

Education in Developing, Emerging, and Developed Countries: Different Worlds, Common Challenges

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Introduction

Charl Wolhuter

Education in Developing, Emerging, and Developed Countries: Different Worlds, Common Challenges: Comparative and International Education and the New World

Abstract

After having harboured a very nominalistic conceptualisation of the education systems of the world before 1950, scholars of Comparative and International Education embraced the developed-developing countries dichotomy since the middle of the twentieth century. In this paper it is argued that this conceptualisation of the world has become increasingly anachronistic and also problematic for a number of reasons. Other taxons that have been suggested among scholars in the field include emerging countries, BRICS, and the Global South. The merits of the employment of the taxon of Global South are argued for. At the same time a host of challenges are besetting the education sector globally, in the Global North as well as in the Global South. These challenges can be subsumed into three categories, namely access to and participation in education (quantitative dimension), education quality and education equality. It is argued that the education experience of the Global South with respect to all three of these are also instructive for the Global North. It is also suggested that the Global South coming to its right, and levelling the current unequal playing field in Comparative and International Education and rectifying the preposterous structure of knowledge in the field, may well be the defining feature of a next phase in the historical evolution of the field of Comparative and International Education.

Keywords: BRICS, Comparative and International Education, developed countries, developing countries, emerging countries, Global South

Introduction

One problematic aspect of the evolution of the field of Comparative and International Education is that it has been trapped into a mode of extreme nominalism. The “factors and forces” age in the field reached its zenith during the interwar decades, but continue to have a formative influence on the field. The notion that every (national) education is the outcome of a set of unique societal contextual forces has imbued in the field an underlying belief in extreme nominalism (see Wolhuter, 1997). During the

1960s, during the social phase in the evolution of the field, and when Modernisation Theory became the main theoretical framework, the categories “developed” and “developing” countries became much in the vogue in the field.

The thesis of this paper is that the use of the terms developed and developing countries are becoming more and more objectionable, and that emerging countries, BRICS, and Global South are categories well worth giving more prominence in the field. Secondly, the paper will put it that there are global, universal challenges faced by education systems, and will highlight the proposition of scholars that it is the Global South which is currently appearing to assume the vanguard position with respect to many societal as well as education developments in the world.

The paper commences with an overview of the two categories of developed and developing countries that have been in circulation in the field since the mid-twentieth century, and why these terms are becoming increasingly untenable. The new categories of emerging countries, BRICS countries and Global South, and the value thereof as conceptual tools in Comparative and International Education are then discussed. Common education and broader societal challenges facing the world at the current point in time are then outlined, and the place or role of the Global South vis-à-vis these challenges are explored. In conclusion the implications of this new world for the construction of the field of Comparative and International Education are spelled out.

The problematic dichotomy of developed-developing countries

The impact of sir Michael Sadler as one of the groundlayers of Comparative and International Education, and the “factors and forces” stage in the field that followed Sadler’s Guilford Lecture, has imbued the field of Comparative and International Education with an extreme nominalism. This sense of nominalism was reinforced by founding father Isaac Kandel’s notion of (unique) “national character” as shaping force of (national) education systems. This conceptualisation of the assortment of education systems in the world came difficult to maintain in the wake of the social science phase of the field in the 1960s, particularly with Modernisation Theory rising to the position as main theoretical framework in the field at that time. In line with Modernisation Theory scholars in the field adopted the dichotomy of developed-undeveloped countries, later (in an attempt to be culturally-sensitive) to developed-developing countries, or even more developed-less developed countries.

This dichotomy can be criticised on various grounds. One objection is that the taxon of developing countries spans a wide spectrum and diversity of countries and education systems. For example, on the per capita income line, the developing countries taxon spans all the (in terms of World Bank classification) low income countries, lower middle income countries, as well as upper middle income countries. There is also the problem that this dichotomy, and nomenclature, suggests one model of the development (that of the West) to which the rest should aspire to and necessarily will develop to. In such a conceptualisation of the world is also a thinly-veiled condescending view of the extra-Western world. This stands in sharp contrast to the de facto position of this part of the world, or then the Global South. Geographically the Global South is multiple times larger than the Global North. Demographically the centre of the gravity in the world has shifted, a long time ago to the Global South. Furthermore, an increasingly majority of the global population are residing in the Global South. Economically the Global South is

responsible for an ever-larger part of the global economic output. Moreover, the majority of enrolments, at all levels of education, are to be found in the Global South.

New taxons: emerging countries, BRICS, Global South

Three new taxons that have been suggested in Comparative and International Education and beyond are that of emerging countries, the BRICS countries, and the Global South. World Bank economist Antoine van Agtmael introduced the notion of “emerging countries” in 1981. These are countries not yet in the same category of developed countries, but appearing to be rapidly proceeding to that level. The MSCI Emerging Markets Index considers the following 25 countries as emerging countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Greater China (that is including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan), Colombia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, (Republic of, or South) Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey and United Arab Emirates (MSCI, 2020). This author has argued for the use of the emerging countries as a taxon in Comparative and International Education (Wolhuter, 2021).

The BRICS countries is a grouping that has come to the fore in global geopolitics the past decade and a half. The acronym BRICS is derived from the five constituent countries, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. In view of their impressive total area, demographic weight and increasing economic strength, this grouping has been hailed as a counterweight in the post-Cold War unipolar world. The grouping has also been portrayed as an attractive taxon for scholars in the field of Comparative and International Education to use. Recently (2023) it has been agreed to admit six new members: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, Egypt, Argentina and the United Arab Emirates. The problem with using this as a taxon in the field of Comparative and International Education, is that neither in terms of contextual ecology nor in terms of education features or development, do these countries have much in common. The only feature they share is opposition to Western and especially American hegemony (and even in this instance, the position of one of the key BRICS countries, India, is at best lukewarm or dubious).

The term “Global South” was coined by Carl Oglesby (1935-2011) in 1969 (Oglesby, 1969). The term is usually taken to broadly cover Latin America, Africa, Turkey, the Middle East and Asia (excluding Russia and the high-income Asian countries or jurisdictions, such as Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan). While Global South certainly has a geographic expression with its heartland as demarcated by Oglesby, this author has argued in a forthcoming publication (Wolhuter, 2024) that this demarcation has to be expanded and adapted to new conceptualisations of space in the field of Comparative and International Education and beyond. These new conceptualisations refer to conceptualisations of connections rather than uniform, contagious special blocks, and, also allowing a genealogical meaning to the term “Global South” (see Wolhuter, 2024).

Of these possibilities this author has argued that the Global South offers the most promising new taxon to employ by scholars in the field of Comparative and International Education; moreover, the Global South coming to its right in the field constitutes an imperative and desideratum that may well become the signature feature of a next, immanent, phase in the evolution of the field (Wolhuter, 2024). This, which also provides an answer to a question asked in the author’s paper in the BCES conference paper two

years ago (Wolhuter, 2022). It has been customary to delineate the historical evolution of the field of Comparative and International Education into eight phases. The first five is then those identified by Noah and Eckstein (1969) as a phase of travelers' tales, a phase of the systematic study of foreign systems of education for borrowing, a phase of international cooperation, a "factors and forces" phase, and a social science phase. These cover the evolution of the field till the end of the 1960s. Then Paulston identified three phases: a phase of orthodoxy (which is the same as Noah and Eckstein's social science phase), a phase of heterodoxy (1970s and 1980s), and a phase of heterogeneity (since about 1990). This author has argued (Wolhuter, 2022; Wolhuter, Espinoza & McGinn, 2022) that this periodisation is also in need to updating, i.e., because of a problematic naming and typification of the last (heterogeneity phase) and of the fact that this periodisation suggests that there was no development in the field since 1990. The author has also suggested that a present phase can be identified as an eighth phase (Wolhuter, 2024). This phase can be described as Criticism against Northern Hegemony. This construct can be related to a number of related strands visible in the field. These strands detectable in the scholarly discussion in the field are criticism of the imposition of one model of development; criticism of foreign aid and of international agencies; anti-globalisation; criticism of neo-liberal economics and its impact on education; calls for the decolonisation of education and of Comparative and International Education; criticism of racism in education and in Comparative and International Education; an appreciation of indigenous knowledge systems; and allegations that scholars of the Global South find themselves on an unequal playing field (Wolhuter, 2024). Then bringing the Global South to its rightful place by addressing each of these criticisms will herald a next or ninth phase in the evolution of the field, namely a phase of the Affirmation of the Global South.

Common education challenges facing the world

In the meantime, a plethora of common education challenges are facing the world. Taking the model of Wolhuter (2014), these challenges can be analysed along three dimensions, namely the quantitative dimension, the qualitative dimension, and the equality dimension.

The quantitative dimension refers to adult literacy levels and to enrolments. While this dimension at least, may at first glance gives the impression of being primarily or even exclusively a Global South challenge, it can be stated that in an age of globalisation challenges faced by the Global South have global implications. It is estimated that globally 244 million children aged between 6 and 18 years were out of school in 2021, the majority of these are in the Global South (UNESCO, 2022).

The qualitative dimension refers to quality at the levels of input quality, process quality, output quality and product quality (Wolhuter, 2014). Concerns about quality of education at all four these levels are worldwide, even in the Global North (for example, about concerns by the United Kingdom government on education in the United Kingdom, see Isgin, 2023), but are more pronounced in the Global South. As an illustration to the last point, the outcomes of the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) for Grade 4 learners can be cited. Of the top five countries, all were located in the Global North: Singapore (average score: 587), Hong Kong (average score: 573), Russia (average score: 567), England (average score: 558), and Finland (average score: 549) (Mullis et al., 2023). By contrast the five countries with the lowest

scores were all located in the Global South: Brazil (average score: 419), Iran (average score: 413), Jordan (average score: 381), Egypt (average score: 378), and South Africa (average score: 288) (Ibid.).

The equality dimension refers to inequalities along the lines of gender, socio-economic status, and race/ethnic status at the levels of access, survival, certification and product. While inequalities on all these dimensions and at all these levels are present throughout the world, disparities are starker in the Global South. For example, the gender parity index at the level of senior secondary education in two Global South regions Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia are respectively 0.88 and 0.95, compared to 1.01 in North America and Western Europe (Global North) (UNESCO, 2011).

The Global South

The question is now where or how does the Global South fit into this picture of education challenges facing the world. This author contends that not only is the Global South context, in terms of geography, demography, and economic strength increasingly important factor in the global equation, but in the new geopolitical calculus, characterized by the dissipation of the Washington Consensus, and the rise of new nodes challenging the unipolar world that has held sway since the end of the Cold War, the Global South is assuming ever more importance. In fact, some of the new or promising nodes of power (such as China and India) are located in the Global South. As an example of the growing economic prowess of the Global South, China has emerged in recent decades as the second largest economy in the world. In 2023 the gross domestic product of India as overtaken that of the United Kingdom, to become the sixth largest economy in the world (Trading Economics, 2023). On the growing share of the Global South in the global demography, a comparison between the population totals of Africa and Europe the past seven decades can be cited as illustration. In 1950 Africa's population of 230 million was half that of Europe, by 1985 it drew level (at about 480 million each), by 2025 it is predicted that Africa's population will be three times that of Europe (Kennedy, 1993, p. 25).

Furthermore, a number of social science scholars also put the Global South in a leading global position with respect to social or societal dynamics. For example, Comaroff and Comaroff (2012) present the interesting argument that societally, the rest of the world, North America and Europe in particular, is now moving down a road that has been travelled by Africa – a statement that has also been expressed by political leaders and in the public discourse in South Africa. This same contention has also appeared in a publication authored by three leading scholars in the field of Comparative and International Education: Takayama, Sriprakash and Connell (2017). To belabour this point on the importance of the Global South with another example — one very relevant to a discussion on education and a discussion in Comparative and International Education: there are currently 26 million refugees in the world — the largest number ever recorded, and half of which are children (Monkman, 2022, p. 4). The education of these refugees and their children presents a very specific challenge to humanity. While — rightfully and commendably — much attention has been given to the refugee challenge in the Global North, 85 percent of these refugees are being hosted in developing countries (Monkman, 2022, p. 4).

Furthermore, not only in contextual ecology has the Global South been moving to the vanguard position in the global line-up, but the geographic centre of gravity of the

global education project has been moving decidedly to the Global South. The differential growth in enrolments between the Global North and the Global South and the resultant current enrolment totals at all levels of education testify of this change. Another indication of this shift is that whereas the number of higher education institutions barely changed in the Global North, remaining at around 20 000 from 2006 to 2018, in the Global South the number almost doubled from a little over 40 000 to about 70 000 — a significant component of the global total of 90 000 institutions of higher education (McGregor, 2022). World higher education student numbers are now more than 200 million. But the number of students in the Global North reached a maximum in 2011 and has been declining since, to come to around 58.3 million in 2018. By contrast, the enrolments in the Global South have almost doubled, from some 78 million in 2006 to 150 million in 2018 (Ibid.).

Conclusion

Over the course of its history during the post-Second World War era, scholars in the field of Comparative and International Education have become ensnared in the developed-developing countries dichotomous conceptualisation of the world. This conceptualisation appears to be increasingly anachronistic and problematic. New taxons that have been suggested include that of emerging countries, of BRICS and of the Global South. The merits of the last have been argued in this paper. The growing stature of the Global South in terms of contextual factors and education systems development make the Global South a unit of increasing value for scholars in Comparative and International Education to investigate for its own value (understanding education in the Global South), but also for its value in coming to a more complete understanding of education in the contemporary world, and for its illuminate value for education challenges which are also faced in the Global North. Bringing the Global South to its rightful place in the scholarly pursuit in the field, may well result in a next phase in the historical evolution of the field of Comparative and International Education, a phase of which the Global South coming to its right be the defining feature.

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Part 1

Comparative and International Education & History of Education

Louise Fullard, Charl Wolhuter, Aaron Nhlapo & Hennie Steyn

Exploring Programme Delivery in the Further Education and Training Phase of South African Secondary Schools amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic: Challenges, Mitigation Strategies and Transformative Approaches

Abstract

This paper investigates the challenges, mitigation strategies and transformative approaches in educational programme delivery in South African education amidst the adverse influence of the pandemic in schools' Further Education and Training phase with a focus on the integration of technology-enhanced effective teaching and learning; using data obtained from interviews of a data-rich sample of the school management team and teachers of five schools. The noteworthy contribution of this paper to knowledge in the context of Comparative and International Education pertains to transformative strategies for technology-enhanced programme delivery in education. This paper's final objective is to link the explored findings of challenges, trends and innovations in the South African education system to the theme of this book focusing on the different worlds' common education challenges. Furthermore, the findings emphasised the need for innovation and transformation toward a technology-enhanced education environment, especially in the Fifth Industrial Revolution milieu. In addition, this paper presented noteworthy recommendations for educational stakeholders and future research.

Keywords: Fifth Industrial Revolution, Further Education and Training, influence of COVID-19 on education, Information and Communication Technology, programme delivery, quality education, technology-enhanced education, education transformation

Introduction

In South Africa (SA), similar to international experiences, educational institutions experienced significant interruptions in teaching and learning due to their closure because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The use of technology-enhanced education has prompted significant controversy and deliberation on a global scale. Although the pandemic forced it abruptly upon educational systems, the emergence of the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) (see UNESCO, 2015) has rendered technology-enhanced education indispensable.

This research relied on an analysis of relevant literature and interviews with secondary schools' Further Education and Training (FET) phase (grade 10-12) school management team (SMT) members and teachers, in five schools in the Ehlanzeni district of the Mpumalanga province. These included schools from all Quintiles. The purpose of the interviews was to gather insights and perspectives on the delivery of educational programmes in the FET phase of Quintiles 1-5 public schools in SA during the pandemic. Quintile 1 schools provide education to socio-economically disadvantaged populations, whereas Quintile 5 schools serve communities with a higher socio-economic status (Department of Education, 2005, p. 7).

South African education system: background

SA is a developing nation (an upper middle-income country), with a population of 62 million. The South African education system consists of 23,076 public schools, which accommodate around 12,408,755 students and employ 407,000 teachers (DBE, 2020, pp. 6-7). As of 2022, there are a total of 24,871 schools in the country (Statista, 2023).

According to the World Bank (2022), SA has one of the highest rates of socio-economic inequality globally and is facing a very high unemployment rate of 34.5% (Stats SA, 2021, p. 8), which is significantly impacting the implementation of educational programmes. While a minority of schools (the Quintile 4 and 5 schools) are well-resourced and function effectively, many schools in the country are poorly resourced and outright dysfunctional. As in countries elsewhere (for example, see Reimers, 2021, pp. 171-174), the COVID-19 pandemic as well as pre-occurring economic and educational issues had significant adverse effects on the delivery of educational programmes in South African schools (Motshekga, 2023, p. 2).

The subsequent section elaborates on the key findings derived from the analysis of interviews and a review of literature about the main challenges it posed to programme delivery in South African secondary schools. These challenges were also commonly encountered in other developing countries in a comparable economic context.

