and twenty members of the Nigerian Bar Association. Another crucial body is the Body of Benchers. It is established under section 3 of the Legal Practitioners Act. Membership includes the CJN, and all the Justices of the Supreme Court, President of the Court of Appeal, Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice and the Attorneys-General of the States of the Federation among others.

There is also the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee which was created by section 10 of the Legal Practitioners Act. It is a committee of the Body of Benchers charged with the responsibility of quasi-judicial determination of charges brought against legal practitioners in their professional capacity.

For instance, in *Okike v LPDC* (15 NWLR, 2005, Pt. 949, p. 471) a legal practitioner was debarred for misappropriating his client's money and this debarment was upheld by the Supreme Court. The Nigerian Bar Association is a mandatory association of all legal practitioners.

Law education in Nigeria

Law education is as important as the role which lawyers play in the society. This is because the quality of law education determines to a large extent, the quality of the

lawyers and that of the judges. Legal education therefore is at the nucleus of law practice in Nigeria. The Legal Education (Consolidation, Etc) Act regulates legal education. Section 1 of the Act established the Council of Legal Education and vests it with the responsibility for the legal education of persons seeking to become members of the legal profession.

The Nigerian Law School which is run by the Council provides the qualifying training which entitles a person to be admitted to the Nigerian Bar. However, a person must hold a university degree in law to be admitted into the Law School. Education at the Law School is divided into Bar part one which is a preparatory course for persons who obtained their law degrees outside Nigeria. The bar part two is for all aspirants to the Nigerian Bar (Chinwo, 2006, p. 206).

The roles of technology in law practice in Nigeria

Technology plays different and important roles in law practice. For instance, technology is used in documentation. This includes the instructions of clients, case management, file management, personnel data management and the documentation of accounts of the law firm (Oye, 2012, p. 1).

Technology particularly ICT also provides a platform that enhances law practice. For instance, direct interaction and direct client interview can be done remotely. In addition, virtual meetings, negotiations and disputes can be resolved remotely. Flowing from the above, most transactions are concluded and documented electronically. Accordingly, electronic generated evidence has been very popular in law practice (Lawan, 2011, p. 97). Section 84 of the Evidence Act 2011 provides for the admissibility of computer generated evidence.

Askew (2012, pp. 454-455) observes that technology has made law practice easier through the automation of different aspects of law practice which results in efficiency. For instance, in the Rivers State judiciary, filing of Court processes are done online through automated process. This includes automated assessment of filing fees, online payment, stamping and assignment of cases. Furthermore, except for originating processes, all other processes are served electronically.

Another important role of technology is in law reporting. Unlike hard copy books, electronic law reports such as Lawpavilion can be accessed from anywhere even from phones. This obliterates the need to carry a mountain of books around. Thus, technology enhances legal research. Technology also allows for remote virtual court sittings which was popular in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic. Here, a lawyer could conduct court room litigations without having to be physically present in court. Examination and cross examination of a witness can also be done remotely. Courts also use stenography machines which make taking oral evidence of a witness easier and faster. Other roles and uses of technology in law practice include automated document review, risk assessment, prediction of case outcomes and due diligence reviews.

The importance of technology in law education in Nigeria

Education involves acquisition and transmission of knowledge. Within the process, the flow of information is therefore crucial. In this information flow, technology has been most useful. First, technology allows lecturers and students to access information with ease. Several formats of online based materials enable this free flow of

information. They include electronic books, e-journals, online academic forums, and electronic library (Madhumay & Ravi, 2013, pp. 9-21).

Technology enables the use of visual aids, audios and videos in the lecturing process thus enhancing understanding. The method adopted in Law School is to give out students handbooks in which the content of a subject are stated in outline. The Council of Legal Education places emphasis on the use of interactive teaching methods and clinical approaches such as simulations, role plays, video clips, and legal aid clinics. These are promoted using technologies such as projectors (Ojukwu, 2019, p. 18).

In fact, technology runs through the entire fabric of Law School experience. First is application for law which is currently done online. The registration process is also fully automated. Examination questions are also transmitted electronically to the various campuses of the Law School. Technology also aids data management by the Council of Legal Education. Law students also widely employ technology in research. This includes sourcing for materials for assignments, case reporting, and submission of assignments and for other related purposes. The employment of technology therefore makes the learning process easier and cheaper.

Challenges of the use of technology in law practice and education in Nigeria

The employment of technology in law practice and education faces several challenges. There is no adequate regulatory intervention or incentive to promote widespread integration of technology into law practice and law education. Accordingly, in Nigeria, penetration of technology in the above regards has been very slow. The Nigerian environment is generally risk adverse particularly the legal profession which has a culture of upholding traditions of the bar. Acceptability of technology is therefore low and without effective regulatory intervention or incentive, the pace of technologically integration will remain slow.

There is also the problem of inadequate infrastructure to sustain integration of technology in the law practice and law education. Internet connectivity still fluctuates frequently. Electricity supply remains irregular in Nigeria. These are fundamental infrastructure necessary to sustain technology in law practice in education. However, the inadequacy of this infrastructure is a serious challenge to technology in law practice and education. For instance, the Rivcomis online platform for filing court processes in the Rivers State judiciary has been known to breakdown in many occasions thus making it impossible for lawyers to access their accounts to file processes. Another instance is the challenges faced by virtual court sittings during the Covid-19 pandemic. Network fluctuations and power outages frustrated the potential gains which virtual court sittings would have brought in the Nigerian legal practice.

Relatedly to the problem of inadequate infrastructure is the lack of effective funding mechanism to promote technology in law practice and education. The Nigerian Bar Association does not have any funding arrangement for technological development for the benefit of lawyers. Similarly, the Council of Legal Education lacks an effective revenue framework to develop technologies for the benefit of law students. This financial gap results in a consequently technological gap in law practice and education.

Another major challenge to the use of technology is the low level of technological/digital literacy among lawyers and law students. Senior members of the Nigerian legal profession are the most affected. This cuts across both the bar, bench and law lecturers. As a result of this low literacy level, they are not able to appreciate and utilise technology

effectively. This also contributes to the general reluctance of the legal profession in Nigeria to accept technology. It is therefore not surprising that even the introduction of electronic voting by the Nigerian Bar Association has resulted in poor voter turnout compared to manual voting methods (Matthew, Joro & Manasseh, 2015, p. 17).

Conclusion

The pace of technological advancement is unpredictable, so are the effects which technology will have on law practice and law education in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the roles of technology both in law practice and education in Nigeria cannot be denied. However, the legal profession in Nigeria is still unable to take full advantage of the technology to enhance law practice and law education. This inability is due to the several challenges which militate against widespread integration of technology into law practice and education.

Addressing the challenges will be critical to enhancing and expanding the roles of technology in the above two regards. In addition, there is need for legal education to properly align with technological advances. This can be achieved through the widespread employment of technology in the teaching process. This will enhance learning while equipping the law graduate to function effectively in a technologically driven law industry. Without such strategic long term approach, the roles of technology in law practice and education in Nigeria will remain very insignificant and slow to sustainable growth.

Recommendations

In order to address the challenges to integration of technology in law practice and education in Nigeria and to enhance the roles of technology accordingly, this paper recommends as follows:

1. The National Assembly should amend the Legal Education Act to introduce mandatory introductory courses to technology at the Nigerian Law School. This can be integrated into the Law in Practice and Professional Skills course offered at the Nigerian Law School. In addition, certificate of proficiency in computer operations including micro-soft office, excel, publisher and internet should form part of admission requirements to the law school.
2. The Nigerian government should fund and promote infrastructural development in the technology sector and particularly information and communication technology. This should include enhancing the reliability and affordability of internet connectivity, electricity security and ability of students to access technological gadgets such as computers. These will provide the needed infrastructural foundation for advancement technology in law practice and law education in Nigeria.
3. The Nigerian government through the Council of Legal Education, in partnership with the Nigerian Bar Association should develop and implement a funding mechanism for technological development and deployment in law practice and education in Nigeria. This can be done through a percentage of all fees paid by aspirants to the Nigerian Bar and a percentage of all practicing fees and bar dues paid by legal practitioners in Nigeria. This fund can then be

directed towards the acquisition and diffusion of modern technologies in the law industry.

4. The Council of Legal Education in conjunction with the Nigerian Bar Association and the Judicial Service Commission (both at Federal and State levels) should undertake ICT and relevant technological trainings for law students, lawyers and judges respectively. This will bridge the literacy gap in the use of technology and thereby promote its employment in the legal profession in Nigeria.

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Chinuru Achinewhu, Lecturer, Rivers State University, Nigeria

Part 6

Research Education & Research Practice

Ewelina K Niemczyk

Higher Education as a Sustainable Service Provider in a Rapidly Changing World

Abstract

Bearing in mind United Nations' 2030 agenda and achievement of global goals, the conference theme brings attention to exploration of how education adjusted to the unexpected challenges of the global crisis and how lessons learnt can be used to create better education systems. On that note, this perspective piece brings attention to sustainable development and especially sustainable development goal 4 specific to education as well as the VUCA times representative of the fast-page changing world. Description of the above-mentioned notions is connected to the vision of higher education sector as a sustainable service provider. Higher education institutions play an essential role in sustainability since they are not only knowledge producers but most importantly agents nurturing educators, researchers and leaders with potential to contribute to the successful achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The paper culminates with reflections and considerations about the direction higher education sector should consider to build back better.

Keywords: pandemic, global crisis, sustainable development, SDG4, VUCA times, higher education, South Africa

Introduction

The year 2020 marked by COVID-19 pandemic will remain seen as the time of global crisis impacting life of millions of people at many levels, including their health, loss of employment, and associated financial pressures (OECD, 2020). As a result of implemented restrictions and regulations during the crisis, the education sector was highly affected forcing all educational stakeholders to adopt new practices and activities. Thus, adding an enormous amount of workload for educators who were already struggling to balance all academic activities (Rapanta et al., 2020). The closure of universities and cancellation of face-to-face instruction affected the entire academic community, particularly the teaching practice. Scholars, students, and related support

services had to quickly adapt to virtual platforms. Scholarly literature informs that shifting to online instruction raised several concerns, including the digital divide and a lack of training in effective delivery of online modules. Despite institutional and individual commitment to maintain quality education and student satisfaction via remote teaching, some aspects of online education were difficult to manage due to shortcomings in infrastructure and technological competency. This was a challenging reality especially in less developed parts of the world.

This work is based on literature review and researcher's personal experiences in the past 3 years. Witnessing challenges as well as activities applied to solve them, led to meaningful evaluation of experiences along with lessons learnt in the process. In alignment with the conference theme, this perspective piece will bring attention to sustainable development (SD) and especially sustainable development goal 4 (SDG4) specific to education as well as the VUCA times representative of the fast-page changing world. Description of the above-mentioned notions connect to vision of higher education (HE) sector as a sustainable service provider. Ultimately, reflections are made on the direction HE should consider taking to move from crisis management to building back better.

Sustainability in education

The concept of SD and sustainability received closer attention since the Brundtland Commission report (UN, 1987) that defined sustainable development as: "Development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs and aspirations". This particular description implies the vitality of a long-term vision as opposed to making decisions or taking actions that lead to short term benefits. Although the exploration of SD started with the focus on the environment, currently it includes three main pillars: economic, environmental, and social.

Taking into consideration the challenges that may jeopardise the very existence of humanity and in recognition of the urgency for action, in 2015 the United Nations (UN) with all the UN member states adopted Agenda 2030 for SD and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG 4 refers specifically to education and finds its realization through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD):

... which aims to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. (UNESCO, 2020, p. 57)

Explicating ESD further, UNESCO (2014, p. 12) states:

ESD empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. It is about lifelong learning, and is an integral part of quality education. ESD is holistic and transformational education which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment. It achieves its purpose by transforming society.

Higher education as sustainable service provider

The HE sector is critically important in the delivery of ESD. In fact, scholarly literature often defines HEIs as sustainable service providers. All HEIs can be guided by sustainability values meant to a) safeguard fair and just society and economy for present and future generations, b) ensure the protection of human, animal, and environmental rights, and c) improve the quality of life for all on our planet. These core sustainability values not only form the basis for the sustainability mindset, but also help to inspire the current and future generation of HE leaders to achieve the SDGs.

During the 2022 UNESCO World Higher Education Conference held in Barcelona, Spain, an urgent message called universities to play a stronger role in the societal transformation needed to achieve the SDGs. The common message coming from the presenters urged HEIs to embrace the 2030 Agenda by making sustainability and SDG literacy a core requisite for all faculty members and students and to connect students with real world problems. Another emerging message implied that transformation for sustainability needs to be approached holistically by universities, more specifically to be addressed in each academic activity.