The influence of COVID-19 and challenges to educational programme delivery in South Africa

The pandemic's detrimental effect on programme delivery posed a wide range of persistent challenges for FET teachers in SA. The subsequent review focuses on the most noteworthy discoveries:

The implementation of social distancing protocols and the adoption of a rotating schedule, where students were only required to attend class in person for half of the usual school time (Dayimani, 2022), had substantial implications for the physical infrastructure

of secondary schools to accommodate students daily. As a consequence of this intervention, several reports have shown that teachers fell behind and were unable to meet the minimum curriculum requirements specified in the revised Annual Teaching Plan. In addition, the use of rotational timetables led to a rise in frustration among secondary school teachers due to the repetitive nature of teaching the same topic several times. Furthermore, a rotating timetable technique was deemed inadequate and led to a notable decline in the ability of students to acquire the required competencies (DBE, 2020, p. 13).

Absenteeism was a significant issue that both teachers and students experienced as a result of emotional encounters of uncertainty and anxiety throughout the pandemic. The teachers' absence led to an increased workload for the remaining teachers at the school, who had to take on the tasks of their missing colleagues. This, in turn, resulted in increased levels of work-related stress.

One notable finding from this research is highlighted by the South African teachers. They argue that a notable loss of learning occurred due to the suggested pace-setters as well as the trimmed and revised curriculum and assessment criteria introduced by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). Teachers encountered challenges in meeting the newly implemented requirements for curriculum coverage. As a consequence, students were promoted to the next grade level, primarily based on basic evaluation methods, without necessarily displaying an understanding of the prescribed curriculum. Additionally, students exhibited a discrepancy in memory retention from the previous lesson to the subsequent session (Dorn et al., 2020).

As might be expected, the study revealed that the full or partial closure of schools, as part of the pandemic regulations, along with the lack of online educational resources, led to inadequate communication among the school, teachers, students and parents. FET teachers from the lower Quintile schools faced challenges in implementing online teaching and learning methods. As a result, they were limited in their ability to effectively interact and deliver educational programmes to their students. This discovery supports the assertion made by Giannini et al. (2022) that a substantial portion of the global population with low and middle incomes experienced learning poverty during the pandemic due to the digital divide problem, which was caused by a lack of or inadequate access to data, devices or networks.

Even those secondary schools which managed to incorporate digital and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) methods into their teaching practices, often experienced difficulty operating and facilitating digital teaching tools. Therefore, as a result, they mainly relied on remote methods to deliver educational content to students, which led to reduced effectiveness (Fullard et al., 2022, p. 22). Consequently, despite the growing use of online integrated programme delivery options there was inadequate support and guidance to assist them in successfully implementing it (Backfisch, 2020, p. 1), along with a deficiency in the necessary skills and preparedness to adapt to the swift transition from traditional in-person instruction to the provision of technology-enhanced programmes via online platforms.

The subsequent discussion of the findings of this research project focused on the strategies employed by teachers and SMT members to address and surmount the programme delivery challenges.

Educational programme delivery mitigation strategies

The investigation found that teachers generally displayed a positive attitude, marked by adaptability, innovation and implementation towards resolving the significant problems faced in delivering educational programmes. SMT members and teachers implemented several interventions to address the difficulties in delivering the programme including providing additional lessons, distributing curated worksheets and textbooks as paper-based take-home packages for students, employing substitute teachers to address the high rate of absenteeism among colleagues and accommodating the rotational schedule, seeking assistance from educational partners with specialised knowledge and support as well as utilising technology-enhanced online solutions. In addition, the DBE implemented educational broadcasting lessons that were aired on television and radio stations (Stats SA, 2022, p. 42). It became evident that the majority of these schools' teachers utilised a combination of these strategies for delivering the programme.

A significant discovery reveals that those teachers at Quintiles 1-5 schools actively advocated the utilisation of mobile phones as a method of delivering education programmes, both during and after the pandemic. Hence, it can be contended that the United Nations (UN) proclamation and determination to prohibit the use of mobile phones in classrooms (Pienaar, 2023, p. 1) should be re-evaluated and examined to ascertain if these devices ought to be included in educational reform plans or not. The findings indicated that mobile phones were effectively merged into the teaching methods of the majority of secondary schools, serving as tools for educational activities, to achieve the programme delivery target.

What emerged from the findings of the investigation is that the majority of public schools in SA across Quintiles 1-5 explored and endeavoured to integrate remote alternatives for programme delivery during the pandemic. Teachers utilised various communication and programme delivery methods within various Quintile schools as follows:

- With the exception of a few, the Quintile 1 rural school areas relied solely on in-person teaching and issued paper-based take-home packages as their main ways of delivering academic programmes.
- Schools in Quintiles 2 and 3 opted for in-person, paper-based take-home packages as a method of instruction, supplemented by the use of WhatsApp Messenger for communication and engagement purposes.
- The teachers in Quintile 4 utilised technology-enhanced solutions, such as laptops and desktop computers, at computer centres. These solutions included a range of tools, such as Zoom video-conferencing and WhatsApp Messenger, as well as specifically chosen worksheets and textbooks.
- In Quintile 5 schools, teachers utilised technology-enhanced options such as the Learning and Teaching Management System (LTMS) Moodle, chat rooms, Zoom and Teams video-conferencing platforms, Facebook and WhatsApp. These tools were combined with carefully selected worksheets and textbook activities.

To conclude this section, this research also identified that despite the digital resource challenge, there is a desire, necessity and readiness among South African FET teachers to transition toward a technology-enhanced educational setting, which will be subsequently discussed.

Evolving educational landscape: shifting focus from traditional to innovative education

The results of this study unambiguously verified that the digital technology-enhanced approach, also known as ICT-integrated teaching, was endorsed and suggested as the new strategy for programme delivery that has emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, transforming the field of education in SA. Despite this, SA faces difficulties in adapting to technology-enhanced education due to resource limitations caused by poverty.

Significant discoveries and recommendations emerged on the transition to technology-enhanced approaches for delivering educational programmes in the South African school system. A major goal of the DBE is to encourage and facilitate the implementation of a technology-driven approach to education in schools (MDoE, 2023, p. 60). In order to achieve this objective, the MDoE has developed an e-learning and teaching plan that will be gradually adopted across the whole education system in the province (MDoE, 2023, p. 59) to transform the methods of teaching and learning. Moreover, the MDoE supports the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, in accordance with the South African Schools Act (SASA), by gradually empowering principals with greater authority in implementing school reform strategies (MDoE, 2023, p. 58).

Furthermore, projects like Ubuhlebuzile are crucial in equipping grade 12 students and teachers from Quintiles 1-3 secondary schools with technological devices and data, which leads to significant outcomes. With this educational transforming project in progress, it is disappointing to discover that this endeavour encounters challenges regarding the yearly retrieval and reassignment of devices (Siwela, 2023, p. 7). Therefore, the conclusion can be made that the acquisition of resources, implementation process, financial issues, risk management and skill development are crucial factors to be considered and addressed in the transition process towards technology-enhanced programme delivery.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study highlights the importance of focusing on future skill development during the senior secondary phase (MRTT, 2023, p. 38). The objective of this effort is to effectively equip students with the essential skills and information needed to fulfil the employment demands of the 5IR era, which is distinguished by the prevalence of artificial intelligence. Thus, students need to be sufficiently prepared to take on the role of global participants. This process commences with the proper training of FET teachers to readily embrace educational change which involves an obligation to obtain training in technological competencies and to ensure sufficient resources to effectively facilitate programme delivery (Skhephe, 2022; Backfisch, 2020, p. 1). Furthermore, it was thought important to conduct orientation meetings with students to sufficiently prepare them for effective participation in the delivery of the educational programme.

Collectively, the practical implications of these findings also suggest proper preparation and ICT training for prospective teachers studying at the tertiary level. To this end, these candidates will be better equipped and skilled to effectively participate in the delivery of digital and ICT-integrated programmes in schools (Skhephe, 2022).

Finally, the main practical implication of education transformation in SA is the implementation of virtual classrooms by establishing LTMSs in secondary schools (MDoE, 2023, p. 37). Concerning future research, it is recommended that additional

research be conducted to investigate the implementation, management and advancement of virtual classrooms along with the integration of technology-enhanced modes and methods for teaching and learning in secondary schools in SA. Hence, as an integral component of this research, it is essential to prioritise the monitoring of the latter by teachers and the DBE.

A contribution to Comparative and International Education

The devastating effects of COVID-19 on students' academic achievements due to the restricted availability and effectiveness of educational programmes during the pandemic, particularly for those who were economically deprived and disadvantaged, demonstrated the possible adverse consequences that a crisis event, such as a major epidemic or another pandemic could have on educational institutions, especially in a developing country such as SA.

This research is informative because it shows how secondary school teachers managed the unprecedented programme delivery difficulties that arose amid the pandemic. It also unintentionally provided teachers with a chance to adopt innovation and support the shift towards a digitally improved educational environment. The practical significance of this research lies in its capacity to provide secondary schools in similar contexts with valuable knowledge derived from the shared practices of teachers. This knowledge allows schools to observe and compare more effective techniques with less feasible alternatives. Hence, it is crucial to employ a comparative approach to analyse an appropriate framework for implementation and determine how it might be achieved. Furthermore, it instils a feeling of possibility that was previously met with doubt, allowing school leaders to effectively cooperate with stakeholders and educational partners to empower them in their efforts to bring about educational transformation within their own schools.

Within the Comparative and International Education framework, FET secondary school teachers should critically examine their views regarding the implications of the pandemic on programme delivery and embrace novel insights in response to evolving circumstances. These insights should direct them in acquiring and embracing reformed perspectives on educational innovations that result in practical implementation. To this end, teachers can successfully compare and exchange the described transformative actions with one another in similar educational settings which would promote mutual empowerment and the acquisition of information.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this paper are vital for understanding the negative effects of a pandemic on the delivery of educational programmes in SA, a developing nation. These also contribute to improving readiness for future incidents and provide detailed insights into the areas affected by such crises. The examination of the interviews and the literature revealed specific variables that must be considered to improve the education sector and avoid a repeat of catastrophic damage. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to have a thorough comprehension of the potential influence and challenges pointed out in the concluded findings, as well as how teachers overcame the challenges encountered in delivering the programme.

The COVID-19 disruption also led to the emergence of innovation in education. The study revealed that the closure of secondary schools as a result of the pandemic prompted FET teachers to quickly seek alternative methods to deliver educational programmes. The majority of schools responded by implementing different levels of technology-enhanced programme delivery approaches to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on education. Regrettably, the utilisation of technology-driven approaches for delivering programmes presents challenges for underprivileged and marginalised groups, mostly due to resource constraints. Nevertheless, a noteworthy discovery was that many students in Quintiles 2-5 secondary schools in the FET phase utilised their mobile phones as teaching tools to engage in programme delivery despite the UN's objection to allowing mobile phones in the teaching and learning environment.

To conclude, COVID-19 has prompted the introduction of innovative methods for delivering educational programmes, resulting in a significant awareness of transformation in the education sector of SA. These advancements align with the objectives of NDP 2030 and the vision and mission of the MDoE, which prioritise their unwavering dedication to adopting technology-enhanced approaches and techniques for the delivery of programmes.

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The Impact of a Eurocentric Curriculum on Students from the Global South and North

Abstract

While research on the impact of a Eurocentric curriculum has often focused on marginalized populations in developing nations, it is paramount that scholars also examine the impact of this curriculum on students in the Global North. To this end, this paper begins by first defining and then critiquing what is often referred to as the “Eurocentric curriculum”, and how standard Eurocentric content, such as Eurocentric mathematics and its pedagogical practices may alienate learners from their families, societies, and cultures. It will then suggest an alternative approach, “Ethno-mathematics” introduced by D’Ambrosio (1985), and will apply this concept to educational outcomes in both South Africa and the USA. The paper concludes with a brief discussion of how these cultural imbalances within a school’s curriculum, if not corrected, may negatively impact the academic success of all students, particularly the marginalized.

Keywords: Eurocentric curriculum, ethnocentric curriculum, Global North, Global South, marginalization, South Africa, USA

Introduction

Building upon scholarship that includes an examination of educational inequalities and challenges within US and post-apartheid South African schools (Biraimah, Roets & Kurtz, 2022), there appears to be a need for more effective practices that can provide greater equitable access to, and success within quality education programs for all learners. For example, educators might consider including and/or enhancing intercultural competencies and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge across all content areas. To explore this notion, this paper focuses on the introduction of an ethnocentric curriculum as an alternative to the pervasive Eurocentric curriculum which remains an enduring example of colonialism and neo-colonialism worldwide.

From “Center-Periphery” to “Eurocentric” theories

According to Altbach (1981), some institutions and universities are perceived as intellectual “centers” that model the “gold standard” of curriculum, instruction, and research production, and these institutions are often located in the Global North, such as Princeton University in the US or Cambridge University in the UK. In contrast, there are the “peripheral” institutions, usually comprised of recently established institutions in the Global South, such as the University of Botswana, or lesser known, or recently established colleges and universities in the Global North, such Florida Polytechnic

University, established in 2012 in the US state of Florida. While these labels are less commonly assigned to colleges and universities in the 21st century, the concept of center/periphery universities appears to have evolved into perceptions of Western-centric or Eurocentric institutions and scholarships.

Clearly, these labels reflect a sustained intellectual hierarchy where Eurocentric institutions and curriculum reinforce their own histories and cultures while essentially ignoring the values and contributions of alternate ways of living and knowing. For example, Eurocentric curriculum is often defined as:

- a) curricula generally focused on European issues and perspectives, with little or no acknowledgement of Asian or African contributions;
- b) curricula focused primarily on the European knowledge system that has been advanced with a clear disregard for other knowledge systems;
- c) curricula that perpetuate intellectual dependence on a small group of prestigious Western academic institutions that determine the subject matter and methods of research; and/or
- d) curricula often leading to negative attitudes and beliefs about alternate civilizations and lifestyles, while confirming stereotypical perceptions regarding “other” non-Europeans.

In brief, it appears that the earlier theories regarding neo-colonialism and/or center-periphery have simply morphed into concepts of a “Eurocentric” nature, including terms such as “Western-centrism”, and/or “Global North/Global South” institutions and nations.

The term Eurocentric was originally introduced by Samir Amin (1931-2018), often described as an Egyptian-French Marxian economist and political scientist involved in various dependency theories. Building upon this scholarship, the concept of Eurocentrism has now been applied to the field of curriculum and has garnered a great deal of criticism over the years. For example, Eurocentric curriculum has a) been linked to negative neo-colonial and imperial implications; b) considered Western Europe as the superior cultural center; c) perpetuated a worldview centered on superior European/White ways of knowing; and d) often viewed various non-European societies as undemocratic and subservient.

The impact of a Eurocentric curriculum on the Global South

As a Eurocentric curriculum may have a particularly negative impact on both the Global South, as well as marginalized populations within the Global North, this paper will focus on both populations, beginning with the perceived impact of the Eurocentric curriculum on the Global South, with more specific examples of its impact on students and learning in South Africa.

When contemplating the impact of the Eurocentric curriculum on the Global South, we first need to assess the possible outcomes of both cultural displacement and loss of identity. For example, a Eurocentric curriculum can reinforce colonial and neo-colonial mentalities and power relationships while excluding local perspectives. Moreover, this curriculum is often embedded with examples from the West/Europe while perpetuating language barriers and academic underachievement for students in the Global South. Moreover, when a Eurocentric curriculum is imposed on the Global South it can also maintain a) unequal access to educational and economic opportunities; b) economic

dependency on Europe and the West; c) a disregard for indigenous and local knowledge and cultural traditions; and d) a distorted perception of historical narratives.

Decolonizing Eurocentric curriculum: examples from Ghana and South Africa

Until recently, school curriculum in countries such as Ghana (a former British Colony known as the Gold Coast) focused on a British rather than a Ghanaian/African curriculum. For example, students in English classes read Eurocentric (Bronte and Shakespeare) not African (Achebe or Thiong'o) literature. They also tended to focus on the geography and history of Europe and the UK, and not their own countries. As an example, in the past Ghanaian secondary school students were more skilled at finding London than Accra or Tamale on a map, and they often knew more about the kings of England than their own Asantehene (a powerful chief of the Ashanti empire).

Moreover, as textbooks were often in short supply, particularly soon after independence, many schools had to depend on discarded textbooks published in London or Paris. One example of the often inappropriateness of these textbooks could be found in one math book donated to Ghana during the 1960 that included Algebraic problems featuring cars skidding on ice! A rather difficult problem for students to conceptualize in tropical West Africa. While it is not the responsibility of Western scholars to assess the degree to which Eurocentric and/or Western-centric themes have dominated curriculum within African schools, we do look forward to successful efforts to decolonize the curriculum by African scholars who have received their education from Africa-based schools and universities. For example, instead of maintaining a focus on colonial and neo-colonial issues, as well as the "gifts" brought by the colonizers and missionaries, it might be more important for students to learn about the extended resistance and rebellion of various African populations who fought to maintain their civilizations, cultures, and indigenous knowledge in the face of European intrusion.