To a large extent, human beliefs and mindsets drive human behaviours. Thus, the future of humanity, and the planet ultimately depends on humanity's ability to adopt a sustainability mindset in order to solve pressing issues of our time. Within this context, HE as a catalyst for economic and social progress, needs to lead the world to achieve a sustainable future. Current culture/norms at HEIs include trends towards marketisation of HE and the increasing focus on rankings, which drive up competition between universities.

To that end, some leaders question whether transformation of universities can be achieved without first transforming the context in which HEIs operate. We can all recognise that the current environment of HE is not fully conducive to SD. It is rather difficult to pursue it because of HEIs' commitment to competitiveness: pursuit of excellence is very often (mis) understood as pursuit of individual excellence only, which is further supported by funding structures and rankings that only increase the commodification of science and education. This kind of institutional culture may limit HEIs' ability or even potential to practice sustainability.

Therefore, we need to consider sustainable practices to implement but also unsustainable practices to unlearn. This requires simultaneous process of learning and unlearning as a way to revitalize ESD globally. We need to a) carefully craft a less competitive understanding of excellence, b) encourage collaborative practices based on reciprocity, and c) dedicate time and effort to establish academic processes and practices that keep SD as their guiding principle. Overall, the global society needs to become more responsible with environmental, social, and economic capital. Furthermore, there is a need to recognize that this can only be accomplished through partnerships, new ideas and innovations, and comparative work.

VUCA times

Without any doubt we are living in a fast-changing world and VUCA times. The acronym VUCA stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. The VUCA descriptor was first used by the US Army War College as a response to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Basically, strategizing of what would the new world order look like after the end of a cold war and considering new ways of

seeing and reacting. From that point, VUCA became a way of thinking and approaching solutions to the new world order. A brief description of each term as provided by Glaeser (2022):

Volatility – We live in a constantly changing world, becoming more unstable and unpredictable, getting more and more dramatic and happening faster and faster. As events unfold in unexpected ways, it is difficult to determine cause and effect.

Uncertainty – It is becoming more difficult to anticipate events or predict how they will unfold; historical forecasts and past experiences are losing their relevance and are rarely applicable as a basis for predicting the things to come.

Complexity – Our modern world is more complex than ever. Problems and their repercussions are multi-layered and harder to understand. The different layers overlap, making it impossible to get an overview of how things are related.

Ambiguity – “One size fits all” and “best practice” notions have been relegated to yesterday – in today’s world it is rare for things to be clear or precisely determinable. The demands on modern institutions and management are more contradictory and paradoxical than ever, challenging our personal value systems to the core.

As stated by Waltraud Glaeser, a VUCA expert: “VUCA is more than a buzzword! It is a way of thinking and approaching solutions to the problems of our digital and dynamic world.” The increase in volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity means that we need to seek a new orientation. We need to become fully aware under which conditions we are operating when we consider elements of SD and ESD because this will define our approach to making decisions and taking actions. Simply put, we cannot solve the 21st century challenges and implement sustainable practices and processes with the 20th century mindset when things were more certain and predictable. Decision making under VUCA times must be different that is why we need to consider the current uncertain environment and reflect on lessons learnt during the past 3 years. We need to improve our forecasting and build mindset of a VUCA world, thinking not about going back to the accepted norms but rather anticipate more changes and more complexities coming our way.

Researcher’s reflections

Before the pandemic, my institution can be considered a traditional, campus-based institution – with 3 campuses, where students came to attend classes and lectures, to access various physical learning spaces – lecture halls, libraries, laboratories, multimedia centres. Beyond the official curriculum, campus-based life offered a place of belonging and where any number of extracurricular activities take place, where students have a social life. The on-campus social life was disrupted by the pandemic since one of the key measures to fight the spread of the virus was social distancing. So, while distance education pre-pandemic was limited to a few programs and modules, it suddenly became the sole option for maintaining university’s operation. Academics and students adapted to the online shift for all activities with various levels of success. Encountering challenges in terms of access to technology and internet; finding time/space to study/work at home; overwhelming unexpected workload for lecturers; research being stopped or restricted.

The restrictions and changes implemented in response to the pandemic at my institution align with reported changes introduced at other institutions that turned solely to online teaching, assessing students' performance, sharing feedback, and graduate supervision, research collaborations, managerial meetings. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS, 2020) reported findings based on a large survey to share insights and lessons from universities around the world with the intention to inform and support other HEIs. The QS report included the following beneficial approaches to pandemic-related crisis management: online learning, international coordination and collaboration, proactive and preventative measures, strong university leadership, flexibility for assessment deadlines and exams, stricter sanitation initiatives, and clear communication from university leadership and administrators (p. 14).

The IAU in turn disseminated its 2020 Global Survey Report (Marinoni et al., 2020) based on responses from 109 countries about the pandemic's effect on HE around the world. The IAU findings showed that almost all HEIs acknowledged the significant impact of the pandemic on their pedagogical practices. In most cases, classroom teaching was successfully replaced by distance teaching, and in some cases institutions still look for solutions to continue teaching online. Many institutions, however, were not prepared to move online and had to close their campuses (mainly in Africa).

Technical infrastructure and online access were identified as main prerequisites for shifting to distance teaching and learning. Yet, low-income nations struggle with investing in digital tools or online licenses, a situation that is aggravated by students from low-income families often having no internet access at home, which not only delays their studies but also affects the completion of their academic year. As Paterson (2021, para. 5) indicates, poorer students "may be less able to afford the cellphone, laptop, data and airtime costs of the shift to online tuition" and, moreover, "may also be forced to return to homes where everyday hardships inhibit their ability to learn".

The IAU report also noted that faculty members found it difficult to transition to online teaching because of the different pedagogical approaches that are required for distance teaching; they were not prepared and often lacked technological skills (Marinoni et al., 2020). The quality of learning and the effectiveness of teaching online depends also on the field of study; in some areas (such as the performing/visual arts or veterinary studies), actual practice cannot be easily replaced by distance teaching (Marinoni et al., 2020, p. 25).

Overall, the IAU Global Survey Report indicated that the quality of provision of online teaching differs across nations as it depends on financial situation, technical infrastructure, teaching staff's ability to adapt to remote instruction, and the actual field of study (Marinoni et al., 2020). Students without access to internet and online communication tools (smartphones, tablets, laptops) are the most disadvantaged, which unfortunately maximizes existing inequalities in education.

The forced shift to move all academic activities online along with the use of new or revised teaching and research methods was challenging. Yet, it also showed effectiveness of new and customized ways of doing and thinking. It can be said that as of 2023, a visible transition was made from crisis management to focus on prospects.

Building back better

Although it is still difficult to predict the end of the current pandemic, we need to make changes for the post-pandemic era and adapt for the future that most likely will

present us with new challenges. VUCA times force us to rethink pre-pandemic research activities and teaching practices and to envision creative and effective ways to move forward in a sustainable manner. To a great extent, it is up to us to shape the future of HE and there is an undeniable urgent need to evaluate what works, what lessons learnt we need to harness, what practices are of the past thus we need to unlearn them, and how to convert challenges into opportunities. We must foster a sustainable ecosystem of HEIs and treat sustainability as innovation's new frontier. As noted in the IAU's Global Survey Report, international insights can provide timely solutions to current challenges and showcase the path forward from the crisis to a better future of teaching and research in HEIs:

The overall understanding that our combined efforts generate about the current challenges that institutions and national systems face helps inform future perspectives of and on higher education. International and global perspectives are more important than ever in light of the pandemic and its effect. (Marinoni et al., 2020, p. 6)

It is evident in the scholarly literature that HEIs are transitioning to a position of identifying sustainable prospects for the future. During the crisis, HEIs were able to overcome many challenges; universities identified potential solutions, and the focus in many cases shifted to opportunities that came with change. Having said that, the ongoing struggles of low-income nations and pressures experienced by under-sourced universities is still evident and must be acknowledged. At the same time, it is important to recognise that having learnt valuable lessons during the pandemic, which showed vulnerabilities in terms of access, equality, and relevance of technological skills, HEIs are engaged in strategic planning for the future.

Making informed decisions based on the lessons learnt aligns with the OECD's (2020) message that the global society needs to "build back better". Although the OECD report refers mainly to economic and healthcare recovery, its message also applies to the education sector because ultimately all elements of society are interconnected. The past shows that education can thrive on change and educational stakeholders have the capacity to develop new skills, enhance existing abilities, and provide quality education. In conclusion, HEIs have a responsibility and remarkable role to play in sharing awareness about SDGs as well as engaging in academic activities in sustainable ways to achieve these goals.

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Prof. Dr. Ewelina K Niemczyk, North-West University, South Africa

JP Rossouw

Rebuilding Higher Education by Combating Researcher Isolation

Abstract

To build new and better higher education systems, it is vital to consider all aspects of systems in the recent past. Measures should be taken to identify and address deficiencies, of which academic isolation and the prevalence of a silo mentality is a prominent example. The central question of this paper to be answered is how to effectively combat academic isolation. While an individual in solitude has a positive experience when alone, isolation resulting in loneliness is an uneasy feeling of being unwillingly detached from others. Education institutions, faculties, colleges or communities of practice as well as individuals can experience isolation, whether it is self-imposed or enforced by discriminatory measures. Highly specialized groups may isolate themselves, and so can experienced academics be unwilling to share ideas and so deny others to benefit from their expertise. During an analytical literature survey, which generated valuable observations and findings from scholars worldwide, some of the most prominent reasons for and effects of this phenomenon emerged. The analysis, into which personal experience was also factored, lead to proposing cooperative research and interdisciplinary research as effective ways to breach harmful silo forming amongst researchers, and combat academic isolation.

Keywords: isolation, silo mentality, cooperation, interdisciplinary research, rebuilding higher education, thought leadership, ageism, intellectual property

Introduction

The post-Covid era is characterised by both realising the necessity of restructuring and taking active steps towards rebuilding most spheres of life. The pandemic, however disruptive, was seen by many observers as a timely opportunity of eradicating some well entrenched ailments and deficiencies of the past including that of higher education systems and institutions (Mintz, 2021, para. 29). Outdated practices and intolerable traditions were scrutinised by change agents, and in several countries there was an appeal to higher education authorities to make the most of this opportunity once the disruption of the pandemic has subsided (Saracco, 2022, para. 31). However, given humankind's tendency (at least the conservative ones) to cling to and be comfortable with the past, it cannot be taken for granted that the new normal would not move back to the old normal, unacceptable practices and regulations included.

Central to this paper stands one of the most notable characteristics of the pandemic: social distancing leading to isolation during the hard lockdown period of 2020. This paper explores the nature of and reasons for academic isolation and the implications of a silo mentality. A literature survey combined with personal experience formed the data set for the discussion that follows.

Strategies are offered to combat this not-so-new phenomenon of isolation and silo forming that has been hampering researchers' lives for decades. These may serve as building blocks towards rebuilding higher education.

While the coronavirus ruled the world a lack of collaboration, at least on interpersonal, "physical" level in the world of university staff, was the order of the day. Most academics did break through the barriers of isolation by means of technology that made virtual contact possible. Despite current indications of a looming new wave of the coronavirus, direct personal communication is the order of the day again. Even before the pandemic Sibai et al. (2019, para. 11) warned that feelings of isolation are and have been one of the most common threats to researchers' healthy and productive work lives and needs scrutiny.

Conceptualising isolation

Isolation and solitude should be carefully distinguished. An individual in solitude experiences a "pleasant and fulfilling feeling of enjoyment" (Enago Academy, 2022, para. 2), therefore a positive emotion when being alone. Many academics crave for solitude, "alone-time" (Jandric, 2022, para. 1), and therefore make use of academic retreats whenever possible. It is regularly heard amongst hard working professionals such as researchers that they seriously look forward to retirement, when they will not be caught up in other faculty commitments and responsibilities anymore (Nowak, 2019, para. 1). Jandric (2022, para. 1) maintained: "I develop my best ideas, and write my best texts, in solitude. My fragile attention is all too easily disrupted; peace and quiet help me gather my thoughts into a meaningful form...".

Filho et al. (2021, p. 3) nevertheless argued that "humans are fundamentally a social species: it is in their nature to interact and form various types of relationships with others...". With most of us being social in nature, loneliness is per definition an uneasy feeling of being "involuntarily separated" from others (Sibai et al., 2019, para. 2). In the context of academic work, "isolation is the feeling of being cut off from social network, friends, and family" (Enago Academy, 2022, para. 1).

It is not advisable to generalise when it comes to feelings of isolation amongst individuals. Studies on extroversion and introversion point out significant differences between extroverts and introverts when it comes to their respective reactions when being alone or between people.

Extroversion is a personality trait typically characterized by outgoingness, high energy, and/or talkativeness. In general, the term refers to a state of being where someone "recharges", or draws energy, from being with other people; the opposite—drawing energy from being alone—is known as introversion. (Psychology Today, n.d., para. 1)

On the expected reaction to being alone, "someone who is highly extroverted will likely feel bored, or even anxious, when they're made to spend too much time alone" (Psychology Today, n.d., para. 3).

Isolation manifests in numerous forms. It can entail a real physical separation between an individual and others, or a feeling of loneliness, even amidst a crowd. A higher education institution as entity can experience isolation, and so can faculties, colleges or communities of practice within the institution. They either have the perception of being marginalized, or actively, purposefully isolate themselves from potential collaborators for some reason or another, called the silo effect.

Small highly specialized groups may create or experience isolation because of their own unwillingness to participate in an interdisciplinary context, which may develop

due to a perception of others' ignorance. Various other reasons for the development of a silo mentality have been identified (Kolowich, 2010; Linton, 2009; Capener, 2015; Friedlander, 2022). A silo mentality is detected amongst individuals, groups or institutions in a large number of spheres of life, and typically entails a purposeful separation. Using the term insularity (Latin: insula – island), Kolowich (2010, para. 2) described this phenomenon as an isolation from the surrounding environment:

The “strong college” model — which emphasizes the individual brands of different colleges on a campus — ... can also reinforce insularity and make it less likely that scholars from different colleges on the same campus will come together and tackle a subject from an interdisciplinary angle.

While many universities are structured according to the college model, and many universities structured in other ways, for instance different faculties or research entities, isolation due to the silo effect may manifest anywhere. Capener (2015, para. 3) referred to the unwillingness to share knowledge or skills. He states that, typical of such a silo mentality,

learning is considered one's own IP or “proprietary” and should not be shared or openly discussed with colleagues in other areas for fear others will use it without the credit going to the originator. It can ruin the culture company and university.

Reasons for isolation

One reason why individuals or research entities tend to develop a silo mentality, is to protect their work from intellectual property theft. This phenomenon is specifically prevalent in the corporate world, where billions of dollars are lost to IP theft (StudyCorgi, 2022, para. 3). A significantly negative and costly impact of IP theft in the higher education context in the US was also reported, primarily due to internationally stolen concepts and patents (StudyCorgi, 2022, para. 4).

A decade ago, Vogel (2013, para. 2) pointed to IP theft that leads to significant losses when researchers share ideas during interdisciplinary or inter-university activities: “The trouble starts when those ideas are taken without acknowledgement”. Despite significant effort that goes into the stringent measures to control ethics of research projects, many researchers have the experience of their ideas being unscrupulously taken over by a less creative researcher who are in the position to proceed faster, beating them to the finishing line of a publication and thus unethically garnering all the recognition. In the light of this problem, which is a reality in many universities, it can be understood that some researchers tend to embrace the silo effect and rather isolate themselves in order to successfully develop certain idea or project. Isolation is nevertheless detrimental to good research practice and researcher development.

Other reasons for academic isolation concern interpersonal relationships. Sibai et al. (2019, para. 6) found that “... some educators feel geographically isolated, while others feel socially isolated when they cannot make meaningful relationships with others in their fields”. Academic isolation, sometimes based on social inexperience or other circumstances, is specifically prevalent amongst early career academics. Sibai et al. (2019, para. 1) reported that 64% of PhD candidates experience such feelings. It is also a well-known fact that postdoctoral fellows, who are often engaged in research projects in foreign countries, express feelings of isolation and being marginalised. This can happen when supervisors do not find the time to properly integrate them into a community of practice. Some supervisors merely regard postdoctoral fellows as useful sources for the research entity for increased research outputs, without any

acknowledgement of their personal needs or the necessity of wider academic and professional exposure.

Isolation may be the unintended consequence of certain faculty regulations or prescriptions in grant applications. Such regulations may encourage, even force, interuniversity collaboration, or require international partnerships, leading to a lack of collaboration with fellow researchers close-by in the same faculty. Sibai et al. (2019, para. 9) referred to a national phenomenon in the UK related to Research Excellence Framework, which has the purpose of assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions, according to which "... publications co-authored by two or more academics from the same department (are regarded as) as a single publication". Sibai et al. (2019, para. 9-10) pointed out that this measure promotes "competition between departmental colleagues rather than collaboration. Because of this pressure to perform, academics often feel obliged to disengage from potentially energising relationships with local colleagues and friends."

A last reason for isolation is that of relocation, sometimes associated with promotion, sometimes with retirement. Unfair discrimination, according to the SA constitutional provisions on fairness and equality, can (inter alia) be based on the grounds of origin or age. The effect of ageism and origin-based discrimination is similar to that of a postdoctoral fellow temporarily moving into an unfamiliar environment. Moving out of a well-known and safe environment may lead to isolation, either at the hand of the previous workplace (cutting ties) or unsuccessful attempts to become part of a new environment (cutting out). The resulting feelings of being cut off or cut out can result in a serious challenge to a person's well-being (Sibai et al., 2019, para. 11).

Regarding ageism, Nowak (2019) observed that many academics nowadays rather see retirement as an opportunity to "rewire". Those who successfully rewire, are those who realised the negative effects of isolation, which previously "inhibited creativity and innovative by creating boundaries in how they worked, behaved and thought about things". Nowak added that those who nowadays retire at the age of 65 (or earlier) are well placed to make a successful start to the new productive phase in their lives: "They have been exposed to the brilliance of technology and a new age of thinking which shows that age is not a barrier to entry or exit" (Nowak, 2019, para. 9).

Despite the negative effects of ageism being imposed upon older academics, sometimes at the hands of leadership in a previous workplace, the possibility of academic isolation due to this discriminatory practice can be successfully countered if an appropriate approach or strategy is implemented. "The biggest barrier is the mindset that may be stuck in former belief systems of the past" (Nowak, 2019, para. 9).

Effects of isolation

While it has been stated that many individual researchers and certain entities or institutions willfully and purposefully isolate themselves into silos, sometimes for a good reason, isolation most often has a negative effect, both on professional development and psychological level. Sibai et al. (2019, para. 11) found that "40% of academics, and more than half below the age of 35, view isolation at work as the main factor affecting their mental health. In universities, isolation pushes academics into distress, with many abandoning their research careers. Early career academics are particularly affected by isolation, because their jobs are not secure."

In a certain sense the opposite of academic isolation is collaboration, which is normally seen as an important factor leading to quality research outputs. Researchers

working in silos may well lack the encouragement and intellectual stimulation that go with collaboration with one or more peers. Interdisciplinary work normally leads to findings that, when implemented, can make a significant change to practice.

Isolation prevents a research community to be exposed to academic leaders. Capener (2015, para. 1) referred to the value of thought leadership, which is “the expression of ideas that demonstrate you have expertise in a particular field, area, or topic”. Experienced, innovative but isolated scholars do not share their ideas openly and refrain from becoming thought leaders in their respective fields. They might disseminate their insights and findings through publications, but being physically or mentally isolated from their closer colleagues effectively deprive these potential collaborators or mentees from benefits.

One of the leaders in the field of thought leadership, Brosseau (n.d., para. 2) defined thought leaders as follows:

Thought leaders are the informed opinion leaders and the go-to people in their field of expertise. They become the trusted sources who move and inspire people with innovative ideas, turn ideas into reality, and know and show how to replicate their success.

From this definition it is clear that academic isolation and the adoption of a silo mentality makes the development of thought leadership relatively impossible, because such people have to be approachable, available, trusted and inspirational.

Irrespective of the fact that some compelling reasons may exist for isolation, whether it is self-imposed or enforced, it is worth looking at appropriate approaches to combat isolation and silo forming.

Approaches to combat isolation

To break isolation starts with a certain approach or attitude towards interpersonal relationships, combined with a suitable view of what the research entails. Unsuccessful combating will be characterised by an unwillingness to share and communicate. Researchers, to break through isolation, must firstly have an attitude of collaboration and a general dissatisfaction with being isolated. They should see the benefits of academic collaboration for all that become involved in such a joint project. Researchers who aim at successfully combating isolation should, in terms of Kolowich’s argument, blast academic silos (Kolowich, 2010, para. 2).

Once these two attitudinal traits are in place, approaches such as cooperative research and interdisciplinary research may be considered to prevent isolation or successfully fight existing isolation.

Cooperative research

Few academics are ready from day one to engage in cooperative research, let alone interdisciplinary research. Most early career researchers are still in the process of immersing themselves into the depth and width of their own discipline or field of expertise, which is an essential learning phase towards becoming an accomplished scholar. During this career phase it might be advisable for such researchers to work with a mentor and critical friend in order to master the intricacies and basic principles of their own field or expertise first. This may entail a period of self-directed study and being alone. A prerequisite for this initial phase is nevertheless to prevent a feeling of loneliness and isolation, but rather solitude in combination with regular social contact.

Soon after this phase a novice researcher might be advised to engage in collaboration with one or two peers under the guidance of a more experienced project leader. Surowiecki (in Linton, 2009, para. 7) claimed that “people are not as effective or productive when they work alone as they are when they collaborate with others”.

Interdisciplinary research

Interdisciplinary research and multi-authored publications should not be regarded as the ultimate form of research endeavour. Researchers should strive towards a balance between sole authored and multi-authored publications. They should also develop the ability to conduct a quality project in their own discipline as well as making a meaningful contribution towards multidisciplinary academic work. Capener (2015, para. 1) found that “educators and institutions of higher learning can be the least innovative because they build silos and focus on deep learning rather than interdisciplinary problems and ideas”.

Linton (2009, para. 7) asked the question: “So how does the professor break through the silo and form networks of relationships across campus and across departments?” One solution he offered is for such an academic

to participate in a faculty learning community (FLC). FLCs provide an intentional strategy for breaking down the barriers between faculty members and encouraging interaction that will help them improve their effectiveness. (Linton, 2009, para. 7)

Friedlander (2022, para. 1) motivated from research conducted at Cornell University the necessity of interdisciplinary research as follows: “Solving societal problems such as climate change could require dismantling rigid academic boundaries, so that researchers from varying disciplines could work together collaboratively.”

In his work on fighting isolation, Sibai et al. (2019, para. 6-14) offered the following strategies and approaches to be considered by either institutions or individuals:

- organise writing retreats, implement policies of office attendance, and set up mentoring structures to counter academic isolation and ensure that scholars are more connected;
- work actively and consistently towards better integration into research communities and do not stay “stuck in the lab”;
- network “wildly” and attend regular social events to ensure visibility;
- encourage other scholars to connect and present during online workshops initiated and facilitated by themselves;
- join large research teams working on interdisciplinary projects;
- do not limit interaction to the sphere of the institution or academic work, but engage socially in hobbies and other interest groups.

Conclusion

In the wake of Covid-19 it is time for rebuilding societies worldwide, including higher education systems and institutions. Every measure should be taken to use the opportunity to its fullest. One prominent characteristic of pandemic related lockdowns was that of isolation and social distancing. Yet, isolation and silo mentality have been obstructing researchers’ professional development and even healthy work lives for decades and hindered maximising research projects.

Two prominent approaches to combat isolation are that of cooperation (valuable especially for early career researchers) and interdisciplinary research, which

simultaneously breaches detrimental silo forming amongst scientists, maximises career development of those involved, and results in the most valuable research findings for the benefit of the wider society.

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Prof. Dr. JP Rossouw, North-West University, South Africa

Nicholas Sun-Keung Pang

The Strategies of Reforming Higher Education in China under Global Competition

Abstract

Global competition results in an overall demand for higher skills. In the competitive world, China has no choice but to adjust themselves to become more efficient, productive, and flexible. Higher education in China has played a key role in achieving socialist economy and modernization. Since the open-door policy in the 1980s, there has been a shift from elite to mass education, practice of corporate managerialism in education governance, privatization of education, and spread of transnational education in the tertiary sector. The author first attempts to explore the strategies that have been adopted in higher education reform in China. Then there are reviews of the roles of Project 211, Project 985, and the Double First-Class Initiative in higher education reform in China. Higher education reform has allowed mainland China to identify a small group of universities to be measured alongside the best universities in North America and Europe. However, there are also some backwash effects created from these trends of restructuring of higher education in China.