Examples of active moves to decolonize can also be found throughout the Republic of South Africa. Though perhaps a more complicated history than many former African colonies, South Africa continues to move beyond colonial legacies within their education system. For example, a key issue today focuses on possible cultural erasure, which often includes a denial of indigenous languages, traditions, and knowledge systems that have the potential to contribute to the solution of various local problems. Unfortunately, until now, school curricula, grounded in local context and lived experiences, have been unsuccessful in addressing the country's pressing issues and challenges. Moreover, the impact of South Africa's colonial and apartheid past reflects a series of lost opportunities to learn about cultural diversity, social histories, and an essential sense of belonging, as much of the curriculum reflects cultural dissonance brought on by its disconnect from local culture, histories, and lived experience.

Eurocentric curricular impacts in the Global North: the USA example

As the previous discussion suggests, there is no shortage of concern regarding the impact of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and the Eurocentric curriculum on multiple countries within the Global South. However, we would be remiss if we ignored similar problems and impacts of a Eurocentric curriculum on the Global North, particularly within countries with significant underserved minorities such as the US.

When reviewing the brief history of curriculum development in the US, it is important to acknowledge that the major source of content came directly from European colonists who settled primarily along the eastern coast of what was to later become the US. Of course, what was most likely intentionally overlooked by these European colonists was the rich content and diversity of various curricula ingrained within multiple indigenous groups, what some might term the “first Americans”. These unfortunate colonialist and isolationist tendencies regarding what constituted valid curricula content were only strengthened by decades of segregated education in post-independent US states and territories. Clearly, segregated and separate education could never be considered equal education (as successfully argued by Justice Thurgood Marshall in the landmark 1954 US *Brown v. Board of Education* decision). Moreover, up until quite recently, the study of history rarely went beyond the North American continent, and if any mention of African, Eastern European, or Asian cultures/histories were included, they usually appeared as brief addenda. Clearly, until very recently US curriculum simply ignored or denied the existence of indigenous and minorities’ knowledge and “ways of knowing”. Unfortunately, this negation of valid histories was recently replicated in the southern US state of Florida, where in 2023 the Advanced Placement (AP) African American Studies course was removed from an approved list of courses allowed within the state’s public secondary schools. Fortunately, after sustained outcries from the citizens of Florida, the course was returned to the approved list of AP courses available to students in Florida’s secondary schools. However, these struggles to move beyond Eurocentric or often White/Neo-colonial curricula are also challenged by conservative state governments. For example, the current (conservative) governor of Florida recently labeled calls for curriculum diversification and recognition of minoritized contributions as a “woke culture” that should not be tolerated.

In summary, the continual impact of the tradition of a Eurocentric curriculum within the US maintains a sense of cultural alienation within our public schools, where students may continue to experience a sense of alienation from their own histories, and a disconnect from their own cultures. These historical curricula omissions continue to deny the contributions and critical roles played by marginalized populations within US history in many state curricula (in the US, education is controlled by individual states, not the federal government). Thus, we find that marginalized students continue to experience alienation and isolation from their own histories and a disconnect from own cultures through intentional historical omissions designed to deny the contributions and roles played by marginalized populations within the US. Moreover, this curriculum not only reinforces institutionalized and systemic inequalities and stereotypes, but it also presents a narrow worldview which consistently places the US at the center of the world while marginalizing the histories and cultures of “others”. Unfortunately, the drive to enshrine a Eurocentric curriculum is not limited to the liberal arts, but has impacted STEM fields as well, as the following discussion regarding the impact of Eurocentrism on a mathematics curriculum will describe.

The need for an ethnocentric mathematics curriculum

Unfortunately, the negative and limiting impacts of a Eurocentric curriculum are not only found in liberal arts subjects, such as history or literature, but are also found to impact the mathematics and science curricula as well. While a cursory review of the history of mathematics will clearly suggest that mathematics was not an isolated

European phenomenon but had emerged in multiple cultures and locations where numerical skills were applied to a myriad of significant life skills ranging from building a modest home to selling a crop of maize in a local market. For example:

- a) how did folks living in ancient Peru count their goats and oversee their marketing? They certainly didn't wait for the Spanish to arrive with a Eurocentric-math system before trading a goat; or
- b) how did folks living in ancient Hawaii manage their fishing cultures and marketing? They didn't need to wait for Western missionaries to arrive with a Eurocentric-math system before trading their fish and other agricultural products; or
- c) how were distances described before there were miles or kilometers? While many ways may have been derived, the early Roman term "mille passuum" which literally meant "a thousand paces" might suggest a possible source for our mile or kilometer.

The significance of these examples, however, is that they suggest that multiple civilizations, worldwide, managed their lives and economies by inventing their own mathematical systems. Clearly, both isolated and merging civilizations managed their lives and economies without a knowledge of Eurocentric mathematics. They incorporated the use of mathematics in their daily lives, but that system was not dependent upon a Eurocentric interpretation of mathematics. As will be discussed in the next section, Eurocentric mathematics was not the only system of mathematics.

As history suggests, there is not "one mathematics" derived from a Eurocentric curriculum. Rather, varying approaches to mathematics were developed independently, worldwide, to solve everyday problems from trading foodstuffs to measuring distances. What we usually term as "Western mathematics" was developed from the mathematical knowledge of ancient Greeks, while "Eastern mathematics" was developed by ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Chinese, and Indians. However, we now have a third approach to mathematics entitled "Ethnomathematics", which has evolved from various ancient cultures to address their cultural, economic, and practical needs. The term "Ethnomathematics", first introduced by Ubiratan D'Ambrosio of Brazil (D'Ambrosio, 2006) combines the studies of culture and race (ethno) with mathematics. Clearly the goal was to include a broader intercultural perspective within what has been a predominantly Western, Eurocentric narrative. To this end, ethnomathematics can begin by connecting marginalized learners from underrepresented and indigenous groups with their cultural heritage, while helping them (and the world) to realize that their cultures play a significant role in what initially appear to be the unrelated fields of mathematics and cultural studies.

Conclusion

While the goals of educators vary across the globe, one objective consistently shared is to promote a student's personal and social development, a goal obviously nurtured by a rich ethnocentric curriculum. Educators and academics, in theory, are often found supporting the concept of equitable access to quality education for all learners. However, they do not necessarily know how to reach a diverse and often marginalized student population; and thus, the need to explore and apply the concepts of ethnocentric curriculum through enhanced teacher education programs. Unfortunately, simply understanding the concepts and strengths of an ethnocentric curriculum does not

necessarily translate into improved student access and success. For learners and teachers to enjoy the positive outcomes of an ethnocentric curriculum and pedagogy, the following perspectives may help to form a solid base upon which more relevant ethnocentric curriculum and pedagogy can thrive:

- a) all children have the universal right to an equitable educational opportunity;
- b) student poverty may be linked to multiple factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, or disability;
- c) recognizing that poverty and marginality are complex problems linked to multiple social issues, and not simply the reflection of the self-fulfilling prophesy of student failure;
- d) the level of student performance may be the result of cultural or economic inequities, rather than assumed cultural or intellectual deficits; and
- e) the need for enhanced intercultural competencies within classrooms, based on a curriculum which is ethnocentric, not Eurocentric.

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Secondary Teachers' Education Programs to Promote a Positive Learning Climate through the Cases of France, Greece, and England: The Planning of a Research

Abstract

This paper presents an ongoing comparative study of secondary teachers' education programs in France, Greece, and England, with a primary focus on strategies aimed at cultivating a positive learning environment in schools. Recent studies have underlined the significance of teachers' pedagogical competence formation as a determinant element which will form their future in the teaching profession. Globalization and technological development being major characteristics of our century have had an undeniable impact on educational thought and practice which imposes the need to acquire new types of knowledge and skills to ensure teachers' capacity to deal with the needs of the new generation. Secondary teachers must implement targeted handlings towards a special age group – adolescence – in combination with the principles of the curriculum. Through interviews and focus groups with secondary teachers of various specialization and teaching experience the aim is to understand their needs and level of preparation for the purpose of entering the classroom equipped to conduct their demanding role and to explore the ways the undergraduate studies of secondary teachers can be enriched both theoretically – and especially – at a practical level.

Keywords: secondary teachers' education, pedagogical competence, school climate

Introduction

The tinder for this study is our postgraduate research, which included secondary school teachers of different specialties and years of experience at schools in Crete, Greece regarding their pedagogical training and ability, and their level of preparation when entering the classroom. The need to enrich the undergraduate studies of teachers who aim to teach both at a theoretical and – indeed above all – at a practical level became apparent. The necessity for assistance and redefining the goals of education from the State's side was also emphasized. We believe that the comparative study of European education systems and the evaluation of the objectives of secondary teachers' education programs in England and France can contribute to identify weaknesses, omissions, or problems and possibly to find proposals for a new training model to give a positive boost to the education of Greek teachers.

We consider the comparative study of the training programs of Greece, England, and France appropriate, because their organizational and ideological differences in terms of the structure of their educational systems can offer useful aspects and directions for the

Greek reality and development. The case of England is particularly interesting, since it is considered a dominant example of neoliberalism in combination with the socio-economic changes that are taking place. On the contrary, France, a country particularly sensitive to education issues, has shown a strong resistance to neoliberal reforms, with an undeniably constant effort to preserve the humanitarian spirit within a demanding framework regarding the effectiveness of the choices made by the central authority.

In the above context, our goal is to, through the comparative evaluation, capture the ways of utilizing new problem-solving methods and to enrich the experiences of organizing and supporting teachers. Undeniably, we do not aim at the sterile adoption of foreign standards, but we believe that Greek secondary education teachers can and should draw experiences from European education systems. In addition, we intend to focus on a dynamic study of concerns, ways of intervening and solving problems always with the aim of promoting the student's interest and the professional satisfaction and development of teachers, given that a strong interaction is observed between these parameters.

The teacher is the basic component of every class and acts as a catalyst in the effectiveness of the educational process. The way in which he perceives his role is inextricably linked to his training and the professional training he has received. Its role and work in the context of the school, but also outside it, have always been an important topic of research both in the field of education and educational policy. The relationship between education and society is now understood in the context of the so-called "knowledge society" and "lifelong learning", while the planning and implementation of educational policy as such is in the perspective of "human resources development" and seems to be emphasized in the tripartite "autonomy-accountability-efficiency" (Karras & Wolhuter, 2014).

Theoretical framework

The future of education in a rapidly changing world with significant challenges for the entire educational community is something that should concern all of society, but especially the educational community. Globally, the OECD report "The future of education and skills: Education 2030" raises fears about the path we are expected to follow and the reality we will be called upon to experience (OECD, 2018). Teachers are therefore called upon to develop new skills and adapt the directions they provide to their students, so that they remain relevant and engaging but at the same time useful and effective during the pedagogical process.

The education policy developed in the European Union varies greatly since it seems to take into account the diversity of national education systems and the right of each member state to draw up and implement the education policy line. However, there exists the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), a form of intergovernmental policymaking originally created in the 1990s as part of an employment policy and was later designated as the Lisbon body. At the same time the European education area (EEA) aims at creating a genuine common European space of learning which will benefit every country. Under Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the EU contributes to the development of quality education by encouraging and facilitating cooperation between its member states, and by supporting and supplementing their action (OECD, 2018). With a budget of more than EUR 28 billion, the new Erasmus+ program (2021-2027) funds projects on education and training, as well as measures in favor of youth and sport. In addition, the 27 member states and the European Commission are working

towards a wide-ranging improvement of the EU's education and training sector. This shared vision is called the European education area (EEA), and aims at creating a genuine common European space of learning, which will benefit all learners, teachers, and institutions, by 2025, through:

- improving the quality of education and training for all;
- ensuring inclusion and gender equality;
- promoting policies and investments to bring about the green and digital transitions;
- enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession;
- reinforcing higher education institutions;
- promoting lifelong learning and mobility; and
- strengthening the geopolitical dimension of the EEA (OECD, 2020).

A positive school climate – where students feel a sense of safety and belonging and where relational trust prevails – improves academic achievement, test scores, grades, and engagement and helps reduce the negative effects of poverty on academic achievement. To bring about such environments, teachers, paraprofessionals, and school and district leaders must be prepared to create the school and classroom structures that encourage secure relationships. Preservice preparation programs and professional development should cultivate knowledge, skills, and beliefs that build educators' understanding of student needs and their ability to support learning and development. To cultivate learning environments in which strong adult-student relationships can flourish, educators must gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to meet their students' needs. They need deep knowledge of the individual assets and experiences of the children in their care, the social and emotional skills to cultivate empathy and help students develop those skills, and both the teaching competencies and beliefs that enable students to achieve at high levels (Darling-Hammond & De Paoli, 2020).

Indicators in teacher competence in pedagogical aspects include the ability to master student characteristics, learning theory, learning practice, assessment, and evaluation (Lauermaun & ten Hagen, 2021). Teachers are also asked to be able to develop the potential of students, take advantage of the results of assessments and evaluations in improving learning, and reflect in further efforts to improve the quality of education. Professional competence is more emphasized on the ability of teachers in terms of mastery of the material, structure, concepts, and material development as well as creative (Prasetyono et al., 2021). Social competence includes elements of objectivity, non-discrimination, inclusiveness, communicativeness, and being able to adapt to the existing socio-cultural diversity (Abdullah, 2021).

Literature review

Livingston and Flores (2017) found recurring topics of investigation from the 1970s through to the 2000s. These included, among others, the relationship between theory and practice, collaboration between universities and schools, and mentoring/supervising arrangements during school placements.

In the last two decades, debates on the efficiency of the educational systems have intensified in the countries of the European Union. The results of the repeated international study PISA (Program for International Student Assessment), which are not satisfactory for some European countries, contributed to this. In this direction, the

important social changes and scientific and technological developments that took place during this period also largely contributed, which have the following main characteristics:

- a) multiculturalism of societies and pluralism of beliefs and values;
- b) globalization in the economy and in many other sectors of society.

As a result, interdependence relationships have been formed between the various countries with the simultaneous diffusion of international standards and practices in the economic, social, and educational fields. A third key feature of modern societies is their demographic evolution, which affects the structural and quantitative dimensions in educational programming as well as the essential aspects of education. The latest scientific and technological developments, especially in the fields of Genetics, New Technologies and Computer Science and Digital Systems, which justify the often-used description of the “fourth industrial revolution” also play a crucial role and proved to significantly strengthen in the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. The special health conditions created by Covid-19 is perhaps an opportunity to compensate for the educational needs of the teachers themselves, but also to reorganize the policies that will support educators and the school space. A January 2021 survey of 2,000 UK teachers about the impact of the pandemic on their work came to this conclusion, among others (Fullard, 2021).

Recent research in Finland and Norway highlights the fact that high-quality teaching is the most important factor in raising student achievement, while making it clear that successful teacher education depends on the motivation and commitment of teacher educators to do their best for the learning and intellectual development of future teachers. However, there is an inconsistency between the commitment to learning shown by teacher education students and their commitment to continue practicing the teaching profession, which is interpreted as a clear need to revise the theoretical framework of teacher education (Elstad et al., 2021).

Research over the past five years by the London Institute of Education of a sample of 3,500 teachers explored what motivated them to teach in the first place, and the reasons why they left or might consider leaving the profession in the future. The research emphasizes the motivations that initially prompted young people to pursue the teaching profession and their thoughts on the challenges they thought they would face. The data of the analysis of the findings reveal that the reality of teaching is far in terms of difficulties and challenges from the theoretical and practical education they have received at the University. Intensification, loss of autonomy, monitoring and evaluation, limited participation in decision-making and lack of personal development seem to be ignored. As a result, a frustration of their goals is quickly observed and the workload in relation to their life balance is such that they often push them to quit, so it is necessary to emphasize the creativity of the teacher’s work and the promotion of good practice in the implementation of teaching, so that the teacher is not considered merely a learning resource and his personality or meaningful communication with his students is sidelined (Perryman, 2022).

The prevalence of intentional career change has been recognized as a persistent and significant problem worldwide. Research on Finnish teachers (Räsänen et al., 2020) regarding the investigation of reasons behind these intentions show that many factors seem to interact with the school system, such as the challenges of modern developments, workload, ongoing educational reforms – which clearly aim to further develop a

relatively well-performing education system (OECD, 2019) – but require new professional training to ensure readiness to manage difficulties and increase the pressure on teachers, whose main concern is their performance and effectiveness in relation to their classroom and students (Räsänen et al., 2020).

In Greece initial secondary teachers' education typically lasts 4 years and as is the case in almost all OECD countries, a tertiary degree is awarded to prospective teachers of all levels of education upon completion of their initial teacher training (OECD, 2018). Research is oriented to the behavior of students and the relationships between the teachers' and the school's leadership. A new law established recently gives the opportunity in each higher educational institution to form a special pedagogic and teaching proficiency study program which will be operated by decision of the Senate, the successful completion of which leads to the granting of a certificate of pedagogic proficiency (OECD, 2020). Reforms are expected to be announced in the end of the academic year 2024 concerning the acquirement of a pedagogical competence certificate.

The purposes of the French initial teacher education system mainly focus on the selection procedures for teachers and civil servants (Escalié et al., 2023). To improve the attractiveness of the profession, the Ministry of Education is studying several recruitment reform hypotheses, particularly the positioning of bac + 3 competitions. The challenge of the reform is also that of improving initial teacher education. The Society of Aggregates sent an open letter to Gabriel Attal, in which it is underlined that “many undergraduate students have not, at this stage of their studies, acquired a sufficient level of knowledge or methods to guarantee that they will be able to master their discipline later”. In an open letter that became a petition, more than two hundred academics opposed, for the same reasons, a perspective for secondary education. Announcements are expected in early 2024.

England chose a decentralized teacher education model that emphasized apprenticeship in schools. Since 2010, the role of universities in teacher education has been further marginalized (Menter, 2019). The English government has yet decided that there are issues of quality with initial teacher education programs and therefore set in place a ‘Market Review’ led by a group of experts (Ofsted, 2022). The aim of a market review arrangement (with delivery from 2024) is to make well-informed, evidence-based recommendations on how to make sure all trainees receive high-quality training.

Aims

The general objective of this research is, through a comparative study of educational policies and the corresponding configuration of the educational systems of England, France, and Greece, to determine the degree of readiness of secondary education teachers, who teach in public schools, to face behavioral issues, but also classroom management, to maintain a positive learning climate.

After studying the literature and the available sources, the research questions that are formed as a framework are the following:

- Which are the theoretical and operational differences of the three educational systems under study in terms of preparing teachers to face the demands of teaching?
- Is the teacher influenced by the educational policies in the studied systems?

- Does the educational material and the existing curriculum contribute to maintaining a positive learning climate?
- What problems do teachers face in the three countries under study regarding school climate and learning outcomes?
- What is the opinion of teachers about the effectiveness of education programs and how is this affected by age or years of experience in the three countries under investigation?
- How are the educational needs of teachers affected in relation to their studies, the schools they serve and the often-changing conditions due to particularities in each of the countries under consideration?
- Is the contact and exchange of opinions and practices between the teaching colleagues of different countries promoted in the three systems under study?
- Do the recent educational reforms contribute to the pedagogical competence and preparedness of teachers?
- What are the main (structural and functional) factors for the effective education of teachers and, consequently, for the formation of a positive learning climate?

Methodology

The method that will be used to study secondary teachers' education in the three educational systems is the comparative analysis. It will highlight the target position of each country. In addition, it will lead to conclusions not only at the level of theory, but also at the level of applied policy regarding the emphasis placed on the pedagogical competence of teachers and their readiness to manage the classroom, but also to ensure a positive learning climate. Our methodological strategy aims to move along the following axes:

1. the bibliographic research;
2. the study of secondary quantitative data; and
3. the qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

In the first stage of the research (pilot research), in the form of an interview, five teachers in each country will be asked to answer general questions about their profession, the situations they face in the classroom and the manipulations they are asked to adopt to ensure a meaningful learning environment interaction with their students. This specific approach will highlight the points that concern the teachers the most and, in this way, we will be led to the second stage of the research (main interview), when the data and experience obtained from the previous stage will be included, the questions will be formulated with greater clarity and readjusted based on feedback from the previous stage.

When it comes to focus groups, it is essential to design and deliver an effective and enjoyable discussion, which requires consideration not only of issues of sampling and group composition, but also of group dynamics, as well as the comfort and convenience of the participants. research participants. After all, the success of a focus group is related to the stimulation and engagement of participants, and we will work in one direction to develop topic guides and introduce questions appropriately to ensure that participants are able to contribute to the discussions as fully as possible (Robinson, 2019).

The above stages of the research phase and especially the pilot and the main interview will be used in the final drafting of our questionnaire with a more organized list of questions and adapted to the final axes of study. In the final questionnaire, we

intend to include both open-ended and closed-ended questions to ensure objectivity and lead the respondents to answers within the conceptual framework, and in cases where it is not possible to communicate with the interviewees in person, we will use online interviews.

The comparative study and analysis of the education and training systems of teachers in Greece, France and England is not going to be a simple list of similarities and differences. Its main objective is to identify the scope of the pedagogical competence and preparedness of secondary school teachers in the three countries under study and the effectiveness of the educational systems. Regarding the analysis of secondary quantitative data, social scientists have the possibility of analyzing high-quality data and at the same time reaching valid conclusions. The analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the interviews and focus groups in the three countries will play an important role in the proposed study, as qualitative research in education successfully utilizes archives or texts, discussions between individuals (interviews) or groups (focus groups) in both in-person and online environments (Ward & Delamont, 2020).

We intend to use content analysis to answer the research questions and draw conclusions about the issues under investigation. Content analysis allows qualitative material to be transformed into quantitative data and is used to draw conclusions from texts and other units of meaning. In addition, it is expected to build an ideal framework for the study of social representations, of living everyday ideology since this perspective is an important element from the point of view of qualitative research (Denny & Weckesser, 2022). As a research tool, inductive content analysis organizes, categorizes, and groups the qualitative data of the research, which will ultimately answer the research questions and it is expected that the empirical data will be included in the framework of a theory.

Since this research is in progress we have not reached yet to conclusions, however the pilot interviews demonstrate a vivid interest of teachers in the reforms to take place.

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Life Skills as an Integral Part of a Comprehensive Education: A Research Proposal for Educational Policies in Compulsory Education in Greece, Germany, and Finland

Abstract

With individual, social, and emotional skills increasingly emerging as integral components of a comprehensive education, this scientific study aims to organize and summarize the range of different approaches found in the literature regarding the role and contribution of “life skills” to the holistic development of students and adolescents. This study serves as the theoretical background upon which extensive research will be based concerning educational policies and “life skills” in compulsory education in Europe, through a comparative analysis of three different European educational systems: Greece, Germany, and Finland.

Keywords: life skills, individual skills, emotional skills, social skills, compulsory education, Greece, Germany, Finland

Introduction

During developmental changes, students and adolescents often encounter difficulties in their communication with parents, teachers, classmates, and their social environment (Eriksson et al., 2019). These situations often lead to unnecessary anxiety, anger issues, low self-esteem, limited life satisfaction, poor academic performance, and behavioral disorders at school and at home (Cosma et al., 2023).

In this context, individual, social, and emotional skills emerge as integral components of comprehensive education (Gómez-López et al., 2019; Currie & Morgan, 2020). The ability to build and maintain social relationships, critical and creative thinking, effective communication and collaboration, skills such as self-control and self-management, decision-making, and goal setting are just some of the “life skills” that equip children and adolescents to face the challenges of adulthood (Eriksson et al., 2019; Sala et al., 2020).

The primary aim of this work is to organize and summarize the range of different approaches found in the literature, identifying the nature of life skills while concurrently providing a robust literature review regarding the positive outcomes resulting from their cultivation and development.

This study aims to serve as the theoretical background upon which extensive qualitative research on educational policies and life skills in compulsory education in Europe will be based, through a comparative analysis of three different European educational systems: Greece, Germany, and Finland.

Life skills: a theoretical approach

With its Recommendation adopted in 2018, the European Union acknowledges that the cognitive background proves to be weak when isolated from skills related to problem-solving, critical thinking, ability to cooperate, creativity, personal, social, and metacognitive skills, self-regulation of behavior, etc. (European Commission, 2019).

Through this acknowledgment, the European Union essentially urges its member states to realize that the future “well-being” of their citizens hinges on the development and cultivation of skills that will enable them to successfully navigate the inevitable pressures of life, productively and fruitfully, creating protective factors and mitigating potential risks (Due et al., 2019).

The above-mentioned individual, social, and emotional skills are identified in the literature under the term “life skills” and according to the definition of the World Health Organization, they reflect a range of skills that make individuals “capable of effectively coping with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (World Health Organization, 1999). The broad scope of this definition allows for the inclusion of countless skills, recording, in some cases, differences from country to country, depending on existing educational, social, political, and cultural conditions.

The European Council defines life skills as “positive, affirmative behaviors oriented towards problem-solving” and which are “appropriately and responsibly used in everyday life – at home, in the community, in education, in training, and in the workplace”. Essentially, these are a set of social and personal skills that can be cultivated and developed throughout a person's life span through various “socio-educational activities” embedded in the processes of education and training (European Council, 2017).

The World Health Organization identifies and records a set of significant skills that lie at the core of life skills. According to this approach, these skills are related to: a) decision-making, b) problem-solving, c) creative thinking, d) critical thinking, e) effective communication, f) development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, g) self-awareness, h) empathy, i) emotion management, and j) stress and anxiety management (World Health Organization, 1993).

In a similar effort, the European Council (2017), in its conclusions regarding those skills that facilitate young people's successful transition to adulthood and professional life, as well as their active participation in the community, categorizes life skills into four concise bundles:

- a) Interpersonal skills: leadership skills, conflict resolution, planning and organization, teamwork, negotiation, intercultural sensitivity;
- b) Communication skills: expression and consideration of opinions, discussion and dialogue, digital literacy for media, presentation, advocacy;
- c) Cognitive skills: critical thinking, reasoned analysis, creative thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, interpretation, judgment; and
- d) Personal skills: self-confidence, self-esteem, resilience, autonomy, initiative, and empathy.

According to the above hierarchy, life skills can be identified through common points and characteristics. Regardless of category they belong to, their aim remains “holistic”, aiming for the overall development of the individual and the achievement of “positive self-actualization” (European Council, 2017).

Furthermore, the above-mentioned skills are a crucial part of personal and professional development and are important for future success and well-being, regardless of environment or professional sector in which the individual operates. In other words, they are “valuable and useful in themselves”, while remaining “complementary” and “reinforcing”, supporting the learning and development of young people in every aspect of their daily lives.

In the same vein, the above categorization confirms that life skills, having broad applicability regardless of content, can be identified as “transversal”, while they are clearly “cross-cutting” skills as they contribute to an individual’s general ability to adapt and respond to various aspects of life. Correspondingly, they can be defined as skills that provide opportunities and possibilities, strengthening behaviors and attitudes and encouraging young people to develop and express their creative, personal, and professional potential (European Council, 2017).

In this context, there seems to be an agreement on the necessity for life skills to be part of a “positive education” within the school environment, as an integral part of the educational curriculum (Seligman & Adler, 2019; Eriksson et al., 2019).

As presented in detail below, the results from longitudinal studies suggest that such interventions at an early age can facilitate a successful transition to new roles and responsibilities that may arise in adult life. The process of acquiring life skills stems from a perspective identified in the literature as a positive youth development process and is grounded in the theory of developmental systems. This theory suggests that young people have the potential for “positive change” by developing and evolving their personal and social “capital” (Seligman & Adler, 2019; Eriksson et al., 2019).

The positive impact of life skills: a literature review

From the aforementioned points, it is easily understood that the positive outcomes from cultivating and developing life skills, particularly in the developmental stage covered by compulsory education, can be highly beneficial for the personal development of students and adolescents (Kourmoussi et al., 2017; Eriksson et al., 2019; Currie & Morgan, 2020). Through shaping positive social values, attitudes, and behaviors, life skills can facilitate the smooth socialization of youth and their successful integration into the community, while also promoting democratic values that will make them active and participatory citizens in the future (European Council, 2017). Additionally, the integration of life skills into education can have significant influences on the area of healthy child development at a crucial age, by strengthening perceptions of prevention and avoidance of unhealthy habits (European Council, 2017).

In the international literature, we find a plethora of studies focusing on the positive outcomes stemming from the integration of life skills into education. Currie and Morgan (2020) identify the clear influence of life skills on the development of social and emotional skills in children. Seligman and Adler (2019) and Eriksson et al. (2019), document the contribution of life skills to self-esteem and health-related behaviors, emphasizing their influence on preventing the development of mental disorders. Kourmoussi et al. (2017) focus on the ability of life skills to promote positive social adaptation and social competence, arguing that skills-based education contributes to the development of self-control, emotional recognition, and understanding.

Furthermore, Due et al. (2019) find that the integration of life skills into education can contribute to the development of effective conflict resolution skills, emphasizing in

positive effects on violent and antisocial behaviors. Kawalekar (2017) focuses on improving academic performance, school discipline, and classroom management, arguing that research data show that children perform better in school when they develop social and emotional skills. Similarly, Yeager (2017) and Jones et al. (2017), by separating and studying a series of social and emotional learning programs, argue that teenagers' lives in school can significantly improve through these skills. Şimşek et al. (2022) highlight the contribution to combating substance abuse. Meanwhile, McGrath and Adler (2022) underline the enhancement of children's self-confidence in the school setting.

Despite the differences, most research studies and surveys agree on the importance and role of life skills in the holistic development of students, significantly influencing their subsequent progress and well-being.

The role of the educator

As the primary figure responsible for managing students, the contribution of the educator is not limited to cognitive areas alone. On the contrary, it extends to areas concerning the emotional, ethical, and social aspects of students, making their role increasingly complex within contemporary social demands (Karras & Wolhuter, 2019).

According to the findings of Humphrey et al. (2018), educators' perceptions of teaching, combined with adequate support and their belief in what they teach, significantly contribute to the success or failure of a cultivation and development program of skills. Similarly, when educators lack the environment and resources to promote social and emotional learning skills, students exhibit lower levels of behavior and performance.

In this direction, as Dyson et al. (2019) suggest, while the development of life skills can be a significant part of the formal curriculum, it is not necessarily derived solely from the school curriculum. In these cases, the integration of social and emotional skills into the teaching program is closely linked to their recognition by educators themselves of the importance these skills have in the holistic education of their students. Educators may recognize and prioritize certain skills over others, focusing their teaching on those skills that better serve their students and their environments (CASEL, 2021).

Proposed research

Research aim

The approach and understanding of the concept of life skills, as well as the broader conceptual framework that accompanies them, are prerequisites for enabling future research regarding educational policies and life skills in compulsory education in Europe. Through a comparative analysis of the national educational systems of Greece, Germany, and Finland, the proposed research aims to capture the existing situation regarding the cultivation and development of life skills. This will be achieved by examining the institutional study programs, methodologies, applied practices, official educational guidelines, as well as the experiential knowledge of educators themselves, to assess the degree of alignment of the theoretical framework with the contemporary educational reality in the three countries under examination.

Study originality and research necessity

The conduct of the proposed research is deemed significant, as a lack of similar studies regarding the development and cultivation of life skills in Greece has been identified. Comparing the institutionalized educational system of Greece with similar educational systems that incorporate and promote the development and cultivation of life skills in their philosophy (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019) will allow for the extraction of valuable data and conclusions. These findings could serve as a catalyst for a series of policy reform proposals in the country, integrating best practices concerning the very structure of the educational process, including aspects related to the training of educators themselves.

Methodology

The proposed methodological design consists of two phases. In the first phase, the above organization and recording of the range of approaches found in the literature will be utilized, identifying the nature of life skills and conducting a literature review, both regarding the positive outcomes resulting from their cultivation and development, as well as regarding the role of the educator in the process of cultivating and developing these skills.

Simultaneously, relevant official documents concerning the integration of life skills into the national educational policies of Greece, Germany, and Finland will be sought, recorded, and examined, along with the role assigned to educators in this process and the institutional support provided by the state towards them in this direction.

In the second phase, a qualitative research study has been designed. The conduct of a purposive sampling study will be realized using the method of semi-structured interviews (Tsiolis, 2014), with **policymakers** and **stakeholders** from each national case. Specifically, a total of twelve (12) semi-structured interviews are expected to be conducted, four per national case, leaving open the possibility of revising the sample if necessary. If conditions permit, the research is planned to be conducted in the interviewees' workplace to achieve the best possible connection with the research purpose. Additionally, before conducting the semi-structured interviews, a pilot study has been designed to assess the effectiveness of the adopted methodological design.

Finally, the examination of the findings will be conducted through content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013), utilizing a similar coding scheme to enable the comparative analysis of the data and the secure extraction of conclusions regarding our research questions.

Conclusion

As we have already noted, the present work constitutes the theoretical background upon which extensive qualitative research on educational policies and life skills in compulsory education will be based, through a comparative analysis of three different European educational systems: Greece, Germany, and Finland.

Utilizing the existing literature review and the findings of the studies presented above, which highlight the contribution of life skills to holistic development and future well-being of students and adolescents, as well as the significance of the role that educators are called to play, we will attempt to approach national educational policies in the three examined countries, focusing on the degree of integration of the process of

developing and cultivating life skills within the three national educational programs (both formal and informal), the learning environments, and the practices adopted and implemented by educators.

As emerges from the main part of the present work, this process requires and presupposes supportive structures, opportunities, positive social norms within the educational framework and content, support, and close coordination between the family, the school, and the state.

The data analysis aims to lead us to a comprehensive critical approach to the subject, providing us with the opportunity to formulate certain policy proposals and issues for further research regarding educational policies related to the development and cultivation of life skills in the three examined countries, with an emphasis on the case of Greece, which today seems to be experiencing significant differentiation in the corresponding national rankings (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2019).

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Nomthandazo Buthelezi & Nonhlanhla Desiree Maseko

Supporting the Transition of Learners with Learning Disabilities into a Special Class: An Informal Transition Support Training Model

Abstract

The transition plan for learners with learning disabilities is a critical aspect that involves various key components. This paper focuses on the importance of transition planning in facilitating the successful integration of such learners into a special class, highlighting the benefits of family, school, and community partnerships. The plan establishes clear goals and objectives that align with the learner's aspirations and abilities, encompassing academic achievements, social integration, skill development, and career exploration. Moreover, the plan identifies specific strategies and interventions to address potential barriers and challenges during the transition process. The paper draws on research conducted in a school situated in Johannesburg South and a longitudinal research program conducted at the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. Utilizing the insights gained from these studies, the paper proposes an informal Transition Support Training model. This model emphasizes the assessment of learner strengths, challenges, and needs, allowing educators and support teams to construct an Individualized Education Transition Plan that optimally supports learners with learning disabilities throughout their transitional journey into a special class. By delivering the transition plan effectively, educators and support staff can facilitate a smooth transition for the learner's well-being and set the stage for their success in the new educational setting.