Keywords: global competition, higher education reform, Project 211, Project 985, Double First-Class Initiative in China

Introduction

Globalization is a product of the emergence of a global economy. The process of globalization is seen as blurring national boundaries, shifting solidarities within and between nation-states, and deeply affecting the constitution of national and interest group identities. The potential effects of globalization on education are many and far-reaching, due to its scale and nature. Since the main bases of globalization are knowledge intensive information and innovation, globalization has a profound impact on education (Carnoy, 2002). Almost everywhere in the world, educational systems are now under pressure to produce individuals for global competition, individuals who can compete for their own positions in the global context, and who can legitimate the state and strengthen its global competitiveness (Daun, 2002). Since after the open-up policy of China in 1978 by then President Deng Xiaoping and after joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, China has been exposed to the impact of globalization to reform its education system and policies for global competition.

Reforming higher education in a competitive world

Global competition results in an overall demand for higher skills. Suárez-Orozco (2007) argued that global competition leads to an increasing demand for higher skills in

the population as a whole and lifelong learning for all. Global competition also leads to a techno-economic shift. Such a shift results in unemployment in the short term but to a higher standard of living and higher employment in the long term. As the arrival of a global society will also herald that of a knowledge society, the role of education is to enhance a nation's productivity and competitiveness in the global environment.

In the competitive global economy and environment, China has no choice but to adjust to be more efficient, productive, and flexible. Education has been a national priority in China as well as largely understood in terms of national economic survival in a fiercely competitive world. It has been recognized that the production economy is being rapidly overtaken by the knowledge economy. China must take actions to enhance its competitive edge through the development of the knowledge-producing institutions and industries. The development of the knowledge economy through the enhancement of skills and abilities, that is, improved human capital, has become an important agenda in China's educational policy.

The impacts of global competitions on the change to higher education in China manifest in the drastic restructuring of higher education systems, in which values, such as accountability, competitiveness, devolution, value for money, cost effectiveness, corporate management, quality assurance, performance indicators, and privatization are emphasized (Pang, 2016). In general, most of these changes are expressions of a greater influence of the market and the government over the university system. At the core of these changes is a re-definition of the relationships between the university, the state, and the market.

Features of restructuring higher education in China since 1980s

In studying the responses to globalization in educational reforms, Currie (1998) identified a few interesting trends, which include: (i) a shift from elite to mass education; (ii) the practice of corporate managerialism in education governance; (iii) the privatization of education; and (iv) the spread of transnational education.

Since the open-door policy in 1978, there has been a shift from elite to mass higher education in China, driven by the goal of building a knowledge-based economy. This is a result of a shift from economic production to knowledge-intensive services and manufacturing. Rising relative incomes for highly educated labour increases the demand for university education, pushing China government to expand its higher education. It is important to mention that due to corporatization, state universities in China are also run like business corporations. The adoption of business-like approaches has resulted in financial cost savings, increased administrative efficiencies, and retain academic staff through the offering of competitive market remunerations. Such a change resulted in higher education institutions (HEIs) increasingly being required to secure additional funds from external and competitive sources as well as to reduce dependence on the government.

In China, a unique feature of the rapid expansion of private higher education is the emergence of offshore programmes that are offered by foreign universities. The emergence of foreign-linked programmes reflects a growing trend of transnational education, which means that there is a growing volume of higher education being delivered across national boundaries. Education has become increasingly affected by commoditization. In the Chinese context, the boundaries of how, where, and under whose authority education is carried out and certified are well defined by newly established laws and regulations on one hand. On the other hand, these universities

internationalize their campuses, curricula, and teaching staff. By the end of 2019, more than 600 universities across the country have held Sino-foreign cooperatively run institutions and projects, with the number reaching 2,238 (Ren & Tian, 2020). The rapid development of independent universities, such as New York University-Shanghai, Hong Kong Chinese University of Shenzhen and the University of Nottingham Ningbo China are cases in point.

The strategies of reforming higher education in China

Higher education in China has played a key role in building of the economy, scientific progress and social development by increasing the pool of advanced talent and experts necessary to achieve socialist modernization. The overall objectives of higher education reform in mainland China are to smooth the relationships among the state, the market and HEIs, setting up and perfecting a new system in which the state is responsible for the overall planning and macro management while the HEIs follow the laws but enjoy the autonomy to provide education according to the needs of the nation.

The Project 211 and the Project 985 in higher education reform in China

The Chinese administrative system used to be very highly centralized, so did the former higher education system. Education was provided by the central and local governments respectively and directly under their controls. That led the state to undertake too many responsibilities and the HEIs lacking the flexibility and autonomy to provide education according to the needs of the society (Higher Education Center, 2023).

President Deng Xiaoping was the principal architect of reform in the post-Mao era. Since 1976, Deng designed the Four Modernizations programme, which identified agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology as key areas for reform and investment. Modernization with its open-door policy has brought about a new era for China and resulted in a rise in the living standard and a loosening of controls on daily life (Agelasto & Adamson, 1998, p. 4). Under this circumstance, higher education in China accorded a new mission that supported the drives of the modernization and nurtured the necessary human capital.

In 1998, China has stipulated its first Higher Education Law, which determined the reform and development of Chinese higher education in the 21st century. In order to give a boost to higher education, the central government decided to assign priority to a number of HEIs, aiming at building them into world-class universities (Zhu & Lou, 2011). Thereafter, the two most successful projects in the recent reforms of HEIs have been: The '211 Project' from 1996 to 2000, which was designed to foster 100 world-class universities in the 21st century, and the '985 Project' of May 1998, that provided utmost support to China's top universities.

Project 211 was a project of developing 100 comprehensive HEIs and a number of key disciplines for the 21st century, initiated in 1995 by the former State Education Commission of China. It was implemented since 2002 by the Ministry of Education (MoE). The objectives of Project 211 were to: (i) improve the quality of academic disciplines and programs; (ii) re-structure of the higher education system; and (iii) assure the quality of teaching and research up to international standards (Wang, 2010; Fang, 2011). However, the board mission of this project, besides further boosting some top universities in China, also included some universities that were in poorly developed areas, having minor ethnic groups, and disadvantaged in resources' allocation. These universities were weaker than some other universities beyond the project in terms of

comprehensive competitiveness and faculty development. Project 211 might not be sufficient and effective enough to enhance the competitiveness of Chinese higher education in the global context.

President Jiang Zemin, at a conference celebrating Peking University's centennial on 4 May 1998, declared that China would strive to have a number of world class universities of international standards. In 1999, the State Council approved the Ministry of Education's document, *Facing the 21st Century Education Development Action Plan*, which emphasized the support of Beijing University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, Zhejiang University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and some other HEIs to build world-class and high-level universities. Then this initiative was named the 'Project 985' and its main objectives were to: (i) build world-class universities which are globally renowned in scientific and social research; (ii) renew the operational mechanisms of HEIs; (iii) enhance the strengths and opportunities in sustainable development; (iv) increase the capabilities of these universities in scientific and technological innovation; and (v) increase the effectiveness and competences of these universities in global competition (Fang, 2011, p. 49). From 1999 to 2002, the central and local governments allocated US \$3 billion to strengthen research and infrastructure at these universities. This state-initiated project has enabled a number of universities to gain resources to become top universities that participated in global higher education competition (Wang, 2010, p. 7).

The reform of the higher education system, since the open-door policy in 1978, was comprehensive and all-round. Re-structuring of higher education has involved areas of ownership, funding, administration, enrollment and graduate employment. With the establishment of socialist market economy, marketization of higher education emerged and developed speedily. The funding resources have been extended to various sources, the efficiency and effectiveness of HEI administration have been increased, and the internationalization of higher education has become more prominent, when the relationship between the state, the market and the HEIs is re-defined under global competition.

The Double First-Class University Initiative since 2016 in China

In June 2016, the Ministry of Education of China declared the abolishment of the Project 211 and Project 985 and announced that they would be replaced by the Double First-Class University Initiative (Chinanet, 2016). The Double First-Class Initiative is a major commitment made by the Chinese government to improve China's higher education and global competitiveness in the international context. The strategies in this reform included talent training, performance evaluation, research management and other key areas (MoE, 2022).

A range of achievements had been made by the end of 2020, including a group of major scientific innovations and critical technology breakthroughs, a few HEIs and disciplines such as Materials Science and Engineering that reached world-class ranking, and prominent progress achieved in Quantum Science and other vital research fields. When the Initiative was started, in September 2017, a total number of 140 universities were included in this plan and seven more universities were included by 2022. These are the top universities in China and make up to around 5% of the total number of Chinese HEIs (3,012) (MoE, 2022). The number of disciplines supported under the Initiative includes 59 basic disciplines such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology, as well as 180 engineering disciplines and 92 philosophy and social science disciplines.

As compared to the Project 211 and Project 985, the Double First-Class Initiative as stipulated is a part of major national strategies to invest the future of the nation as well as to enhance the competitiveness of Chinese higher education in the global environment. The Initiative has involved policies (Liu, 2018, pp. 148-149), such as: (i) building on the strengths of the previous two projects, that is, 211 and 985; (ii) meeting the national strategic needs with advancing the development on international cutting-edge science and technology; (iii) prioritizing certain disciplines with Chinese characteristics; (iv) purposefully inclined resources to support some selected universities and disciplines; as well as (v) stressing administrative principles of quality assurance, performance appraisal, accountability, autonomy, flexibility and competition. Liu (2018, pp. 150-151) also criticized that the Double First-Class Initiative is not without problems and challenges. The critique included: (i) the Initiative is not clearly defined and the goals of which are ambiguous; (ii) putting excessive resource largely to promote intra-competition among participating universities and disciplines; and (iii) the tensions between academic autonomy and performance evaluation are difficult to solve.

Nevertheless, the Double First-Class Initiative has completed the first round of trial in 2016-2020. In mid-February of 2022, the MoE of China issued a *Circular on Further Promoting the Development of First-Class Universities and First-Class Disciplines* (the Circular) to start the second round of the Initiative. The Circular further clarifies the directions, basic principles, major tasks and supporting mechanism for the new round of the Double First-Class Initiative. It requires universities and disciplines that have been identified as having the potential to become world class to focus on the quality of their development and explore new development models in pursuing solutions to China's issues and serving economic growth and social advancement (MoE, 2022).

Conclusion

Though there is still no universally accepted conceptualization of globalization, what we call "globalization" has brought numerous and profound changes to the economic, social, cultural and political life of nations as well as changes in education. Globalization might entail the imposition of the concepts of competition, market, choice, decentralization and privatization on education, that is, the further infiltration by business forces into education. It might also lead to increased commoditization of education and making quality education only accessible to elite elements of society who can afford it (Kellner, 2000).

Along with the further opening of the higher education sector following China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001, international competition and pressure have been intensified and further restructuring and transformation have been introduced. The then Project 211 and Project 985, as well as, the current Double First-Class Initiative have allowed mainland China to identify a small group of universities to be resourced as the flagships of China's higher education sector, to enable them in due course to compete internationally, and to be measured alongside the best universities in North America and Europe.

There are some backwash effects created from these trends of restructuring of higher education in China due to global competition. First, a rapid expansion in higher education may inevitably lead to a fall in the average academic standard and performance of graduates. It is likely that the definition and establishment of quality

will become the prerogative of management rather than academic professionals. When universities become more corporatized, they will be linked more to the market and less to the pursuit of truth. Intellectuals will become less the guardians of the search for truth, and administrators will assume a dominant role. In this regard, norms that have traditionally been part of university life may be questioned. Zajda (2010) warned that when guided by a climate of knowledge as production, the university may become indifferent to subjects dealing with ethics, social justice, and critical studies.

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Prof. Dr. Nicholas Sun-Keung Pang, East China Normal University, China

Zoltán Rónay & Ewelina K Niemczyk

Higher Education as a Change Agent: Exploring Interconnection of Academic Freedom and Sustainable Development

Abstract

Considering the fast-changing times and mounting challenges, higher education institutions (HEIs) became recognized as important change agents in the society but at the same time became more threatened. To that end, recently Magna Charta Universitatum, a declaration stating that intellectual and moral autonomy is the hallmark of any university and a precondition for the fulfilment of its responsibilities to society has been revised to reflect the changes of global society as well as to recognise HEIs' role to address the challenges that come with change. In fact, the revised document indicates that universities acknowledge their responsibility to engage with and respond to the challenges of the world and to their local communities to benefit humanity and contribute to sustainability. In order to achieve this promise, the academic freedom (AF) of scholars as knowledge seekers and builders as well as key actors in education and social change needs to be safeguarded. The aim of this paper is to enhance consideration for relationship between AF and sustainability. Based on the scholarly literature we explore the interconnection between the two notions. The preliminary findings clearly indicate that sustainability and AF play an imperative role in HEIs. Freedom of academic voices needs to be supported to protect and promote authentic participation in public discourses and to sustainably shape future society. Meanwhile, the infringement on AF carries unwanted consequences including slow transition towards sustainability.