Keywords: transition, learners with learning disabilities, transition plan, special class

Introduction

Transition is a term that encompasses change and movement (Patton & Kim, 2016). As described by the transition theory, transitions can occur at any time and may be predictable or unpredictable (Anderson et al., 2018). While some individuals may navigate transitions successfully without a formal plan, it is widely recognized that the transition process can be challenging, particularly when faced with the need to adapt to new environments or settings. This holds true for learners with learning disabilities (LD), for whom unprepared transitions can be even more difficult when they have to transition from the mainstream class into a special class. Therefore, implementing a transition plan becomes crucial to support their successful transition into a special class.

Transition planning is a strategic approach employed during critical transition periods to ensure a smooth and effective process for learners with LD as they move into a special class. Buthelezi and Maseko (2023) stipulate that support for learners with LD involves the collaborative efforts of the family, school, and community to develop and

implement a comprehensive transition plan tailored to the unique needs of each learner transitioning into a special class. By embracing a proactive approach, transition planning aims to minimize potential obstacles and maximize opportunities for success (Trainor et al., 2020). Olcese (2019) states that at the core of effective transition planning is the creation of a transition plan, which serves as a guiding document throughout the transition process. This plan outlines the necessary steps, resources, and support mechanisms required to facilitate a successful transition. It addresses various aspects, including academic, social, emotional, and vocational considerations, based on the individual learner's needs and goals (Wehman et al., 2020).

Challenges faced by learners with learning disabilities during transition

Transitioning between educational settings can present unique challenges for learners with LD. These challenges can impact various aspects of their academic, social, and emotional well-being. Understanding these challenges is essential to effectively support learners during periods of transition. These are some of the challenges that learners with LD experience during transition which emanated from research conducted in a school located in Johannesburg South:

- *Academic expectations:* Moving from one class to another or transitioning from one educational setting to another often involves a shift in academic expectations. Learners with LD may struggle to adjust to new curriculum requirements, instructional methods, or assessment formats. They may require additional support to bridge any gaps in their academic skills and knowledge (Buthelezi, 2020).
- *Learning environment:* Transitioning to a new learning environment can be overwhelming for learners with LD as they may struggle to adapt to changes in classroom routines, structures, or physical layouts. Navigating the new classroom and adapting to the setting may pose difficulty (Patton & Kim, 2016).
- *Social interaction:* It has been established that learners with LD may struggle to develop and maintain social connections during transitions and they may experience social anxiety, struggle with communication skills, or find making friends in new settings challenging (Cavendish et al., 2017) as such the loss of familiar peer networks and the need to establish new relationships can be particularly challenging for these learners.
- *Self-advocacy:* Transition periods may require learners to become more self-aware and develop self-advocacy skills and it has also been established that LD may find it challenging to express their needs, seek support, or communicate effectively with teachers, peers, and other stakeholders. They may require assistance in understanding their learning strengths and weaknesses and developing strategies to advocate for themselves (Buthelezi, 2020).
- *Executive functioning:* It was further established that executive functioning skills, such as organization, time management, planning, and task initiation, are crucial for academic success (Buthelezi, 2020). Furthermore, it was found that learners with LD may struggle with these skills and transitioning to a new educational setting can further exacerbate these difficulties. They may require explicit instruction and ongoing support to develop and strengthen their executive functioning abilities.

- *Emotional well-being*: Transitions can evoke a range of emotions for learners with LD, including anxiety, stress, and fear of the unknown (Patton & Kim, 2016). It has also been found that learners with LD may worry about their ability to meet new academic demands, fit in socially, or navigate unfamiliar environments. Emotional well-being supports, such as counseling services or access to a trusted adult, can help address these concerns and promote a positive transition experience.

Addressing these transition challenges requires a collaborative approach involving educators, support staff, families, and the learners themselves. It was thus recommended in the study conducted by Buthelezi (2020) that individualized transition plans, regular communication, targeted interventions, and ongoing support can help ease the transition process and facilitate successful adaptation to new educational environments.

Between the year 2010 and 2015, the School of Education at Trinity College Dublin conducted a longitudinal research program called “Inclusion in Education and Society” (Doyle, 2016). This program focused on investigating the transition of learners with disabilities as they moved from post-primary education to higher education (HE). The program consisted of three simultaneous studies. Study Three specifically examined the effectiveness of transition planning resources designed for learners, parents, and practitioners involved in supporting learners with disabilities during their transition journey. These resources were uniquely created for the study (Doyle, 2016).

The research program identified critical factors influencing successful transitions, including the importance of self-awareness, self-determination, self-advocacy, and independence. Recommendations from the findings suggested the need for a flexible planning instrument that could be adapted to individual needs and contexts, serving as a modular portfolio covering the senior cycle of education.

As a result of the above research, a model of the research was developed, known as the Education Transition Planning (ETP), serving as an informal Transition Support Training toolkit.

Theoretical framework

Transition planning models are built upon theoretical frameworks that prioritize support for learners with LD. The Education Transition Planning (ETP) model is grounded in two distinct but complementary theories: transition theory and family, school, and community partnership framework. The first theory, Schlossberg’s transition theory, acknowledges that transition is a challenging process for individuals. While Schlossberg’s theory primarily focuses on adult transitions, it can also be applied to young people, including learners with learning disabilities.

Schlossberg’s theory is based on several premises (Anderson et al., 2011). Firstly, individuals consistently experience transitions, and their reactions to these transitions depend on the type of transition, whether it is an event or a non-event, as well as their perception and the context surrounding the transition. Secondly, transition is a continuous process without a fixed endpoint. It involves different phases, including assimilation and continuous assessment, as individuals progress through three stages of transition: moving in, moving through, and moving out. These stages are guided by four essential factors, referred to as the four Ss: Strategies, Support, Self, and Situation.

Secondly, ETP incorporates support for transition through Epstein’s Family School Community Partnership (Epstein, 2018). The involvement of key stakeholders, such as

the learner's family, school personnel, and members of the community, is essential in the development and execution of the transition plan (Epstein, 2018). Collaboration among these stakeholders ensures a holistic approach to support the learner during this critical phase. It enables the exchange of information, the identification of strengths and challenges, and the establishment of clear roles and responsibilities for each party involved. Through shared decision-making and active participation, all stakeholders contribute to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for the learner's successful transition (O'Neill et al., 2016).

To ensure a comprehensive and seamless transition, the plan also addresses the need for collaboration between the sending (mainstream class) and receiving (special class) classes where the learner with learning disabilities moves in, moves through, and moves out of the transition process. This collaboration facilitates the smooth transfer of relevant information, such as previous report cards, individualized education plans (IEPs), and any additional accommodations or supports required. It promotes continuity of services and ensures that the learner's specific needs are understood and met in the new educational setting (Cavendish et al., 2017).

Regular evaluation and monitoring of the transition plan are vital to its success. This ongoing process allows for adjustments and modifications based on the learner's progress and changing circumstances. It also provides an opportunity to identify and address any emerging challenges, ensuring that the learner's transition remains on track.

By implementing a well-structured and comprehensive transition plan, learners with LD can experience a smoother and more successful transition into a special class. The collaborative efforts of the family, school, and community, coupled with proactive strategies and ongoing evaluation, create an environment that supports the learner's growth, development, and overall well-being. Guidelines in the planning process should include:

- *Collaboration and coordination*: Effective collaboration among key stakeholders, including educators, support staff, families, and community members, is essential for delivering the transition plan. Regular communication and coordination ensure that everyone involved is aware of the plan's goals, objectives, and specific actions to be taken (Young et al., 2011).
- *Individualized approach*: According to Cavendish et al. (2017) it is imperative that when planning each learner's unique needs and strengths are recognized. The delivery of the transition plan should be tailored to meet these individual requirements. Personalized supports, accommodations, and interventions should be provided to address specific academic, social, emotional, and behavioral challenges.
- *Timely implementation*: It is important to initiate the delivery of the transition plan on time this includes starting preparations well in advance of the actual transition period to allow for adequate planning, resource allocation, and necessary adjustments. Early intervention ensures that learners have sufficient time to acclimate to the upcoming changes (Herring, 2019).
- *Supportive environment*: Create a supportive and inclusive environment in both the sending and receiving educational settings. This entails fostering a positive and welcoming atmosphere that values diversity and promotes acceptance. Educators and peers should be encouraged to provide support, understanding, and

encouragement to learners with LD throughout the transition process (Dakwat, 2023).

- *Continuity of services*: Ensure a smooth continuity of support services during the transition. This involves facilitating the transfer of relevant information, such as IEPs which form part of the SIAS policy (DoE, 2020), assessment records, and accommodations, between the sending and receiving classes. Clear communication channels and collaboration between educators help maintain consistent support and minimize disruptions.
- *Monitoring and evaluation*: Regular monitoring and evaluation of the transition plan's implementation are crucial. Assess the progress of the learner, identify any challenges or gaps in support, and make necessary adjustments accordingly. Ongoing communication with the learner, family, and relevant stakeholders allows for timely intervention and ensures that the transition remains on track (Etscheidt et al., 2023).
- *Transition support team*: Consider establishing a transition support team consisting of professionals with expertise in special education, counseling, and related fields. This team can provide guidance, support, and expertise in delivering the transition plan. They can offer additional resources, training, and assistance to educators and families involved in the transition process (Patton & Kim, 2016).

Conceptualization of the transition plan training program

The delivery of the transition plan plays a critical role in ensuring a smooth and successful transition for learners with LD. It involves the implementation of strategies and actions outlined in the transition plan to support the learner's adjustment to a new educational setting. Designing a comprehensive training program for the delivery of the transition plan is crucial to ensure that educators and support staff have the necessary knowledge, skills, and strategies to effectively support learners during the transition process (Dakwat, 2023). Below is an outline of steps to be considered when implementing a training program focused on the delivery of the transition plan:

Step 1: Introduction to transition planning

It is thus important to ensure that there is provision of an overview of the purpose and importance of transition planning for learners with learning disabilities. This according to Dawkat (2023) assists in ensuring that the key components of a transition plan and its role in facilitating a smooth transition for learners with learning disabilities are explained. Furthermore, it highlights the benefits of collaborative teamwork for stakeholders involved in the transition process.

Step 2: Understanding the needs of learners with learning disabilities

In the program it is imperative as stipulated by Patton and Kim (2016) that the characteristics, strengths, and challenges commonly associated with learning disabilities are thoroughly explored. Furthermore, the impact of learning disabilities on academic, social, emotional, and behavioral aspects of learners' lives should be highlighted as this assists in providing insights into the specific needs and considerations of learners with learning disabilities during transitions.

Step 3: Legal and policy framework

During the implementation of the training program participants must be familiarized with relevant regulations, and policies related to transition planning for learners with learning disabilities such as the SIAS policy framework (DoE, 2020). Explain the rights and entitlements of learners with disabilities during transitions, including accommodations and support services aids in ensuring that legal aspects are made clear for participants to avoid legal implications that may arise.

Step 4: Developing individualized transition plans

The training program should guide participants through the process of developing individualized transition plans for learners with learning disabilities using a checklist to identify needs a learner may have. An individualized transition plan is a tailor-made plan for the learner based on their uniqueness as such it is imperative that the necessary assessment tools, data collection methods, and collaborative strategies to gather information about learners' strengths, needs, and goals should be outlined (Trainor et al., 2020). This should be done by providing examples and templates for creating effective transition plans tailored to the unique needs of learners with learning disabilities. The importance of this is that it ensures that transition planners can collect sufficient information about the learner (Dakwat, 2023).

Step 5: Collaborative partnerships and communication

During training the importance of collaborative partnerships between educators, support staff, families, and community members should be emphasized. Partnerships aid in ensuring that every person plays a part using their expertise and experience to ensure that the learner's needs are met during transition. Furthermore, the strategies for effective communication, information sharing, and collaboration among stakeholders involved in the transition process should be shared with participants since these key areas aid in ensuring a smooth process. It is suggested by Mazzotti et al. (2018) that techniques for engaging learners, families, and community resources in the development and implementation of transition plans are also shared with participants to equip them in designing an effective plan.

Step 6: Supporting academic transitions

As part of transition planning Barger et al. (2015) suggest that strategies and interventions to support learners with learning disabilities in adapting to new academic expectations, instructional methods, and assessment formats should also be addressed. Moreover, the techniques for promoting executive functioning skills, organization, time management, and task initiation during academic transitions should also be highlighted. In supporting academic transitions effective instructional strategies and accommodations to meet learners' diverse learning needs in the new educational setting must also be addressed.

Step 7: Social and emotional support

When dealing with learners with LD it becomes mandatory to examine the social and emotional challenges, they may face during transition so that they can acquire the necessary support to handle the emotions that come with transition stress (Barger et

al., 2015). As such the provision of strategies to promote social skills, self-advocacy, self-confidence, and resilience in the new learning environment should form part of the transition plan training. In this training program, the approaches to fostering a supportive and inclusive school culture that values diversity and promotes positive peer relationships need to be shared with participants (Cavendish et al., 2017). It has been found by Patton and Kim (2016) that learners with LD struggle to make friends due to their lack of emotional intelligence.

Step 8: Monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up

Like any implementation program, it is of utmost importance that ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up to ensure the effectiveness of transition plans are done (Mazzotti et al., 2018). Trainers should explore assessment methods, progress tracking, and data collection strategies to measure the impact of transition interventions in schools and further provide guidance on adjusting, addressing challenges, and modifying transition plans based on ongoing feedback and evaluation from the participants.

Step 9: Professional development and resources

In training programs trainers must share professional development opportunities, resources, and research-based practices related to transition planning for learners with learning disabilities so that participants can be able to refer somewhere to acquire additional information (Trainor et al., 2020). They can also provide participants with access to relevant publications, websites, and online platforms as part of extra support.

Step 10: Case studies and practical application

After training it is also suggested by Cavendish et al. (2017) that participants in case studies and interactive activities are encouraged to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the training program. Encouraging participants to share their experiences, challenges, and successes related to delivering transition plans for learners with learning disabilities can assist others who have not undergone training and they could share information with others who may require support. Facilitating discussions and problem-solving sessions to address specific scenarios and real-life situations that may arise during the transition process also form part of the ongoing program since communication does not stop when training ends (Mazzotti et al., 2018).

Step 11: Evaluation and feedback

Conduct evaluations to gather feedback from participants regarding the training program's content and delivery since the delivery of the transition plan should be a collaborative and ongoing process (Dakwat, 2023). Transition planning requires flexibility, open communication, and a commitment to meeting the evolving needs of the learner.

Conclusion

In conclusion, transition planning plays a vital role in ensuring successful transitions for learners with LD as they move into a special class. By involving key stakeholders, creating a comprehensive transition plan, and fostering collaboration, we can provide the

necessary support and resources to navigate the challenges of transition. Through these efforts, we empower learners with LD to embrace new opportunities, thrive in their educational journey, and achieve their full potential.

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Effective Ways of Modernization and Internationalization of Education in Kazakhstan

Abstract

This paper examines the problem of modernization of the national education model, based on the program documents *Mangilik El* and *Rukhani Zhangyru*, the project *New humanitarian knowledge: 100 new textbooks in the Kazakh language*, *Daryn* programs, etc., aimed at the spiritual development of the nation. One of the ways to internationalize education in Kazakhstan is the participation in *QS World University Rankings*, which highlights the top five universities: Asfandiyarov Kazakh National Medical University, Satbayev University, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Gumilev Eurasian National University, and Nazarbayev University. In addition to the five universities described, nine more, highlighted in the QS subject rankings, deserve attention. Among these universities is Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University, which implements educational programs in teaching professions developed jointly with foreign partners. The review also covers the following path of modernization of education in Kazakhstan, which takes place in preschool and school education. Since 2009, Kazakhstan has been actively participating in international PISA studies, the results of which have contributed to the implementation of important educational initiatives implemented in the country. The study of such experience contributed to the design of a scientific study on the topic *Theory and technology of a comprehensive psychological and pedagogical assessment of the developing potential of the school's educational environment using the international SAKERS (modified version)*. The quality of school life and educational outcomes of students directly depend on the comfort of the school educational environment, in addition, the problem is aggravated by the risks and threats of globalization and changes in the modern world. The international SACERS (School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale) tool allows for the assessment and measurement of the educational environment according to 7 criteria: the internal space and furniture of the school; health and safety; active activity and pastime; interaction; educational process; staff development; special needs for students with disabilities. At this stage, according to the project on measuring the educational environment using international scales, SAKERS (this term is used in Kazakhstan for SACERS) is conducted in 7 Kazakhstani schools, different in structure and location. The paper ends with strategies for solving problems regarding the orientation of the educational system of Kazakhstan to international cooperation.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, modernization of education, internationalization of education, quality of school life, educational outcomes, university rankings

Introduction

The current period of education development in Kazakhstan is characterized by significant reforms. The fundamental basis of the reforms is the national project *Quality Education “Educated Nation”* (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021). The main goal of the project is improving the quality of education and student outcomes. At the same time, the education system of Kazakhstan is carried out in accordance with the *Concept of development of preschool, secondary, technical and vocational education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2029* (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

In 2017, in his program article on the future modernization of public consciousness, President Nursultan Nazarbayev noted: “I propose to draw the public’s attention to the history of our contemporaries, which can be demonstrated in 100 New Faces of Kazakhstan project” (Nazarbayev, 2017). It is important that the presentation of the program *Rukhani Zhangyru* and the works of classics of Kazakh literature took place at the world-famous London Book Fair in 2019. The event aroused great interest among British publishers, representatives of the academic environment and the readership. The presentation was attended by the heads of well-known publishing houses, the leadership of the British Council, journalists and literary agents. The project *New Humanitarian Knowledge: 100 new textbooks in the Kazakh language* was also presented here. Within the framework of this project, more than 18 best textbooks on history, political science, sociology, philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, economics and linguistics have been translated from English, French and Russian into Kazakh. According to these textbooks, video recordings of lectures have been made on the Open University platform, according to which students can independently study and develop knowledge.

One of the priorities for the modernization of the national education model is the training of intellectual personalities, young people who are able to take key positions in government, economics, science and culture. The implementation of the state program *Daryn* contributes to the activation of this work.

Currently, the teacher training system has been rebuilt on the basis of international standards; the teacher’s status and public image are being raised through the media, propaganda of the achievements of the best teachers, pedagogical skill contests, interaction with public organizations, parents and employers.

Thus, the reforms in the Kazakh educational system are supported by important state documents and are aimed at recognizing the country on a global scale.

Results and discussion

Kazakhstani universities in QS World University Rankings

One of the ways to internationalize education in Kazakhstan is the participation of universities in *QS World University Rankings*. According to *QS World University Rankings 2023: Top global universities*, the top five universities of Kazakhstan included:

- Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi – 150th place in the world and 44th place in Asia;
- Eurasian National University named after Gumilev – 277th place in the world and 96th place in Asia;

- Nazarbayev University, which cooperates with the scientific centers of Cambridge and Pennsylvania within the framework of the School of Education programs, for the Business School – with Fuqua Business School of Duke, for the School of Public Policy – with Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy of the National University of Singapore;
- National Research Technical Satbayev University – ranks 443rd in the world and 177th place in Asia;
- Kazakh National Medical University named after Asfandiyarov is in the range of positions 651-700 places in the world and 301-350 in Asia.

In addition to the five universities described, QS identifies nine more universities. Among these universities is the Kazakh National Pedagogical University named after Abai, which implements educational programs in teaching professions developed jointly with foreign partners.

One more event should be noted: the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev (first president of Kazakhstan from 1990 to 2019) and the French President Francois Hollande opened the Sorbonne-Kazakhstan Institute in 2015. It is the second Sorbonne University worldwide after the French Sorbonne University and the only one in Central Asia. Today, Abai University is actively working to further improve the system of professional and pedagogical training of future teachers in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstani schoolchildren in PISA

The quality of education is the most important factor determining the long-term development of Kazakhstani society in all spheres of life, as well as the main competitive advantage of the state. Therefore, modernization is taking place in preschool and school education. But in this direction, everything is not so simple and this is an urgent problem.

Among the transformational processes of the school, it is important to note the participation of Kazakhstani schoolchildren in international studies of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is conducted under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Kazakhstan has been participating in it since 2009 and its indicators are different. In 2022, 15-year-old schoolchildren from 81 countries of the world took part in the PISA study; 33,000 students from Kazakhstan. Here are the indicators in comparison with 2018: among 81 countries, Kazakhstan ranked 46th in mathematics (54th in 2018), 61st in reading (69th in 2018), 49th in natural sciences (69th in 2018). There is a big difference only in the natural sciences: the indicator increased from 397 to 423 points. However, not high scores with math and reading. In mathematics, Kazakhstan rose by only two points – from 423 to 425. And in reading, it even dropped by one – from 387 to 386. Let's compare these figures with Singapore, which occupies a leading position: 575 points in mathematics, 543 in reading and 561 in science. Cambodia became the main outsider of PISA 2022 with the following indicators: mathematics 336, reading 329, natural sciences 347 (OECD, 2022).

Despite the global deterioration of PISA indicators after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, experts note that Kazakhstan has managed to maintain indicators in solving mathematical problems and assessing reading skills, and has shown significant progress in natural sciences. This was noted by Ms. Elizabeth Fordham, Senior Advisor to the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills. According to her, Kazakhstan's

accumulated significant experience of participating in PISA and the effective steps being taken to improve the national education system may be interesting and useful for studying by other countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The PISA results allow relevant institutions to reflect and work out such questions: why did the southern region of Kazakhstan fall behind in all three disciplines; why, the lower the cost of education and the worse the socio-economic situation, the lower the results; why are the capitals and the more urbanized north of the country in the lead, and the more agrarian south in the laggards? Other issues arise, for example, on the development of school culture. We devoted ourselves to this problem in 2022. A year later, a comparative study with Polish colleagues, which showed the peculiarities of the school culture of Kazakh and Polish schoolchildren, was published (Tłuściak-Deliowska, Dernowska & Kosherbayeva, 2023).

Comfortable schools in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's PISA results have contributed to the implementation of important educational initiatives being implemented in the country. One of the effective initiatives, in our opinion, is the organization and development of the educational environment of the school. Relying on international experience is very important in this regard. The study of such experience contributed to the design of a scientific study on the topic *Theory and technology of a comprehensive psychological and pedagogical assessment of the developing potential of the school's educational environment using the international SAKERS (modified version)*. The term SAKERS is used in Kazakhstan for SACERS (School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale). This project started in 2023. There are practically no such studies in the republic today, despite their relevance on a global scale. The task of the project is to develop a methodology, tools and mechanisms for assessing the educational environment, taking into account the peculiarities and mentality of Kazakhstani schools. According to the concept of the project, it is the environment, the internal and external space of the school, that has a significant impact on the educational results of students. These are factors such as strengthening the teacher's status, the introduction of updated curricula, the widespread use of digital solutions in the educational process, etc.

So, the quality of school life and the educational results of students directly depend on the comfort of the school educational environment, on every detail of it – from the noise insulation of the halls to the transformable furniture in the classroom. The problem is aggravated by the risks and threats of globalization and changes in the modern world. A review of domestic and foreign studies shows that the situation in the world has a significant impact on the personal, socio-psychological health of children and their motivation, becomes a factor of stress disorders and other negative manifestations (Braunack-Mayer et al., 2013).

In the conditions of a negative information background and real threats to the physical health of schoolchildren, the statistics of manifestations of violations of the social and psychological health of the individual in the form of depressive states, frustrations, increased anxiety, aggressiveness of the individual, reducing its resistance to various kinds of addictions and deviations are increasing. These manifestations directly affect the educational and cognitive activity of students, reducing its activity, organization, and consistency, which can negatively affect the quality of educational results. Of particular importance in the combination of these problems is the assessment

of the educational environment and the support of positive motivation, subjective well-being of school students, the preservation of their health as a set of potential and real human capabilities in carrying out their actions in society and interacting with people without deterioration of physical and spiritual condition, without loss in adaptation to the living environment.

The international SACERS tool allows for the assessment and measurement of the educational environment according to 7 criteria: internal space and furniture of the school; health and safety; active activity and pastime; interaction; educational process; staff development; special needs for students with disabilities.

Our task at the first stage of the study is to modify and adapt the scales to the conditions of Kazakhstani schools. By modifying the scales, our project team has taken the following principles as a basis:

- the principle of taking into account the regulatory framework, the nature of government documents;
- ethnic component, national mentality;
- the concept of *Zhaily mektep (Comfortable school)*.

Today, the study on the above-mentioned project to measure the educational environment of a school using the international SACERS tool is being conducted in 7 schools in Kazakhstan from different regions: the megacities of Almaty and Shymkent, a rural school in the Almaty region, schools in Aktau on the shores of the Caspian Sea, schools in one of the oldest cities of the country – Taraz. These are different schools in their subculture and location, so the results will be different.

Our attention is attracted by the school, which in the future will function according to the state project *Zhaily mektep*, i.e., a comfortable school (Kudaybergenov, 2023; Aimagambetov, 2018). According to this project, 401 schools are planned to be built in the country by the end of 2025. These are schools that take into account a safe educational environment for students, equipped with advanced technology, with separate blocks for senior and junior grades; barrier-free space for children with special needs; subject rooms of a new modification. The national project *Zhaily mektep (Comfortable school)* is aimed at solving the issues of shortage of student places, liquidation of emergency schools and three-shift education.

Conclusion

In the last decade, Kazakhstan's education has been undergoing modernization, the main idea of which is internationalization and integration into the global educational space. Kazakhstan's education system is focused on international cooperation. Four strategic directions are being developed to solve the problems:

- creation of a new professional development system;
- modernization of the content of professional development based on the best Kazakh and international experience;
- development of an innovative system of professional development for teachers of pedagogical specialties of universities and colleges;
- creating conditions for the effective functioning of a professional development system that ensures the quality of education.

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Part 2

International Education Issues

Obed Mfum-Mensah

Between “Scylla and Charybdis”? Trusteeship, Africa-China Relations, and Education Policy and Practice

Abstract

Sub-Saharan African societies had contacts with China that stretch back to the early days of the Silk Road where the two regions facilitated trade relations and exchanged technology and ideas. Beginning in the 1950s China formalized relations with SSA based on South-South cooperation. At the end of the Cold War, China intensified its relations with SSA within the frameworks of “One Belt one Road” in Africa and the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The China-Africa relations have scored benefits in the areas of promoting infrastructural development, strong investments in SSA, trade links between the two regions, less expensive technical assistance for nations in SSA, cultural exchanges, and student scholarships. Nonetheless, the relations raise complicated issues around trade where China is flooding markets in SSA with inferior goods, acquisition of resources, Chinese mining companies causing environmental destruction in many countries in SSA, and the Chinese government’s debt trapping of many sub-Saharan African nations. Many suspect that China is surreptitiously forging a relationship with SSA that may help it assert its “trusteeship” over sub-Saharan Africa’s political, economic, and development processes. The paper is developed within these broader contexts to examine the paradoxes and contradictions of the China-sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) relations and their potential impacts on education policy and practice in the region. The paper focuses on SSA, a region that constitutes forty-eight of the fifty-four countries of the African continent. This sociohistorical paper is part of my ongoing study to examine the impacts of external forces’ economic and political relations on education policy and practice in the SSA and the potential of the relations to destabilize the epistemological processes of sub-Saharan African societies.

Keywords: education policy, sub-Saharan Africa, China-Africa relations, education and development, human capital, human rights and education

Introduction

Sub-Saharan African nations and China have forged relations that demonstrate both optimism and pessimism. The economic ties between the two regions have grown by leaps and bounds. However, the relationship is defined by lending, borrowing, and debt trapping. This paper examines the paradoxes and contradictions of China-sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) relations and their potential impacts on education policy and practice in SSA. I situate my discussion within the “trusteeship” framework and conceptualize trusteeship as a colonial intervention strategy, power relations, and politico-economic practices that draw from the doctrine that “men could be perfected by the deliberate intervention of their fellow men” (Bain, 2003, p. 181). I organize the paper in three parts: an examination of the paradoxes in China-SSA relations; the contradictions of China-SSA relations; and a discussion of the potential impacts of China-SSA relations on education policy and practice. The paper is a sociohistorical analysis that uses the review of literature, analysis of online documents, newspaper publications from SSA, anecdotal reports, and lore as the methodological approach. The paper is part of my ongoing study to examine the impacts of external forces’ economic and political relations on education policy and practice in SSA, and the potential of the relations to destabilize the epistemological processes of sub-Saharan African societies (Quist, 2003; Stambach & Cappy, 2012).

China’s earlier relations with Africa, which date to some millennia past, were based on trade and exchange of goods and little (if any) diplomatic and geopolitical processes (Farooq et al., 2019; Hevron & Crowley, 2019). However, in the 1950s, China forged strong relations and robust engagements with SSA based on China’s “South-South cooperation”. China expressed its desire to position itself as a significant role player in global geopolitics after the end of the Cold War. African nations also expressed their desire to explore an alternative to Western imperialistic relationships and therefore saw the “China model” as an alternative to American neoliberalism (Asante, 2018; Basu & Janiec, 2021; Farooq et al., 2019). In 2006 China outlined the four pillars that encompass its relationship with African countries: peaceful coexistence; mutual economic benefits; tightening cooperation in the international area; and support for African countries’ development (Plotka, 2020).

Paradoxical relationship

China-Africa relations are full of paradoxes in the areas of economic and political benefits. In the 1950s China began to offer modest foreign aid, promote little trade, and provide little to no direct investment in Africa (Shinn & Eisenman, 2012). In the 1960s, China offered soft loans to newly independent nations with no conditions. In the 1970s, China began to embark on infrastructural development in SSA to demonstrate its interests in the region (Debrah & Asante, 2019; Farooq et al., 2019). China also registered its presence in the region with a focus on high level visits, cultural exchanges, student scholarships, and less expensive technical assistance. However, beginning in 1990, China began to register its strong presence in Africa, which was motivated by its growing need for raw materials. Therefore, China increased its trade, aid, and direct investment with SSA as a bargaining chip to assert its benign trusteeship and control in SSA. Gadzala (2015) and Shinn and Eisenman (2012) note that as China’s state-directed assistance and commerce grew, so did the presence of state-run firms in African

countries, building bridges, dams, roads, and railroads. In the 1990s, China bankrolled over 800 projects throughout Africa to offer alternatives to North-South trade and investment patterns that dominated global trade since the colonial era (Asante, 2018). China systematically increased its financial support for Africa from 2000 to 2020 peaking at around 12% of Africa’s private and public external debt. Asante (2018) points out that the trade relations between China and Africa have expanded the middle class in both regions, these aid initiatives emerged with China using similar props of the colonial and imperial powers to assert some form of trusteeship in the sub-Saharan African nations.

China is interested in investing in Africa for a couple of reasons: to gain access to Africa’s resources; gain access to (and possibly monopolize) the African market; secure investment opportunities; forge political allies with Africans to consolidate symbolic “empires”; and to consolidate the relationship with Africa as part of China’s trans-imperial project on the African continent. As it pertains to SSA, China views its “going global” as including promoting trade and investment (either directly or through infrastructural development), increasing demand for raw materials, and the ability to produce affordable consumer goods and capital equipment in the region (Asante, 2018; Shinn & Eisenmann, 2012).

The 2022 Economist Business Report estimates that about 10,000 Chinese firms are active in Africa. Many of these 10,000 Chinese firms in Africa have profit margins of between 20 percent and 90 percent. Annual flows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from China rose from just \$75 million in 2003 to \$4.2 billion in 2020. The value of trade between China and Africa has risen from \$10 billion in 2000 to a record \$254 billion in 2021—more than four times that between America and Africa. Chinese firms lobby to win around half of all African construction contracts that are tendered to foreign firms (see *The Economist*, 2022). The Economist argues that it is not because Chinese firms are competitive that they are successful in winning contracts. It is because, for the most part, they have mastered how to play the game. Many of these Chinese firms are corrupt and use corrupt means to “grease the palms” of African politicians.

This economic progress notwithstanding, some of the Chinese investments in SSA are only great in the short term but pose economic challenges in the region in the long term. China’s trade relationship through competitive markets in SSA is killing local manufacturing companies. Research shows that Chinese companies are undermining locally manufactured goods (Atobrah et al., 2021; Nnanna, 2015; *The Economist*, 2022). The challenge for sub-Saharan African governments is how to create a balance where Chinese companies build competitive markets that do not also kill local manufacturing companies. Many Africans view the arrival of Chinese firms as another episode in the history of external trusteeship, organized infantilism of the masses, and internalized oppression of African corrupt politicians. There are accounts of Chinese infrastructural investments and mining activities creating serious environmental degradations in rural communities in Zimbabwe, Ghana, Zambia, and Botswana and becoming a detriment to the livelihoods of many local communities (Beyongo, 2017; Hevron & Crowley, 2019; *The Economist*, 2022). Tighter regulation of pollution in China is one of the reasons why some Chinese firms move to Africa.

China poses as a reliable lender that provides the opportunity for governments in SSA to borrow. However, its unbridled lending to SSA governments has become a debt trap for African societies so China can advance its geopolitical interests. After baiting

sub-Saharan African nations to do more borrowing, China is now applying similar conditionalities used by Western imperial forces, to retrieve the debts owed by sub-Saharan African nations.

China's agenda in SSA is to push out other competitors and monopolize the region's market and investment. It works within its "go global" framework and overseas investment strategies through Chinese firms in SSA to phase out all competitors (The Economist, 2022). The goal is to counter neoliberalism and free market ideologies of the Global North. Chinese firms have become scavengers and doling out huge sums of money to buy out foreign companies that are already operating in SSA with the goal to monopolize the markets and once they purchase these companies, implementing practices that are detrimental to local Africans that work in the companies. Local communities experience the brunt of Chinese activities and think Chinese firms are more ruthless than Western ones (The Economist, 2022).