Keywords: academic freedom, sustainability, sustainable development goals, higher education

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are in a unique position in terms of their potential to make contribution to the global society. In fact, they represent critically important spaces responsible for producing and disseminating knowledge which assist in navigating an uncertain world and in nurturing conscious and carrying citizens dedicated to social wellbeing and achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Spooner (2023, para. 10) suggests that universities should be rather viewed as multiversities since they are:

immensely diverse and quite adept at integrating a variety of conflicting demands and purposes: from fostering ground-breaking scientific research and transmitting and critiquing knowledge to supplying teachers for our schools and medical personnel to our hospitals.

In fact, HEIs fulfill many roles providing social, economic and environmental benefits to glocal communities.

As indicated in UNESCO (2022, p. 19) report, the importance of HEIs in global progress towards the SDGs is significant. Without HEIs input towards the 2030 Agenda, it will be difficult if not impossible, to achieve the global goals (GG):

HEIs have accumulated knowledge and research procedures that can both explain and contribute to solving the main ecological, economic and social problems that face societies both locally and globally. The academic freedom they profess and defend, as well as their normative structure and ethical principles, have allowed most HEIs to be oriented towards an understanding of our world's problems and in many cases towards possible solutions to some of them. HEIs have drawn on this knowledge, produced globally, to design their educational programmes and are training new generations of professionals with knowledge, skills and ethical principles that it is hoped will guide their professional decisions and actions. As aspirational, free institutions, HEIs in general are particularly open to novel and critical thinking and therefore also represent unique intellectual spaces for rethinking sustainable development.

HEIs' strength as agent of change lies in offering a collective space to connect with countries, cultures, and disciplines while exploring plural ways of thinking, knowing and acting. A vital activity to address common challenges through achieving GG and thus make our future sustainable socially, environmentally and economically. It is essential to recognize that for HEIs to serve as change agents, AF of scholars as knowledge seekers and builders as well as key actors in social change needs to be safeguarded. UNESCO (2017, p. 6) report states that:

based on the principles of academic freedom, higher education provides a protected space for independent and historically informed reflections, which is both, oriented towards the generation of new knowledge and towards contributing to meeting societal challenges.

AF is an integral component not only of a democratic society but also of a sustainable society. AF assures honest unrestricted flow of information and innovation without interference of the State and other external authorities. It can be deduced that sustainability is an expression of AF and HEIs' commitment to address social challenges. UNESCO (2022, p. 60) report also indicates that because of AF, HEIs are in privileged position to provide bold and novel contributions towards achievement of SDGs. Despite the significant pressures on academic work caused by intensified academic capitalism, marketization of access and competition for status through rankings and metrics, most HEIs retain enough autonomy in their academic activities (teaching, researching and community engagement) to critique the status quo and the hegemonic power. At the same time, it is important to recognize that in many contexts AF is severely constrained.

Current status of sustainability in HEIs

The scale and severity of human influence on social systems and the planet is worrisome in terms of wellbeing and sustainability. As explained by Stephens et al. (2008), throughout the history HEIs paid a crucial role in society for advancing science, however due to current social issues, their role of advancing science in practical and applicable ways maximized. As clearly indicated by UNESCO (2017, p. 3):

Sustainability Science requires important new capacities of individual scientists for integrated critical analysis and foresight; the ability to cope with systems thinking,

changing environments, risks and insecurity; and the capacity to recognize and address diverse values as well as conflicts of goals and interests, to empathize and work responsibly and collectively in diverse partnerships. Such capacities need to be strengthened through all forms of education.

The term ‘sustainability’ defined by various individuals and institutions differs creating space for flexibility but also ambiguity. It is also important to mention that the interpretation of the term may differ across cultures and contexts. As accurately stated by Wals and Jickling (2002, p. 227):

Sustainability is as complex as life itself; hence, it differs over time and space and it can be discussed at different levels of aggregation and viewed through different windows.

Multitude of academic activities that take place at HEIs offer variety of ways to engage in fostering sustainable practices, facilitating sustainable long-term goals, and applying scientific knowledge to create social change. As suggested by Stephens et al. (2008, p. 321), higher education can: model sustainable practices for society; teach students the skills of integration, synthesis, and systems-thinking and how to cope with complex problems; conduct use-inspired, real-world problem-based research; promote and enhance engagement between individuals and institutions both within and outside higher education to resituate universities as transdisciplinary agents.

With all the potential at hand, relying on current scholarly literature, it is evident that norms steering HEIs, namely driving forces of marketisation and the increasing focus on rankings, which drives up competition between academics and institutions do not align with principles of sustainability. It is unsettling yet vital to realize that this kind of neoliberal approach promoting elitism and unhealthy competition is not effective long-term. Some scholars (Ferrer-Balás et al., 2008) argue that in order for HEIs to contribute to social sustainability they would have to first invest in their own internal change.

According to scholars like Stephens et al. (2008, p. 323), there is a need to embrace sustainability science as an emerging field relying on

interdisciplinary research that internalizes the link between knowledge and action, integrates social and physical sciences, and calls for the training of individuals to be able to deal with the complexity and interconnectedness associated with the major sustainability challenges facing society.

UNESCO (2017, p. 1) report elaborates that sustainability science

can be geared towards the generation of basic knowledge, towards applied technology or towards sociocultural innovation as well as towards new governance or social and economic models. Sustainability Science is an expression of both academic freedom and of academic responsibility towards societal issues.

The situation and main problems with AF

Before overviewing the key challenges facing AF, some conceptual clarification is needed. First, the distinction between institutional autonomy and AF needs to be clarified. Although many references in the literature portray these two values in different ways (one as a condition of the other or as parts of each other), we argue that they are closely related concepts, which cannot exist independently of each other (Rónay & Niemczyk, 2022). However, when Kováts and Rónay (2023) set up their model of AF, they identified two conceptual components: essential and supporting elements, with institutional autonomy falling into the latter category. The essential

elements are freedom of a) teaching, b) research, c) learning, and d) dissemination. Between these elements and the supportive elements, self-governance, which means the decision-making and the inevitable involvement of the academic community in academic affairs, can be seen as a transitional area. Autonomy as a supportive element and employment security, and, in a broader context, financial security ensures all the above-mentioned elements. Therefore, AF is the individual's right, and autonomy is the institutional right.

These conceptual elements are subject to the risk of restriction, individually and in complex ways. One classic phenomenon is the State intervention, which can be direct (either by threatening the security of existence or the freedom of the person) or by creating a system of rules and conditions in which the restriction is often hidden and takes the form of self-censorship (Kováts & Rónay, 2022). Under pressure from the State or even independent of it, the institution itself can also restrict AF even though the HEI enjoys a high degree of autonomy.

In liberal democracies and in the new authoritarian or illiberal states, as well as in dictatorships, the reasons for restricting AF may vary. In the former, the discussion of certain topics, defined often as sensitive, is prevented on the protection of fundamental rights and human rights. This may include restriction of certain topics during conference discussions or themes addressed with students within the classroom. Barriers may also be built via taboo or negatively viewed topics by the authorities, which often include discourses about gender issues and LGBTQI+ rights in illiberal countries, while these can also be politics, religion, and ideology in a dictatorship. It is essential to mention that all these impositions have financial implications for HEIs and individual scholars who may not obtain funding if engaged in the above-mentioned sensitive topics.

Bond between AF and sustainability

As evident in the previous sections, essential elements of AF are necessary if academics and HEIs aim to contribute to SDGs. Sedlacek (2013, p. 76) notes that:

Universities fulfil a central role in sustainable development processes since they are key players in both the individual as well as the social or collective learning systems. Academic freedom enables universities to explore ideas which, especially in a comprehensive or integrative approach to sustainability, are important to cope with the trade-offs between economic, social, and environmental goals.

In fact, HEIs are expected to be flagships in sharing the idea of sustainability and leading the realization of GG. To that end, they have to be role models in sustainability processes in all academic activities including sustainability-oriented curricula and fostering green university (Lattu & Cai, 2020). Ekwueme et al. (2016) add that sustainability education is essential not only for ensuring a better future but also to serve as a tool for educating about human rights and social justice, which are part of the conditions necessary to achieve sustainability. To this end, AF is required for sensitive topics even when against the state's interest (e.g., environmentally damaging investments, harmful effects of industrial production, use of alternative energy sources) to be discussed in research and teaching.

Potential tensions between AF in teaching and SDGs are less visible. However, the tensions between AF in research and pursuit of solving sustainability issues often puts pressure on researchers. Meanwhile, AF is essential to ensure restriction-free discussions and sharing of information to responsibly achieve sustainability. The

interconnection between AF and sustainability becomes more complex if we approach it from the supportive elements of AF.

In terms of employment security, it can be stated that academics facing direct or indirect existential consequences, would be hindered by them and so would be the sustainability. The protection of their employment's future may result in their self-censorship, which reflects restriction of their AF. Tran and colleagues (2023) underline that financial freedom's importance as a condition for AF without SDGs' achievement is difficult. While the social mission of higher education has become a global responsibility – including the responsibility for sustainability – the financial conditions for this have also changed (Vasilescu et al., 2010). The transformation of the higher education environment leads to a diversification of funding and, thus, financial exposure. With diminishing public support, there is a growing need to involve market partners that are often involved in activities that threaten sustainability, which may place researchers and HEIs in difficult position. The increasingly market-oriented and market-driven society is weakening the defining characteristic of AF, which can hinder the ability of achieving sustainability (Sedlacek, 2013).

Another aspect of the relationship between sustainability and AF lies in the university itself as being a sustainable organisation. This means mainstreaming sustainability in the university's operations, integrating sustainability into education (including sustainability courses and topics in the curricula), extending research interests towards sustainability, and engaging in research in a sustainable way. In some cases, this means not only a commitment to sustainability but also abstinence of unsustainable practices relevant for AF. Furthermore, it also implies a transformation of the organisational culture. Adams et al. (2018) argue that AF, in particular, makes students, as an intensively fluctuating population, less able to adapt to the culture change required for sustainability. The same authors (2018, p. 440) further claim that *sustainable university requires individuals who behave sustainably: autonomous, self-regulating, and responsible*. They conclude that a sustainable culture of an organisation requires the community's mutual considerations. Namely, these autonomous individuals must transform the organisation and its culture together through mutual decision making. In order to accomplish that the university needs the academic staff's self-governance, which is the elementary condition of AF. Although the relationship between sustainability and AF is complex, they can strengthen each other.

Concluding remarks: Against conformity and pro sustainability

HEIs have the potential and responsibility to address the contemporary challenges to benefit humanity and the planet sustainably. As stated earlier, to achieve this, the AF of scholars as knowledge seekers and builders needs to be protected. Undeniably, focus on sustainability in HEIs is not an option but rather a necessity if they are to serve as agents of change for glocal society. This means saying no to conformity and yes to AF.

António Nóvoa, one of the authors of the 2021 UNESCO report, emphasised the uniqueness of HEIs stating that their power and potential lies in their unique position. Implying that the day they lose their specificity, allowing themselves to be governed by market rules or commodification trends, they will become useless (UNESCO, 2021). We would add that when HEIs allow for AF to be restricted they will no longer serve as agents of change for a sustainable society. In short, we can state that AF is the necessary condition for sustainability thus for achievement of GG.

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zoltán Rónay, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

Prof. Dr. Ewelina Kinga Niemczyk, North-West University, South Africa

Jan B Khumalo

School Management Support for Parental Involvement in Education

Abstract

The role of parents in the education of their children is a factor which has been acknowledged as one of the contributors to learners' success in schools. In addition, the nature of parental involvement and the benefits thereof, have been sufficiently treated in the corpus on school improvement. The purpose of this paper is to probe the support that schools, through their School Management Teams (SMTs), provide to parents to enable them to be closely involved in their children's education. Seen through the lens of Epstein's model, parental involvement is conceptualized and related to school environments in diverse South African contexts. The model of parental involvement reveals six areas of involvement, namely, parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community. Accordingly, parental involvement as defined by Epstein and the inherent support that schools should provide to parents, form the thesis of this paper. The paper concludes with a recommendation of implementing proactive strategies of parental involvement in education.

Keywords: parental involvement, education, school children, School Management Team, Epstein's model

Introduction

There has been unanimous consensus amongst experts, not only in education but in psychology as well, that the involvement of parents in the education of their children impacts their learning and development (Munje & Mncube, 2018). Furthermore, recent studies show that there is a need for parents to be more closely involved in their children's education, and to be supported by educational institution to do so (Epstein, 2018). Moreover, studies indicate that "the earlier parents become involved in their children's education, the greater the academic benefits will be" (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989, p. 3). The Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2021) also encourage parents to contribute meaningfully to the success of their children in schools, because it regards parental involvement in education as vital.

The involvement of parents in their children's education has potential benefits, apart from an improvement in the educational attainment of those children. A study by Avvisati et al. (2013, p. 58) reported a "significant reduction of reported truancy and misbehaviour, as well as improved motivation for schoolwork". In the same vein, parental involvement in education has been found to lead to lower students' dropout rates (Jimerson et al., 2000), and better emotional development (McDowall & Schaugency, 2017). In addition to educational attainment, reduction of truancy and misbehaviour, improved motivation for work and lower dropout rates, parental

involvement also involves parents in school decisions through participation in the School Governing Body (SGB).

The main argument made in this paper is that there is a need to focus attention from how and why parents are involved or not involved in the education of their children, to the kind of support that is typically provided to those parents by the school. This contention is corroborated by Trotman (2001, p. 280) who states that “teachers who hold low expectations or believe that parents do not care about their children and do not want to be involved in their education, may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy and directly contribute to the lack of parental involvement and to student [learner] failure”. Similarly, some school practices or policies may have the effect of encouraging or discouraging parental involvement, thereby shifting attention away from parent characteristics to the resources and programmes that schools provide to encourage parental involvement from all parents regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status (Trotman, 2001). Msila (2012, p. 305) claims that “principals and other stakeholders in schools need to understand these complexities when dealing with poor parents in their schools” and support them to be more closely involved in their children’s education.

The aim of this paper is to probe the support that school management provides to parents to encourage them to be more involved in their children’s education. Firstly, parental involvement will be unpacked and clarified through the lens of Epstein’s model (1995). Then, the rationale to provide support for parental involvement in education will be provided. The paper will conclude with a recommendation of implementing proactive strategies to promote parental involvement in education.

Conceptualization of parental involvement

Although some scholars argue that there is no uniform and accepted definition of parental involvement, Okeke (2014, p. 1) reports that “there appears to be some consensus in the literature on the conflation of activities that together represent effective parental involvement in their children’s schooling”. In the same vein, parental involvement can be understood to describe “a situation in which parents are perceived as active partners in the process of educating their children” (Okeke, 2014, p. 1). Makgopa and Mokhele (2013, p. 220) define parental involvement as “a combination of supporting student academic achievement and participating in school-initiated functions”. The two definitions accentuate the importance of the involvement of parents in the education of their children, and ongoing communication with the school. Mncube (2010, p. 234) concurs that parental involvement entails “awareness of, and achievement in, schoolwork, an understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and learner success in schooling, and a commitment to consistent communication with educators about learner progress”. Additionally, there is growing empirical evidence to show that supportive behaviour from parents or guardians correlates with student achievement (Scharton, 2019).

Other definitions regard parental involvement as a partnership between parents and the school to improve the education of learners. The partnership orientation “emphasizes the importance of parents-school cooperation in education and socialization of children, respecting cultural differences among children and families and the importance of different perspectives on creating a positive studying climate” (Matejevic et al., 2014, p. 290). Co-operation between the school and parents is regarded as a cornerstone of the partnership orientation.

Besides the clarity provided in the paragraph above, there are other attempts at defining parental involvement in school. As indicated by Green et al. (2007), traditional definitions of parental involvement entail school-related activities such home-based activities (when parents help children at home) and school-based activities (when parents communicate with the school and help children with school-based activities).

Parental involvement in education can also be conceptualized through Epstein's model of parental involvement. The model is comprised of six major levels. Each level includes activities which clarify how parents are involved in their children's education, and school life in general. In the paragraphs that follow, each of the levels is unpacked to illustrate parental involvement in the education of their children.

- The first level focuses on parenting; parents try everything they can to satisfy their children's basic needs, supervise and discipline them when necessary, and establish home conditions that support children as learners, so that they can perform well at school.
- The second level entails communicating; parents communicate with teachers and schools about school activities and children's progress. This level is crucial as it enables the early identification of learning barriers so that parents can be involved in addressing them.
- Volunteering is the third level, and it refers to parents who assist teachers, learners, administrators, and other parents in classrooms or other areas of the school, while others may participate as supporters of school events.
- The fourth level is about learning at home; parents work with guidance from schools to become involved in children's home learning, such as helping children with homework or curriculum-related activities. Frequent communication with the school is necessary, so that parents may be aware of how and in what areas of schoolwork to assist the child.
- The fifth level deals with decision making and includes parental involvement in school decisions through participation in School Governing Bodies, SGB sub-committees, or school-based parent groups. This role also affords parents the opportunity to participate in school governance and to promote the best interests of the school.
- The sixth level encapsulates collaborating with the community and involves parents working with social structures with an interest in education and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to support the school and collaborate with educators to achieve school goals.

Unpacking parental involvement brings forward two main arguments, namely, that parental involvement in children's education is important and that schools need to support parents in their endeavour to be present in their children's education. To give effect to the thrust of this paper, the section that follows provides recommendations in a form of strategies which might be necessary to encourage parental involvement in schools and to render the required assistance and support to parents.

The rationale to provide support for parental involvement in education

To get parents to be more closely involved in their children's education, it stands to reason that they need support from both school management and other stakeholders who are involved in education. The need to support parental involvement in education is reinforced by Hornby and Lafaele (2011, p. 39), who argue that there are barriers

which inhibit involvement such as “individual parent and family factors, parent-teacher factors, child factors and societal factors”. The authors further state that individual parent and family factors include parents’ beliefs about parental involvement, perceptions of invitation for parental involvement, current life contexts and class, ethnicity, and gender. Msila (2012) concurs with that argument stating that the social and cultural capital of parents from poor socio-economic backgrounds negatively influence their involvement in education.

Hornby and Lafaele (2011) distinguish parent-teacher factors as differing goals and agendas, differing attitudes and differing language used. It can be argued that differences in the abovementioned areas may stifle co-operation between parents and teachers and impede parental involvement in the school. Child factors include age, learning difficulties and disabilities, gifts and talents and behavioural problems. Parents of learners who experience these problems may find it difficult to be involved in their education, and to visit their school regularly to discuss their difficulties with teachers.

Societal factors which have been identified by Hornby and Lafaele (2011) include historical and demographic, political and economic factors. The impact of these factors on parental involvement is evident in some studies on parental involvement which attribute the lack of close involvement to both social and cultural capital (Msila, 2009).

Proactive strategies of parental involvement in education

Considering concerns about the level of parental involvement in education and the support that school management is expected to give to parents, proactive strategies of parental involvement in education in the South African context are recommended. These strategies are based on the original work of Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005). A scrutiny of the six strategies for parental involvement in education, resonates with the situation in schools and an application of these strategies may contribute to support parents in becoming more involved in their children’s education.

Create an inviting and welcoming school climate

For parents to be interested in the school, the school environment should be intentionally inviting. The school environment should be visually appealing to parents from diverse backgrounds when they enter the school. South Africa has a rich tapestry of diverse backgrounds from which the learners come; therefore, no parent should feel alienated by the school. The school environment should not be seen as a closed organization that parents may be afraid to visit. Parents should feel that the school is theirs and they belong there. School management should create a positive school climate. The principal as leader of the SMT should create trust through open communication and the building of sound teacher-parent relationships. The administrative staff should be professionally developed to possess critical office-staff skills with a consumer orientation and treat parents, learners, and visitors with respect.

Empower teachers for parental involvement

Routine school practices that focus on discussion and development of positive, trusting parent-school relationships should be developed. Teachers should seek parents’ ideas, perspectives, opinions and questions about school and family roles in learning. There should be time for parents’ meetings to discuss parental involvement and reflect on practices which have been successful in the school in the past. It is necessary to

keep an active school file of teacher and parent ideas on what is helpful and effective. In addition, a school-specific resource bank should be developed to support teacher skills and capacities for improved parent-teacher relations. In-service programmes should also be developed to support teacher efficacy for involving parents and school capacities for effective partnership with families. To crown it all, teachers should be offered opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and learn from them. Strategies that are adopted to improve parental involvement should be revised frequently. Lastly, involvement plans responsive to teacher, family, and community needs should be developed.

Learn about parents' goals, perspectives on child's learning, family circumstances and culture

Suggestions should be offered for support of child's learning consistent with parents' circumstances. The parents' family circumstances inevitably determine the kind of support that the parents can get from the teachers and how the parent can assist and support the child with their learning. It is vital for teachers to focus on developing two-way family-school communication. Parents' perspectives on the child's learning and suggestions should be sought and followed through. Existing involvement approaches should be adapted as needed to enhance the fit between invitations and family circumstances. Lastly, new strategies should be developed to enhance opportunities for communication between the family and the school.

Join with existing parent-teacher-family structures to enhance involvement

Where after-school programmes exist, these should be used to increase family-school communication. Use the SGB to invite all families' participation in parent activities organized by the school. It is necessary to work with parent leaders to ensure open access and to make parents feel accepted and embraced by the school. In schools where learners are already adolescents, it may be helpful to establish parent advisory committees providing advice on children's progress and suggesting improvement plan if progress is not satisfactory. Some schools establish a school-based family centre to support family-school interactions and communications.

Offer full range of involvement opportunities and new opportunities unique to school and community

Invitations could be sent to specific events and volunteer opportunities at school. For parents with inflexible work schedules, it is wise to think of times that suits their schedules when activities are organized. Involvement opportunities should be clearly advertised by using methods targeted to interests and needs of school families, and which will attract parents to be involved in the school.

Invite teachers, parents, principal, and staff to learner-centred events at school

There is a need to increase opportunities for informal parent-teacher-staff communications and interactions. These events should be used to seek parents' comments and suggestions for involvement. During parent involvement activities at the school, there should be informal parent-teacher-staff communications and interactions. At this stage, the school should avail themselves of the opportunity to seek parent comments and suggestions for improvement. The school can also make use of this

opportunity to distribute information on upcoming events, school policies and how parents can generally support children's learning.

Conclusion

The subject of parental involvement in children's education has received considerable attention in scholarly literature for decades now. The phenomenon has been approached from several angles, to contribute to the existing body of knowledge. The thesis of this paper is that there is still existing need to support parents, in the best way possible to deal with the problem of inadequate parental involvement, which still manifests itself in South African schools today. The ideal situation is envisaged as one where the family and schoolwork together as genuine partners to promote parental involvement. Apart from unpacking parental involvement and justifying why there is a need to provide support to parents, proactive strategies to improve parental involvement were suggested.

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Dr. Jan B Khumalo, North-West University, South Africa

Maja Stojanović & Susan M. Yelich Biniecki

Training Adult Education Researchers in a Remote Doctoral Program: Experiences, Reflections, and Suggestions for Moving Forward

Abstract

This paper focuses on the experience, reflections, and best practices related to training adult education researchers in an adult learning and leadership doctoral program at a Research I institution in the United States. We discuss embedding technology into the curriculum, fostering connections, and supporting the development of self-directedness as key elements of an effective online doctoral program. The paper offers suggestions applicable to other online, research-intensive programs catering to the working learner population.

Keywords: adult education, graduate, doctoral program, online learning, United States

Introduction

Fully online or distance education was almost unimaginable only a few years ago. While there were online-based courses offered pre-2019, mostly at the postsecondary level, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way online education is perceived, evident in the number of courses and programs that continue to be delivered through online platforms and modes of instruction. Notably, in comparison to 2019, 2020 saw a 186 percent increase in the number of undergraduate students who were enrolled exclusively in online education in the United States (US) (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). This means that 44 percent of undergraduate students were studying fully online. As for graduate students, the increase was less significant (around 20 percent), still, 52 percent of those students were taking exclusively online courses in fall 2020 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

While the pandemic might have caused a significant shift in undergraduate education, for graduate students, notably adult learners, the flexibility and practicality of online education was evident even before 2019 and continues to be so as many programs continue to offer fully online programs at the graduate level.

In this paper, we share insights from one such Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program. We focus on how this program is training adult education researchers through the use of technology, following the principles of self-directed learning, and embracing the fact that online education plays an integral role in the educational landscape of the future.