Sub-Saharan African nations cannot count on China on issues of transparency as Chinese investments have exacerbated corrupt practices in the region. Chinese investors in SSA are notorious lobbyists who incentivize African leaders and politicians by doling out bribes to secure tender for infrastructural projects. The activities of Chinese firms have become another opportunity for African elites and political operatives to collude with extractive firms to exploit their nations' immense resources. Reports of Chinese firms reaching only the elite echelons of African societies abound (The Economist, 2022).

Politically, China supported colonized African nations and liberation movements striving to attain political independence. At the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia, representatives of most African nations and independent Asian countries resolved to promote economic and cultural cooperation among themselves and reduce dependence on the West (Rugumamu, 2014). China took advantage of the Cold War and the nonaligned position taken by the post-independent African states, to court them. Between the 1960s and 1980s China strengthened its partnership with African nations. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) witnessed rapid development of global market economy, partial decline of the United States, and shifts in the bipolar power struggle between the East and West to a more multi-polarity mode where so many powers emerged in the global governance scene.

As a one-party state, China has tried to navigate the complexities of Africa's multiparty democracies through the development of exchanges with African political parties, parliamentary delegations, cadres, and cultural and educational groups and shifted its political focus from supporting wars of national liberation in the 1950s to post-1978 economic reform efforts (Shinn & Eisenman, 2012). From 2000, a wide range of China-Africa political and economic interaction has occurred under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) framework. China has made the political calculation to deal with the different spectrums of political ideologies in Africa—monarchies, conservative governments, right-leaning independent African countries, and various types of African governments to advance China's interests (Shinn & Eisenman, 2012). Thus, politically, China is everything to every government in SSA and insists on political neutrality to ensure its cordial relations with any government in control of the levers of state power in SSA. This political calculation is unpredictable and presents a paradox for governments in SSA. African nations at least know their dealings with the colonial West because they have been dealing with them for many years and at least in recent years

Western nations have genuinely embodied humanitarian values and human rights in their relationship. Many express the sentiment that “the devil you know is better than the devil you don’t know”. China’s noninterference approach and its apathy toward human rights means that it can continue to provide support for governments that disenfranchise a section of its citizens and trample on the human rights of specific groups (Plotka, 2020; Hevron & Crowley, 2019).

Contradictory relationship

China has embarked on massive investments in infrastructural development in SSA totaling over \$200 billion to boost the economic fortunes of the region and to present an alternative to the formerly colonial and imperial powers of the Global North. On top of China’s infrastructural development is the 2700 km East African railway line that includes Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan railway line that is currently in construction in phases. Another major project is the 1315 km Kano-Lagos railway line in Nigeria, and the 1302 km Bengue railway line in Angola, which will bring to a total of 4000 km railway in Angola constructed by China (Hevron & Crowley, 2019; Farooq et al., 2019). These massive investments in infrastructural development are not so much because China wants the region to develop. They are part of China’s “One Belt, One Road in Africa” policy to provide financial gains, access to the raw material needed, and open African markets for China to dump its goods (see Atobrah et al., 2021; Farooq et al., 2019). China’s agenda for its “One Belt, One Road in Africa”, is to connect China to Africa to the Suez Canal for easy passage of raw materials from the northern parts of Africa and position itself for global dominance and the geopolitics of the horn of Africa (Farooq et al., 2019).

China’s contributions to SSA include a cautionary tale about its surreptitious economic “imperialism” that it is going to unleash on sub-Saharan African nations from this debt trapping (Asante, 2018; Basu & Janiec, 2021; Gadzala, 2015; Obeng-Odoom, 2024). Data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank show that about 12 percent of the debt burden on Africa is owed to Chinese lenders and much of the debt is owed by sub-Saharan African nations. As of the close of 2021, China was Africa’s biggest bilateral lender, holding over \$73 billion of Africa’s debt and around \$9 billion in private debt. This massive borrowing by sub-Saharan African governments from China and other nations has put them in debt distress or at high risk of debt distress. Africa’s massive debt to China and the ensuing negotiations, has put China in a position where it could employ the same old “trusteeship” interventions that the United States and its European allies and entities employ to exploit sub-Saharan African nations of their resources.

Potential impacts of Africa-China relations on education policy and practice

Students of history and economics know that China-Africa relations come with some potential implications for education policy and practice. First, is the reality that external powers that encroached on African territories enforced their education, cultural values, and ways of socializing their younger generations in African societies, which restructured the social arrangements in African societies and destabilized their identities (Blakemore, 1975; Rodney, 1988). The approaches, processes, and props being used by

Chinese entities in SSA are similar in form to those used by the external forces that preceded them. Muslim Arabs engaged with African societies to promote trade relations and over time acquired African territories, asserted their trusteeship, and established Koranic schools to indoctrinate and Islamize the younger generation of Africans. Similarly, Europeans initially came to trade and over time, embarked on explorations, sent European Christian missionaries to African territories, colonized African territories, and then used Western forms of Christian and colonial education to “proselytize” the younger generations of Africans to embrace European/Christian values. After World War I, American philanthropic entities scouted SSA to promote “capitalist doctrine” in the form of human resource development and over time acquired “symbolic territories” and pushed “adapted” and “industrial” education on Black Africans in SSA. This philanthropic support for education became a blueprint for post-World War II Western nations to use their Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to steer the direction of education policy and practice in SSA.

Secondly, external forces created “crisis” as an industry in the development discourse and used “crisis” in SSA as a rationale and justification to intervene in Africa’s development agenda (Barrios, 2017; Mfum-Mensah, 2020). Crisis, whether real or perceived, usually calls for reforms. We witnessed this in the way Western entities focused on the education sector in SSA and implemented universal primary education campaigns in the 1940s into the 1980s culminating in the 1990 Jomtien World Education Conference and subsequent planetary initiatives, which all focused on education in SSA. China’s debt trapping and Africa’s debt distress is a crisis that China could exploit and use as a rationale to extend its trusteeship in all sectors of SSA’s socioeconomic processes including human capital and human resource development.

Thirdly, given that China’s numerous infrastructural activities and investments are contributing to the environmental degradation in SSA, China could incorporate conditionality on education programs supported through Chinese ODA, to ensure that such programs (if they incorporate environmental stewardship and sustainability) do not undermine China’s interests.

Finally, we should point out that neoliberal agendas and free market ideologies introduced by Western allies in sub-Saharan Africa’s education sector in the 1980s focused on privatization, choice, decentralization, and other democratic principles in school organization and classroom practices. China can broaden its monopolistic approach, lack of transparency, and lack of human rights in the education sector by pushing policy makers to dismantle or undermine those neoliberal ideologies and practices, incorporate authoritarian practices, and censure human rights in school organizations and classroom processes.

Conclusion

China’s South-South cooperation with SSA, which began in the 1950s, is surreptitiously treading toward trusteeship in SSA. China is driven by its ambition to acquire a physical and symbolical empire in SSA to exploit new sources of (raw) material, consolidate trade, commerce, and mercantilism, and accumulate wealth at the expense of targeted African societies. The relationship between China and sub-Saharan African nations has had mutual benefits to the two regions. As China continues to become a formidable competitor on the global geopolitics, it will continue to do everything within its “go global” agenda to win sub-Saharan African nations to maintain

the strong relationship it has already forged. China’s relations with SSA are strategic with economic, political, and cultural ramifications.

In the education sector, China could use its debt trapping as a rationale to intervene in how the region prepares its human capital. Not only that, but it could also use the opportunity of the relationship to impose its cultural values, in the education systems in SSA. As part of its cultural transfer, China can strengthen Chinese studies programs and the learning of Chinese as in SSA by funding programs of such nature. Already, many Africans students have turned toward China for higher education.

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Coenraad Jurgens

Injuries in Mechanical Technology Workshops at South African Public Schools

Abstract

Ensuring the safety of learners is paramount in schools, particularly in workshops where hands-on learning takes place. Mechanical Technology teachers bear the responsibility for ensuring learners' safe participation in activities, guided by specific safety management elements that dictate their duty of care and legal obligations. This paper presents findings from a comprehensive investigation conducted in 220 technical schools across South Africa, offering Mechanical Technology as a subject. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the investigation aimed to assess the frequency, severity, and management of accidents and injuries occurring in these workshops, while also examining the underlying reasons for such incidents. Results indicated that a significant number of accidents were attributed to unsafe behavior, including failure to wear or correctly use personal protective equipment. Furthermore, the study revealed a notable lack of awareness among participating teachers regarding injury reporting procedures and record-keeping practices. In response to these findings, it is recommended that Mechanical Technology teachers enhance their understanding of their legal obligations and responsibilities concerning learner safety. This entails strict adherence to safety policies and regulations to ensure a secure environment for all learners involved in workshop activities. Moreover, school governing bodies are urged to fulfill their legal mandate by developing and implementing effective safety policies for workshop environments. Such policies serve as crucial tools in reducing and preventing injuries, thereby mitigating legal liabilities for the department, teachers, and schools alike.

Keywords: safe school environment, legislation, accidents and incidents, injuries

Introduction and problem statement

Mechanical Technology is a subject taught during the Senior and Further Education and Training (FET) phase, involving substantial practical work conducted in workshops. The Mechanical Technology workshop encompasses three disciplines: fitting and machine work, automotive, and welding and metal work (DBE, 2014, p. 9). These areas pose significant safety risks due to the use of specialised machinery and tools. Summan et al. (2020) highlight the extensive use of machinery and tools in technical workshops, which poses dangers to both teachers and learners. According to them, the nature of workshop activities exposes learners to potential accidents and injuries. Learners have the legal right to receive quality education in a safe school environment, as outlined in Article 24(a) of the constitution (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2008, p. 156). Rutherford (2009, p. 25) clarifies that a "harmful" environment refers to places where learners face risks. To address this, technical schools and workshops are legally required to prioritise learner

safety and eliminate potential risks. School workshops must adhere to stringent safety measures to safeguard the well-being of learners. Despite these precautions, accidents persist, suggesting a failure to properly implement or adhere to these measures (Smit, 2022, p. 1). Ensuring a safe environment conducive to effective teaching and learning is one of the teacher's foremost duties of care (Oosthuizen & Rossouw, 2008, p. 105). Therefore, Mechanical Technology teachers must understand their legal obligations and responsibilities in ensuring the safety of learners within these workshop settings.

State of the art

Safe school environment and equipment vs academic progress

Ensuring a safe school environment, including secure equipment and facilities, is crucial for effective teaching and learning. Squelch (2001, p. 137) emphasises the importance of schools being safe places for both learners and teachers. Squelch (Ibid.) defines a safe school environment as one that is shielded from potential dangers, allowing teachers to carry out their duties safely and learners to engage in learning without risk. Teachers need to be able to conduct their lessons confidently in a secure environment, allowing learners to develop their potential. Machelm (2015, p. 28) highlights that learners who feel threatened or unsafe cannot fully engage academically, which can negatively impact their academic success and intellectual development. Clarke (2012, p. 207) stresses the necessity of using safe equipment and apparatus to ensure quality teaching and learning in workshops. Safe machinery not only facilitates effective teaching but also enables learners to reach their intellectual potential. Clarke (Ibid.) further suggests that safe equipment contributes to a secure workshop environment, which in turn promotes academic progress. A secure school infrastructure fosters better academic outcomes by allowing learners to participate confidently in school activities without fear of injury. Every learner requires a sense of security, as the absence of it can directly impact their learning process.

Legislation

Legislation mandates the provision of a safe school environment. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996), under Articles 5(5) and 6(2), assigns the responsibility of establishing the safety policy of the school, including the workshop, to the school governing body. De Wet (2016, p. 168) elucidates that governing bodies at the school level are entrusted with specific powers, particularly those related to the safety policies and programs and the operation of the facilities of the respective schools. This includes the creation of a safe workshop environment. De Wet (Ibid.) further suggests that governing bodies, following a thorough examination of national legislative frameworks, can develop school policies to oversee and regulate learner safety.

In line with this, Joubert and Prinsloo (2008, p. 156) emphasise that governing bodies of schools with workshops are obligated to implement effective safety programs and policies under the regulations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (RSA, 1993). Section 8(2) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (Ibid.) also mandates this responsibility for them. According to sub-regulations 2(1)(2)(2a-g) and (3-7) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (Ibid.), the education department and schools are obligated to educate workshop teachers and learners on the proper use, maintenance, and limitations of safety equipment. They must also ensure that

teachers and learners use the provided safety equipment when performing tasks for which it is intended. This implies that technology workshops must adhere to the health and safety standards and measures outlined in this Act. Summan et al. (2020) suggest that the risk of accidents or injuries in workshops and laboratories can increase if comprehensive safety protocols and policies are lacking, outdated, or not properly implemented. They attribute this situation to the failure of management to create, update, or fully implement the necessary protocols or policies. Considering this, learners attending school workshops have the right to receive instruction in a safe and secure environment, free from harm or disadvantage.

Accidents and incidents

Learners are at risk of accidents and incidents while participating in workshop activities. According to the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (RSA, 1993) an accident is an unplanned event caused by unsafe behaviour or conditions that may result in injury. An injury is considered a consequence of an accident, although accidents can occur without causing harm to anyone.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (Ibid.) defines an incident as an undesirable event that, under slightly different circumstances, could have caused damage to property, loss of production, or harm to personnel, or that did result in such consequences. Incidents encompass accidents as well as near misses, also known as “near-accidents”.

Injuries in South African school workshops

Smit (2022, p. 6) highlights the International Labour Organisation’s estimation that around 2.3 million workers succumb to occupational diseases and accidents annually, with approximately 160 million workers globally experiencing non-fatal accidents in their workplaces. While these statistics may not directly apply to South African schools’ workshops, they still underscore the inherent risks in such environments and the need for adequate protection measures.

Summan et al. (2020) note that school workshops share similarities with industrial settings, where power equipment is prevalent. The layout and equipment arrangement in school workshops are often modeled after industrial workshops. This suggests that the safety risks observed in industrial workplaces could also manifest in school workshops. Additionally, Smit (2022, p. 5) highlights the lack of comprehensive incident records kept by the national and provincial education departments, further emphasising the need for improved safety measures and monitoring in school workshops.

A review of the literature revealed a dearth of research specifically focused on learner safety in Mechanical Technology workshops, both in South Africa and internationally. Given the absence of official statistics on injuries in South African school workshops falling under national basic education, previous research findings were consulted to ascertain the occurrence of injuries in public school workshops in South Africa. These studies indicated that a significant number of injuries occur annually in public school workshops, with many schools reporting more than 10 injuries per year. However, the severity of these injuries was not delineated in the available data. Nonetheless, these findings provide compelling evidence that injuries are indeed prevalent in South African school workshops.

Research aim, method and design

Research aim

One of the study's objectives was to assess the type and frequency of injuries caused by fixed machinery in Mechanical Technology workshops at schools.

Research method

For the quantitative research, a structured electronic questionnaire was developed based on themes identified in the literature study. The quantitative study was supplemented with a phenomenological study, during which individual semi-structured interviews served as the data collection method. The questions in the interview schedule were formulated based on the conceptual and theoretical framework.

Population and regional sampling

The target population for the quantitative investigation comprised teachers from technical schools in South Africa who teach Mechanical Technology (N=220). For the qualitative investigation, a selective sample was drawn from experienced Mechanical Technology teachers possessing significant skills and expertise. Individual interviews were conducted with a subset of these participants (N=8).

Ethical aspects

The researcher obtained ethical approval from the university's ethics committee, which oversaw and guided the research process. All ethical guidelines mandated by the ethics committee were strictly adhered to.

Data analysis

Appropriate statistical techniques were selected for analysing and processing the quantitative data, with collaboration from the statistical consultancy service at the relevant university. The qualitative interviews were recorded electronically, and after transcription and analysis by the researcher, various groups, categories, sub-themes, and themes were identified.

Findings

Injuries

The study aimed to determine if learners were injured in the Mechanical workshops. Most respondents (68.13%) reported 1-5 injuries occurring during their teaching careers. 18.13% of respondents reported 6-10 injuries, while only 1.88% indicated 11 or more injuries. Additionally, 11.88% of respondents reported no injuries ever occurring in their workshops.

In the quantitative investigation, only 28.13% of the respondents reported accidents and injuries, while 71.88% indicated that they did not report such incidents. With a follow-up question about whether injuries occurred but were not reported, 82.28% of the respondents stated that they were aware of incidents in workshops that went unreported.

Fixed machinery

The fixed machinery that resulted in the highest number of injuries includes the lathe, amaryl grinder, drilling machine, alternating current welding machine, and gas welding. Among these, 16.98% of learners sustained minor injuries while operating the lathe. Minor injuries typically involve minor scrapes, cuts, and burns that can be treated by the teacher. For injuries sustained at the lathe, 29.56% were classified as more serious, requiring treatment by a qualified individual such as a doctor for stitches, broken bones, etc., while 2.52% of learners suffered very serious injuries, which may involve limb amputation or even death. Additionally, 31.25% of learners were treated for minor injuries caused by the amaryl grinder, while 21.25% suffered more serious injuries. 50% of minor injuries were caused by the AC welding machine, while 38.36% of minor injuries were caused by gas welding.