Adult learning and distance education

Distance education was conceptualized in the 1800s to refer to correspondence study programs and later the education delivered via the radio and television (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2013). Today, distance education is typically delivered via the Internet and so, in this paper, we use the terms online and distance education as synonymous, to refer to education delivered through the Internet and in which students and instructors are separated by space and potentially time (in case of asynchronous learning). This mode of learning is particularly appealing to the so called “non-traditional learner”, the adult over the age of 25 who has full-time professional responsibilities, in addition to family responsibilities, and is more likely to pursue further education as a part-time endeavor. These are the students who opt for online learning because of the benefits this mode of delivery has in relation to their lives.

Ritt (2008) suggested that online learning addresses personal, professional, and institutional barriers that would otherwise prevent adult learners from obtaining a higher education degree. In terms of personal barriers, the author argued that online learning removes the need for learners to relocate in order to pursue further education. Learning from home, which eliminates the need to commute to campus, also helps address family responsibilities and may reduce the financial challenge, which is an institutional barrier imposed on those pursuing a degree in person (Ritt, 2008). With regard to professional barriers, individuals who may not be able to leave their workplace to attend in-person class meetings may learn online on their own time.

Additional proof that online learning is appealing to full-time working adults is the fact that career start, advancement, or change, as well as increasing job prospects are the key reasons adults pursue online programs (Capranos et al., 2022). In fact, a national, US survey of 2,500 adult learners who were either studying online, recently graduated from an online program, or were planning to enroll in one indicated that 77 percent of these individuals decided to study online before making any other decision relevant to their studies, inclusive of selecting a university (Capranos et al., 2022). This means that most adult learners who are currently enrolled in online education have reasons other than the pandemic to study online. Because online learning is likely even more popular for adult graduate students than traditional, in person education, graduate faculty who teach in online programs need a specific skillset to support and guide these learners.

The context

The scenario for analysis presented in this paper is the remote Adult Learning and Leadership PhD Program at Kansas State University (KSU), encompassing challenges and opportunities in training adult education researchers in remote education globally. KSU is a Research I institution and the first land-grant institution founded in the US in 1863. Of course, educator and researcher preparation has changed significantly since the university was founded. In a predominantly rural state, remote access has the potential to give learners who are not able to access a brick-and-mortar campus the opportunity to engage in a doctoral program, addressing our land-grant mission to serve individuals in the state of Kansas (Kansas State University, n.d.). The program also is borderless and reaches learners throughout the world.

The impetus behind the remote model, which was in place even prior to the pandemic, was twofold: to increase access and ensure program sustainability. Both are

necessary within an ethical and a fiscally responsible framework to maintain a thriving program in an environment where most higher education programs are unsustainable through a local population with traditional access to a campus for in-person learning. Although the adult learning and leadership of doctoral program was remote prior to the pandemic, the number of students interested post-pandemic has increased. The reasons for this increase, as suggested by Capranos et al. (2022) and based on Ritt (2008), could be the experiences all learners have had during the pandemic with remote work and learning as well as the opportunity to better balance personal life, work, and education. At this point, the idea of an online program may be a more appealing option, whereby adults realize that the quality, rigor, and flexibility of an online program is achievable.

We describe our program as remote; however, while pursuing their degree, students need to enroll in two in-person, one-week residencies within two different summers. The purpose of the residencies is to engage learners with peers and faculty, and to create an intense scaffolding to move forward within the program. There is a flexible timeline for completion within seven years, without a cohort model; therefore, this connecting time in-person serves multiples purposes.

Administratively, the program is categorized as 100% online; therefore, within federal and foreign country guidelines, many graduate assistantships that regularly support international doctoral students and student visas are often unavailable to international students, making recruitment for international learners difficult. In addition, although the US is making progress in addressing broadband equity in rural areas, these regions still do not have the same access (Lee et al., 2022). These adaptive challenges are also present in many parts of the world. Therefore, creating a conversation about how to develop successful remote doctoral programs to train adult education researchers can inform worldwide initiatives.

Framework

We framed our analysis of the remote Adult Learning and Leadership PhD Program using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UNSDG) 4, which posits that we should “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (United Nations, n.d., para. 1). This lens helped us focus on understanding how online learning can be embedded into doctoral-level programs in a way that is engaging, socially inclusive, and accessible to all. Specifically, we wanted to examine how quality doctoral education can be delivered remotely and which benefits this method of instruction brings to adult learners who are being training to become adult education scholars and researchers.

Bearing in mind the role that the COVID-19 pandemic has played in the increase in online learning opportunities, as highlighted by the United Nations (n.d.), we consider how the pandemic has informed the development of online post-secondary programs. Still, it is important to highlight that, for the program on which we focus, the pandemic was not the cause for developing an online-based program, but rather the needs of the students that the program serves. As such, in addition to the UNSDG 4, as another element of our framework, we turn to one of the key principles of adult learning—self-directedness. Self-directed learning is based on the premise that the learner will be motivated, show initiative, and demonstrate autonomy and independence in the learning process (Knowles, 1975). Therefore, we consider self-directedness to be an important lens for examining an online doctoral-level program, given that the goals of

such a program is to train autonomous researchers, and considering the fact that the learners and the instructor have fewer opportunities to share the same learning space and time, given the nature of online learning, than it would be the case in an in-person program.

Embedding technology into the curriculum

Online learning is largely technology-dependent, still we argue that in well-rounded online education, technology plays a larger role than that of a facilitative tool. Notably, the Adult Learning and Leadership Program at KSU uses a web-based learning management system, Canvas, to deliver instruction online, exchange learning materials, and communicate with students. Canvas serves as an online learning space, similar to a brick-and-mortar classroom, in addition to Zoom, the video communication platform used for engaging in synchronous learning opportunities and for online office hours. In addition to using technology to facilitate the learning, we realize that embedding technology into the curriculum is equally important to ensure that the learners are acquiring all the necessary skills that researchers in the 21st century need.

Specifically, all graduate programs in Adult Learning and Leadership at KSU expect students to demonstrate knowledge of the impact of technology on adult education learning and the skills relevant to online adult education. Students are often required to create digital content to demonstrate their learning and are asked to use digital tools in collaborative projects. As a culmination of their PhD program, in dissertation proposal and defense meetings, students are expected to use technological tools to deliver the content to their committee.

Further, and pertaining specifically to research, the Department of Educational Leadership at KSU, which houses the Adult Learning and Leadership Program, embeds technology into the research methods courses taught by the faculty in the department. The most notable example is the course that focuses on qualitative data management and analysis using NVivo, a computer software used for qualitative data analysis. Examples of other courses in which the use of technology is a central outcome include *Adult Learners and Integrating Technology into the Curriculum*, *Teaching Online in Adult Learning*, and *Social Media in the 21st Century*, among others.

Fostering connections in a research-intensive program

Fostering connections on multiple levels is important within a research-intensive program, even more so in a program taught at a distance. Facilitating personal connections with faculty and students is critical to support socio-emotional encouragement within the program (Hill & Conceição, 2019). Summer in-person residencies and monthly virtual doctoral group meetings are structured within the program to purposefully create connections with students and faculty. The intent of these structured formal and nonformal learning opportunities is to foster more informal peer learning and mentoring, a critical component of doctoral work. As Cherrstrom et al. (2018, p. 43) note, “This group is vital”. Peer sharing about how students are developing research skills and managing work – school – life balance, can provide important information as well as emotional support.

Although the program can be completed completely online, synchronous and asynchronous opportunities to form connections within different courses are possible. While this diversity in modalities and format create positive opportunities to meet

multiple student preferences, a challenge is that instructors need to be well versed in different pedagogies. Teaching a course that is completely asynchronous, online in Canvas, requires different strategies to foster connections than a course in which learners may be present in remote Zoom meeting rooms and can see each other in real time. Instructors and students need to constantly learn how to adjust within these different formats to foster connections, often in self-directed ways.

Fostering self-directedness and developing autonomous researchers

All doctoral programs, both in-person and remote, aim to support students to become self-directed, autonomous scholars (Conceição & Swaminathan, 2011). Online doctoral programs have a 10 – 20% higher attrition rate than face-to-face programs (Graham & Massyn, 2019); therefore, faculty need to pay special attention to the process of learning so that students do not make it through course work, and then languish, unable to move forward with a proposal. A doctoral program needs to scaffold experiences to move a student first to an independent researcher and then to an autonomous scholar (Conceição & Swaminathan, 2011). The mindset of a student needs to move from one of completing assignments to independently directing and taking ownership of creativity in scholarly work. Course work needs to provide scaffolding and instructors need to provide feedback to support that shift in mindset.

Fostering self-directedness and developing autonomous researchers should be integrated within any doctoral program given that students eventually need to conduct independent research. An online doctoral program needs to scaffold these competencies within online pedagogy and create socio-emotional support. Faculty–student mentoring relationships are critical within that learning process. Setting expectations, creating regular remote meetings, and developing a relationship are important inputs into supporting the student to those ends.

When it comes to adult learning programs, self-directedness is a concept embedded into the curriculum as well as the teaching and facilitation process, in that the students are expanding their knowledge about the characteristics of adult learners, one of which is self-directedness, all the while focused on becoming self-directed, autonomous learners themselves, as they work toward becoming independent researchers. And so, while the online learning environment may pose challenges and require greater effort to establish connections than is the case in programs delivered in person, the distance embedded in online learning may actually be conducive to developing self-directedness.

Moving forward “post-pandemic”

Even for graduate programs that operated (fully) online prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic has created challenges and made faculty and administrators reflect on their teaching and facilitation strategies and the ways that these online programs operate and are structured. Specifically, considering the disruption that the pandemic caused to work – life – study balance and the social context of learning, putting additional emotional pressure especially on non-traditional learners with full-time jobs, practicing emotional literacy in teaching became more important than ever (Robinson & Stojanović, 2021). As online learners showed the need for socio-emotional support, both from peers and faculty, it became imperative to create opportunities for synchronous connections, especially in long-term, demanding,

research-intensive programs, such as an online PhD program. This poses the question of sustainability of online and hybrid doctoral programs “post-pandemic”, which we are currently facing. It also calls for establishing opportunities to learn from each other and understand best practices in online educational programs globally. This paper makes a step forward in the knowledge sharing that may be beneficial to others who are either establishing or working on maintaining online educational programs in the current socio-economic settings.

Conclusion: Implications for other programs

In this paper, we shared experiences while reflecting on best practices related to training adult education researchers in an adult learning and leadership PhD program at a Research I in the United States. While our paper is focused on a single program and a specific context, it offers suggestions applicable to other similar programs, specifically online, research-intensive programs catering to the working learner population.

Employing the UNSDG 4—focused on ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (United Nations, n.d., para. 1)—and self-directed learning to frame our reflections and analysis, we discussed the importance of embedding technology into the curriculum, fostering connections, and developing autonomous researchers as key focus areas of a research-intensive online adult education program that caters to the adult, working learner population. Similarly to Dzubinski et al. (2012, p. 108), we stressed the importance of supporting students in co-creating “online learning environments that are predicated upon intentional community and mutuality, and provide learning opportunities for faculty and students to develop these capacities”. The sense of community emerged as especially important in planning educational opportunities “post-pandemic” and calls for a need to balance asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities.

While we focused on fully online courses (either delivered synchronously or asynchronously) in this paper, a potential area of development in online doctoral education is a hy-flex model of instruction—a situation in which one faculty member delivers a course to online and in-person students simultaneously, calling for a different and unique skillset. Hy-flex models provide an opportunity for future discussion and analysis as we learn how best to create accessible learning environments.

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Assist. Prof. Dr. Maja Stojanović, Kansas State University, United States

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Susan M. Yelich Binniecki, Kansas State University, United States

Oliver Tafadzwa Gore & Anesu Sam Ruswa

Non-monetary Poverty: Addressing Issues of Student Deprivation in South African Higher Education

Abstract

South African higher education experiences low outcomes regardless of the significant financial investments made into the sector to address student poverty through financial aid. Concerning is that more than half of the low-income students who receive funding from the government do not graduate which points to the presence of other deprivations that are not financial. Despite the well documented adverse impacts of multidimensional poverty and non-monetary deprivations, there has been limited research on it in South African higher education. This study fills in this knowledge gap by exploring non-monetary deprivation and ways of addressing multidimensional poverty without necessarily increasing funding. The study uses the Capabilities Approach to argue for universities to give attention to non-monetary deprivation in their interventions aimed to address multidimensional student poverty. The study employed a sequential-mixed methodology that collected data using four focus group discussions, followed by an online survey that collected quantitative and qualitative data using a questionnaire. A total of 2306 undergraduate students who were selected from one university using a simple random sampling technique completed the questionnaire. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. This paper only focuses on the data from the qualitative survey, which indicates that non-monetary deprivation is manifesting in the following dimensions: being able to live stress-free lives, dignity, participation, self-determination and motivation, social networks and being safe and secure. The study recommends that universities should consider reducing the effects of the non-material deprivations, such as mental health in order for students to flourish in higher education.

Keywords: poverty, non-monetary deprivation, multidimensional poverty, student wellbeing, higher education, Capabilities Approach, South Africa

Introduction

South African higher education experiences low outcomes for various reasons, one of them being student poverty. Low outcomes in the country's higher education are concerning since attaining a degree gives the students from poor socio-economic backgrounds a better chance for social mobility through securing employment. For example, unemployment for graduates was 2,7% compared to 38,2% of those with matric qualifications and 51,5% without matric qualifications in the third quarter of 2022 (Statista, 2023). Although poverty is globally understood to be multidimensional (Alkire et al., 2020), the dominant approaches employed in the countries' higher education have been mainly financial through the government offering financial support to low-income students. Alongside that, much of the research on student

poverty has focused mainly on financial deprivation despite its multidimensionality and the role non-monetary deprivation plays in impoverishing students. This study investigates non-monetary poverty among students in South African higher education.

Counting on the potential higher education have in improving the lives of students, the South African higher education instituted a policy through the White Paper 1997 to fund the low-income students (Department of Education, 1997). The implementation of this policy saw significant investment being spent on funding students through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Together with that, the country adopted a free-higher education regime for the low-income students in 2018 with its expenditure of the Gross Domestic Product increasing from 1,5% in 2017/2018 to 2,2% in 2021/2022 (Khuluvhe & Netshifhefhe, 2021, p. 6). Simultaneously, the number of students who received financial support increased from 426 263 in 2020 to 427 851 in 2022 (NSFAS, 2021). While this enabled students who could not have accessed higher education to be enrolled, NSFAS has not been able to fund all qualifying students and support them with financial resources for their living expenses. Due to limited financial resources, higher education might not be able to fund all the qualifying students adequately, which implies the need to find ways of reducing poverty that are not financial. Of concern also is the low graduate rate of NSFAS beneficiaries, which was 46% in 2015 (Wildschut et al., 2018). The low completion rate among NSFAS students points out to the presence of other deprivations that are non-monetary constraining students from graduating.

Student poverty is recognised globally as multidimensional since students experience multiple deprivations in their lives. A study by White, Imperiale and Perera (2016) in the general population established that multidimensional poverty affects mental health through absence of social networks, stress and worry, failure to participate in leisure activities, being unsafe, absence self-determination, lack of respect and recognition. In the same vein, Bray et al. (2019) found out that individuals with multidimensional poverty experience prejudice, stigma and blame, disrespect and are often not recognised. Research conducted in South African higher education on multidimensional poverty shows that students experience deprivation in the dimensions of basic needs, living conditions, participation, and psychological wellbeing with lack of finances precipitating deprivation in the other dimensions (Ruswa & Gore, 2021; 2022). However, Naidoo and van Schalkwyk (2021) reveal that support from friends and family members, and aspirations are instrumental for persistence, self-determination and autonomy of the poor students. Irrespective of these studies suggesting poverty on students, there is still limited knowledge in this area within South African higher education.

This study explores ways of reducing the non-monetary deprivation among students posing the following questions: *How does non-monetary deprivation affect students in South African higher education? How can universities reduce student poverty without necessarily increasing financial support to students?*

Research approach

The study adopted the Capabilities Approach as advanced by Sen (1999) on the ground of it being multidimensional and foregrounding the wellbeing of individuals. Through the Capability Approach, multidimensional poverty is assessed in the various dimensions that constitute students' wellbeing, in which students might experience deprivation. Henceforth multidimensional poverty is defined as a deprivation in one or

more dimensions of a student's wellbeing (Sen, 1999). Capabilities, functionings, agency and conversion factors are the key features of Capabilities Approach. Capabilities are the effective freedoms or opportunities students have to achieve in their lives at the university while functionings refers to the attainments students make from opportunities (capabilities) they have. Put differently, functionings are reflective of the achievements made or deprivations in respective dimension of students' wellbeing. Agency denotes the abilities of individuals to act (or choose not to) on what they believe (Robeyns, 2017). Conversion factors affect the opportunities students have and their agency in achieving their goals.

Although resources are central, the wellbeing of students cannot be achieved through income only, which suggests the multidimensionality of poverty (Anand et al., 2021). The Capabilities Approach therefore enables us to explore non-monetary poverty as we are able to determine whether and the extend students are deprived in the various dimensions of their wellbeing that are necessarily not financial.

The study employed a sequential-mixed methodology that began with focus group discussions, followed by an online survey that collected quantitative and qualitative data from students at one university in South Africa. The first stage involved gathering data through four focus group discussions, two with staff members and the other two with undergraduate students. The qualitative data from the focus group discussion were thematically analysed and were used to inform the development survey questionnaire.

The second stage involved a survey that gathered data using an online questionnaire, which had both closed-ended and open-ended questions. A total of 2306 undergraduate students completed the questionnaire, and the participants were drawn from different faculties using a simple random sampling technique. The participants were diverse based on gender, race, socio-economic background, field of study, year of study as well as their living on-campus or off-campus. This paper focuses only on the qualitative data generated from the questionnaire. The qualitative data were imported into QSR NVivo 12 software, before being coded using descriptive coding. The coded data were thematically analysed. Themes emerged in the process: being able to live stress-free lives, dignity, participation and confidence, self-determination and motivation and social networks, being safe and secure, and these formed the dimensions of deprivations (presented in the findings section).

Findings

Non-monetary deprivation emerged in the various dimensions of students' wellbeing that ranged from psychosocial factors to their participation in university activities. The following text briefly discusses the key themes.

Having a stress-free life

Students felt deprived in their mental wellbeing through stress, worry and anxiety arising from academic pressure as they struggled to manage their academic workload and perform well. One of the participants stated:

... to balance the pressure, you have on campus (workload) and other worries you have when you are off campus, can become almost impossible. This has also impacted on my health as I have been in and out of hospital for 'anxiety' and not eating healthy.
(Participant 1)

Although stress and anxiety were common to students, only a few of them indicated to have experienced extreme anxiety. Due to the under preparedness associated with poor schooling in the low-income schools, poor students lacked the skills needed to cope with their studies, contributing further to their stress, worry and anxiety. Clear from the extract is a symbiotic relationship between stress, worry and anxiety and the physical health of the students that was affected. Nevertheless, this deprivation is associated with financial deprivation when students were stressed about not affording study material, food, transport money and other basic needs.

Dignity

Deprivation was also experienced in the dimension defined as dignity through students experiencing shame and stigma.

It has become such a 'normal' to have stigma in our generation [...]. Students who are poor tend to shy away from others and be seen in events. (Participant 2)

While students tended to blame themselves for their deprivation, shame was reinforced by stereotypes that they were responsible for their poverty. Poor students, had low self-esteem, lacked confidence and were often intimidated by others at the same time had a low sense of belongingness to the university environment. One student observed:

... I just feel like some of us as students from rural areas take us a long time to adapt to the environment and the technology that is used by the university. We feel low self-esteem. (Participant 3)

The socio-economic backgrounds of the students were also a conversion factor preventing poor students to adjust and fit into the university environment.

Participation

Poor students did not take part in some academic, social and leisure resulting in them being deprived in the participation dimension. It was mentioned that:

Student poverty restrains and restricts students. They fail to enjoy their university moments. But of utmost importance they fail to participate in social and study activities that would give them exposure and open doors for them. (Participant 4)

While a sense of marginalisation did not come from cultural differences, students were ashamed to participate in certain sporting activities due to their low English proficiency or perception of having a different accent while speaking English. For some, however, living in off-campus accommodation constrained them from participating in the university social events since they were not able to pay transport fees to attend such events and lacked information about the activities. The low English language proficiency also resulted in students' low class participation making them lose confidence to speak in a large group.

Self-determination and motivation

Deprivation was also evident in the self-determination and motivation dimension as some poor students felt hopeless. Hopelessness was associated with the students' perception that they did not have control over their lives: One student mentioned:

University is difficult. You think you have it under control, then you lose it. [...] I am on the edge of giving up. [...] (Participant 5)

Deprivation in the dimension is driven by the absence of support structures such as family members and friends, which contributed to low motivation, poor performance and their ultimate drop-out. Hopelessness was also reported by some students who thought that they were trapped in poverty. On that note, one of the students explained:

Student poverty goes as deep as affecting the physiological health of students and [...] it is like a magnet that keeps pulling you back into poverty. The more you try to get out, the more it pulls you back. (Participant 6)

Apparent is the lack of agency for the students to work towards achieving their goals. However, some students seemed to be resilient and persevered with their studies being motivated by example of poor students who had graduated and secured employment under similar deprivations.

Social networks

Despite social networks being pivotal for the wellbeing of students, some students reported being deprived in this dimension on the account of lacking social relationships with peers for academic and social support. Whereas others reported not receiving information about the social activities happening at the campus, some students felt isolated:

... we tend to isolate ourselves because we feel we are not competent enough, and it's not even easy trying to explain all that pain we feel with someone who has never experienced all of that and it somehow becomes a burden and then all of that reflects on the studies-low marks. It even leads to depression. (Participant 7)

Isolation was partly attributed to shame, stigma and low self-esteem and the students not fitting into the social networks. Although students viewed social clubs as crucial in establishing networks with others, some did not have sufficient information about where and how they can join these social groups. This was especially prominent for students living in off-campus accommodation who constituted the majority of the poor students.

Being safe and secure

Some off-campus students were concerned about their safety during evenings because of the fear of being mugged and sexually assaulted when walking from the library to their off-campus accommodation since they could not afford hiring private and safe transport. Besides, their concern of being physically harmed, students were generally insecure about their lives:

Being a poor student is a very sad situation to be in because you feel insecure about almost everything. The worst thing is always being worried about what others think about you and the situation you are living in. (Participant 8)

Concern on what others think was related to low self-esteem. Deprivation in the other dimensions increased uncertainty and insecurity of the students constraining their ability to plan, concentrate on their studies and pursue their aspirations.

Reflections and recommendation

Most of the explored dimensions, that is living stress-free lives, dignity, and self-determination are linked to the mental health of the students, suggesting an association of multidimensional poverty and mental health (White, Imperiale & Perera, 2016). Equally significant is that non-monetary poverty results from financial deprivation.

Although inadequate in explaining poverty, finances are required to a certain threshold for students not to be deprived in the other dimensions of their wellbeing (Therborn, 2013). Clear also is the effect of intergenerational poverty where the socio-economic backgrounds of the students, that is low-income, living in rural geographical locations and poor schooling, contributed to non-monetary poverty.

This means that increasing funding alone for the students might not address some of the non-monetary deprivations as these are rooted in the socio-economic backgrounds of the students. A dimension that featured in this study but not clear in previous studies on multidimensional poverty in South African higher education (Ruswa & Gore, 2021; 2022) is the self-determination and motivation when some students experienced hopelessness and lost agency to complete their studies.

To put it succinctly, non-monetary poverty affects students mostly in the dimensions related to the mental wellbeing of students. This means that the universities should promote the mental health of all the students through, for instance making all the social events free at the campus and accessible to all the students. Coupled with that, the universities should consider putting in place structures to identify students experiencing mental health challenges for example, early warning systems where students at risk are identified. Unlike waiting for students to approach the clinic for mental health support before intervening, universities should take a proactive approach, market the services and offer counselling services to many affected students. Regarding participation, information about the social events at the campus should be availed through official online communication platforms as some of the poor students cannot afford data for social media. As language was one of the reasons why students did not participate in university activities (accents that bring shame), universities should help students with language mastery. To promote resilience and perseverance, universities should influence motivation and empower students to believe in themselves and their abilities to complete their studies. Simultaneously, universities should consider implementing programmes where final year students who have circumvented the hardships share their experiences with first year poor students to motivate them to persevere with their studies.

Finally, affordable transport should be made available to ensure the safety of students when they travel late from the campus to their respective accommodations. As there is a strong link between financial poverty and mental health deprivation, universities ought to make it easy for the poor students to access funding as the extreme poor students are worried and experience shame due to their overall state of lack.

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Dr. Oliver Tafadzwa Gore, North-West University, South Africa

Dr. Anesu Sam Ruswa, Henley Business School, South Africa

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