Portable power tool

The portable power tool machinery that caused the most injuries included the angle cutter, sander, and drill. Among these, 41.25% of learners suffered minor injuries while using the angle cutter. Minor injuries typically involve minor scrapes, cuts, and burns, which can be treated by the teacher. Additionally, 15.63% of injuries caused by the angle cutter were classified as more serious, requiring treatment by a qualified individual such as a doctor for stitches, broken bones, etc. Moreover, 14.47% of learners sustained minor injuries caused using the sander, while 13.84% experienced minor injuries from using the drill. Only 1.88% of learners were involved in a very serious incident where injuries were sustained with portable power tools, which could include limb amputation or even death.

According to worldwide statistics cited in the literature study (Adams, Mitchell & Nortier, 2012, p. 3), portable power tools are responsible for many serious, and even fatal, accidents. The information from respondents indicates that portable power tools are indeed hazardous. Therefore, it is crucial to exercise great care to ensure that learners can use such machinery safely during their teaching sessions, minimising the risk of injury.

Hand tools

The hand tools that caused the most injuries were chopping tools, cutting tools, followed by setting tools. Among these, 52.50% of learners suffered minor injuries with chopping tools, while 33.96% experienced minor injuries with cutting tools. Minor injuries typically involve minor scrapes, cuts, and burns that can be treated by the teacher. Additionally, 10.63% of injuries caused by chopping tools and 10.06% caused by cutting tools were classified as serious injuries, requiring treatment by a qualified individual such as a doctor for stitches, broken bones, etc. Fortunately, no learners suffered very serious injuries, which could involve limb amputation or even death.

Meyer and Van der Westhuizen (2016, p. 74) emphasise that the improper use of hand tools is extremely dangerous and can result in serious injuries. Therefore, learners must be taught good workshop practices to ensure they can safely practice their skills.

Cause of incidents

Most respondents (47.5%) cited failure to follow correct safety measures as the primary cause of most incidents. Other reasons included:

- unsafe acts (44.65%);

- use of non-protective equipment (47.5%);
- ignorance (35%);
- lack of supervision (6.92%);
- uncertainty about the cause (1.89%).

Teachers must take note of these accident causes. By implementing effective safety measures, they can prevent similar incidents and create a safe work environment conducive to effective practical development for learners.

Body parts injured

The body part most frequently injured among learners was the fingers (91.82%), followed by facial injuries (63.92%), and arm and hand injuries (61.01%). In contrast, leg and foot injuries accounted for 13.92%, while chest and stomach injuries were the least common (8.86%).

According to Coleman, Straker and Ciccarelli (2009, p. 267), the implications of these injuries can negatively impact the learning ability of learners. Additionally, the risk of accidents and injuries in work centers can be high if there is a climate of insecurity in the school environment.

Reporting of injuries and record keeping of workshop accidents

Only 25% of the respondents reported accidents and injuries, indicating a concerning lack of reporting, with 71.88% of incidents going unreported. One possible explanation for this low reporting rate is that many workshop teachers may overlook minor injuries when it comes to reporting them. Six respondents reported very serious injuries involving machine tools, while four respondents reported very serious injuries involving portable hand tools.

Register of record keeping

Only 41.88% of respondents indicate the availability of a register for record-keeping. This reporting raises concerns as Section 20(1)-(4) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (RSA, 1993) mandates that the school's health and safety committee must maintain records of accidents and injuries in the school workshops. Regulation 8(1) of the General Administrative Regulations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993 (Ibid.) further stipulates that a record of all accidents and injuries requiring medical treatment must be retained for a minimum of 3 years.

Reasons for not reporting accidents

A significant majority of respondents (88.61%) cited fear of legal implications as the primary reason for not reporting accidents and injuries. Additionally, 60.13% expressed concerns about facing disciplinary action if injuries were reported, leading them to prefer concealing incidents. Other reasons for not reporting included the burden of administrative processes (55.7%) and fear of tarnishing the school's reputation (55.06%). Overall, most respondents (55.7%) agreed that a combination of these factors contributes to the underreporting of accidents and injuries.

The qualitative investigation revealed that participants were willing to report injuries but faced uncertainty regarding the type of injury to report and the reporting procedure. Many expressed a lack of time to report every minor injury. Over half of the respondents

(56.96%) cited the complex administrative processes surrounding reporting as a barrier to reporting all injuries.

Interestingly, schools with designated individuals or locations for first aid and reporting, such as administration offices or technical secretaries, reported all injuries. In contrast, schools where staff had to handle and report injuries themselves often only treated the injury without reporting it. This suggests that busy educational schedules may prevent staff from reporting all injuries, especially minor ones.

De minimis non curat lex

There is widespread misunderstanding regarding the principle of *de minimis non curat lex*, which states that the law does not concern itself with trifles. This principle does not grant teachers the right to dismiss or minimise minor injuries, nor does it absolve them from reporting such incidents. However, it should provide reassurance, as teachers are not held liable or blamed for minor injuries that fall within this principle.

Minor injuries, such as minor scrapes, cuts, and burns commonly occurring in workshops, are those that can be addressed by the teacher on-site. In the quantitative study, 5.8% of respondents reported learners sustaining minor injuries with specific fixed machinery, while 14.42% reported minor injuries with specific portable power tools. Additionally, 24.32% of respondents reported learners suffering minor injuries with certain hand tools.

Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of ensuring learner safety in Mechanical Technology workshops within South African schools. Despite the legal and ethical obligations to maintain safe learning environments, accidents and injuries persist, posing risks to both learners and teachers. The prevalence of injuries, particularly those caused by fixed machinery, portable power tools, and hand tools, highlights the urgent need for improved safety measures and stricter adherence to existing protocols. The inadequate reporting and record-keeping of workshop accidents further compound these safety concerns, with most incidents going unreported due to various factors such as fear of legal repercussions and cumbersome administrative processes. This underreporting perpetuates a cycle of risk and hinders efforts to address safety issues effectively.

It is evident that comprehensive safety policies and procedures, aligned with legislative requirements, must be implemented and enforced at both the school and departmental levels. This includes providing adequate training on safety practices and ensuring access to first aid facilities and reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, the misconceptions surrounding the principle of *de minimis non curat lex* must be addressed to foster a culture of accountability and transparency regarding all workshop-related incidents, regardless of their perceived severity. Ultimately, prioritising learner safety in Mechanical Technology workshops is not only a legal and ethical imperative but also essential for creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing proactive safety measures, schools can mitigate risks and safeguard the well-being of all workshop participants.

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Amy Sarah Padayachee

A Silent Revolution is Unfolding and the Weapon is Collaborative Leadership

Abstract

The preponderance of literature associated with school violence illuminates the severity of its manifestation in schools both nationally and internationally. The impact of school violence on students' physical and emotional well-being cannot be understated as this is commensurate with student academic achievement. The South African Government's National Development Plan 2030 identifies the improvement of the quality of public services as critical to achieving transformation. It is germane to then consider how an education system entrenched in a long-standing history of violence can be adopted in an agenda of transformation. In his 2023 State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa stated: "Schools must be safe and allow for effective learning and teaching". Behind this pronouncement, is a silent revolution unfolding. South African schools, now nearly three decades into democracy, are focusing on collaborative leadership to contribute meaningfully to the redress of violence in school environments and move toward trauma-informed practices. A study comprising 121 schools in South Africa reveals that school management teams are employing collaborative leadership to address such behaviours. Underpinned by the Collaborative Leadership Theory, this mixed methods research design investigates how collaborative leadership is employed by educational practitioners to address school violence in 21st century classrooms. The results of this study have the potential to offer an approach towards addressing school violence in South African schools, despite the complexities of an education system stemming from a violent past which remains evident in South African classrooms today.

Keywords: collaboration, collaborative leadership, leadership, management, transformation, violence

Introduction

The paradigm shift in educational management involving the devolution of the management of South African schools has caused many changes in South Africa's educational landscape, with school violence increasingly becoming a contentious issue for education practitioners and policymakers alike. According to Tangwe (2022), in the sub-Saharan African context, respect for human rights, which shows an inclusive environment void of violence, is more often the exception than the rule. Mkancu (2019) describes schools as a microcosm of the heteronormative and patriarchal society in which they exist. Studies and media reports portraying violent and indiscipline incidents in South African schools reveal that violence is increasing at an alarming rate and requires urgent attention (Burton & Leoschut, 2013), however, school violence is not peculiar to

the South African school context. As concerning as the rate of escalation, is the impact of violence on children. Literature suggests that around 10-20% of children globally experience mental health problems and depression, one of the leading causes of illness and disability among children (Chen, Pan & Wang, 2021). There is a growing recognition that although the capacity for aggression is innate and universal, aggressive behavior typically occurs in response to threats that the self perceives in relation to internal and/or external interpersonal experiences (Cohen, 2021).

School, in particular, serves as a primary context for social-emotional and behavioral adjustment, and adolescents spend an increasing amount of time in school-related activities (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Regrettably, indiscipline in South African schools stems from more significant societal issues unaccounted for by legislation and policy frameworks. Moreover, violence is such a prevalent issue in South Africa that Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) contend that crime and violence in South Africa are a way of life, and schools are not immune to the violence from the community. The post-1996 dispensation should have brought reform and overall improvement in all spheres of the education sector. However, the reality is that South African schools are crippled by school violence now more than ever.

A study by Padayachee and Gcelu (2019) revealed that school management teams (SMTs) employ collaborative leadership strategies to manage school violence in secondary schools. Collaborative strategies refer to established and implemented processes by all school stakeholders. Furthermore, it is essential to note that stakeholders involved in some form of collaboration must have a degree of autonomy rather than a generalised merging of stakeholders' efforts. Despite the plethora of information surrounding school violence, there still exists flaws, loopholes, and gaps in the literature that lead to considering how these highly commended strategies can be used to gain maximum effectiveness. It is argued that the defects in school management are catalysts for current issues pertaining to school violence. The focus of this study is the discourse around the management of school violence by employing collaborative leadership strategies.

Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in the Collaborative Leadership Theory. The theory was first introduced in the United States by Kurt Lewin (1947) where he applied the cooperative system in a scientific method on nutrition. According to Miller and Miller (2007), researchers Chrislip and Larson (1994) explored the principles of collaborative leadership using observation-based studies and found many benefits of collaborative leadership in organizations such as schools. Collaborative leadership as the theoretical framework for this study, exemplifies characteristics that are consistent with school management and leadership. Research shows that functional schools effectively employ collaborative leadership, whereby educators and managers work collaboratively with each other, and in teams. It is upon this premise that collaborative leadership served as the foundation of this study. Chrislip and Larson (1994) researched the principles most used and applied by collaborative leaders. Their findings revealed that collaborative leaders were decidedly visionary, but this vision focused on how people can work together constructively, rather than about a particular vision or solution for a specific issue (Miller & Miller, 2007).

Method

A mixed method approach was chosen to capture the widest range of effects of collaboration efforts, (the so what of reform efforts together with a range of participants' perspectives of how and why various reforms were attempted) (Stringfield & Yakimowski-Srebniak, 2005). The researcher chose to use an explanatory sequential design since the design is deeply rooted in the pragmatic paradigm and that the mixed methods research approach was compatible with pragmatism. The sampling frame included all SMT members from 121 secondary schools, amounting to 605 SMT members. The researcher used 20% of the sample frame to calculate the number of schools in the sample size. The sample size comprised 24 secondary schools in a South African education district, from which four participants per school were selected, amounting to 96 participants. Participants selected included the principal, one deputy principal and two departmental heads per school. These participants were selected utilising simple random sampling. The data collected from the questionnaires in the quantitative strand were presented using descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviation, and percentages. The second strand of the data collection procedure involved the use of a qualitative approach. In the second phase, qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to provide 'thick descriptions' of the research questions and to provide further explanations of the results that were obtained in the first phase, in greater detail.

Results

The statistics reveal that 50.6% of participants *strongly agreed* whilst 41.4% *agreed* that as SMT members, discipline was a collaborative effort rather than a delegated duty. The cumulative total of responses in agreement to this question was 92%. Despite agreement from such a large percentage of participants, 6.9% of participants chose the *disagree* option whilst an outlier was found in the *strongly disagree* option. According to Dhlamini (2016), the Department of Education (DoE) has put in place the vision through the National Development Plan and the Department of Basic Education (DBE)'s Action Plan 2014 which has reiterated the government's position declaring education a societal issue. The DBE has called for partnerships with the community to address challenges facing education in the country (Department of Basic Education, 2012). If SMT members do not take into account that discipline and school violence need to be addressed collaboratively, the problem is unlikely to be lessened when approached as a delegated task.

Instead of one or two people making decisions alone, teams make decisions by consensus after all participants have voiced their opinions and support for the change. Shared leadership requires an operational structure that allows more people to lead the thinking of the school and to participate in making decisions at all levels. It is therefore necessary that school management teams encourage a working relationship between more stakeholders. Despite the many benefits that collaboration can have on the management of school violence, the statistics for this question reveal that 13.8% of participants *disagreed* whilst 2.3% *strongly disagreed* that such relationships existed. The 2.3% strong disagreement appeared as outliers in the data set. However, it is worth noting that a total of 83.9% of participants were in agreement that such relationships were displayed, and involved in shared thinking, shared planning and shared creation of integrated instruction.

Don't wait for the government to change things, form partnerships to address issues such as school violence

Participants lamented the government's lack of support in managing school violence. Participants also stated there were many ways to incorporate assistance from external stakeholders. They further pointed out that aid for school violence management was available, but school management teams must be willing to accept the assistance. One participant, a deputy principal, spoke of the collaboration, saying:

Partners for Possibility is an organisation that SMTs in our area work with, and it is phenomenal. It has nothing to do with the education department whatsoever. It's actually just a mindset shift in the teachers and principals, and bringing in new ways of learning, inviting other NGOs to help the kids and impact the kids' lives. The SMTs are trained as teachers, and now they are playing a full-on management role, and if you look at that scenario, it isn't easy. The kids themselves come with massive social challenges. Teachers aren't equipped to deal with that. Bad leadership makes them an island on their own, or they form these clusters of the ones that are dynamic, and then they rub off on each other, and they actually work together, and I think that's powerful. And don't wait for the government to change it. So, I think for a lot of us, it's that support an outside person who is entirely unrelated to our scenarios who rubs off ideas and give us encouragement and put together a vision plan for our schools. It's like there are probably many other ways of curbing the problem of violence this but now we've got partners we can work with to actually obtain some of these dreams to work within the school. I really think it's built on the most unrelated relationships and cross the border of private business and government because they bring skills and bring corporate backing, and they bring outside people; so, it's like this bridge-building space between private and public.

The participant's response is indicative of successful collaboration as presented. The above excerpt shows that the school had an SMT geared toward finding solutions and thereby managing school violence. The inclusion of partnerships is intended to provide encouragement, support, and assistance in a vision for the school. The SMT of this school, therefore, demonstrated collaborative leadership qualities. According to Woods et al. (2006), sustainability should be a key indicator of the success of school collaboration. Their findings revealed several conditions, such as a clear strategy for the partnership, a robust organizational structure including sufficient staff to support the activity, and both flexibility and reflexivity to adapt to shifting circumstances and new developments.

Ill-discipline leading to school violence must be approached holistically and practically

Concerning the theme presented above, the participants stated that policies aside, school violence must be approached holistically and practically. As mentioned, the participants saw policies guiding discipline management as static documents. Hence, they alluded to adapting and personalising the disciplined approach. Another participant, a departmental head, stated:

I'm not sure whether its leadership, I'm not sure whether it's lack of support, I'm not sure whether it's a combination of both, I'm not sure if it's the perspective of the individual of what's important that contributes to this decline; but there is a steady decline of our schools. For discipline to be holistic and to be practical, each school must govern itself for itself. See, the department will give you a policy. You don't have to follow

it; make it personal. Run the school if it were your family what you would do to build the ethos, to build the culture of learning and teaching, aside from what another school is doing and get the support needed. There's no support in the hierarchy.

The key implication in the above response is that schools should approach discipline as a family effort, a collaborative one in which the needs of learners are addressed. The participant's view of how school violence should be approached is supported by the proponents of collaboration, Chrislip and Larson (1994), who state that collaborative leadership operates under the premise that, if you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic vision and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organisation or community.

Discussion

The role of SMT in policy management is as vital as the role of the principal in such matters. The study revealed that the principal, as the chief executive officer, can lead collaborative efforts to manage school violence through collaborative leadership skills. Van Wyk and Marumoloa (2012) opine that the functioning and roles of school management teams with regard to policy matters can, to a degree, also be derived from the core duties of the principal as and senior member of the SMT. Anderson-Butcher et al. (2008) assert that all that is required is one collaborative leader (who does not necessarily need to be the principal) to convene a collaborative team to focus on the improvement needs of the school. Participants also mentioned that the key to collaboration was shifting the thinking of managing school violence as an individual delegated duty to that of a partnership between stakeholders. SMT members provided practical examples of how leading by example helped to show stakeholders that the school belonged to them and that if they worked as partners, they would be able to achieve much.

The participants asserted that the SMT needed to display transparency in their management approach and collaboratively lead all stakeholders to form partnerships that can help manage school violence. DeWitt (2016) contends that collaborative leadership requires commitment and dedication and that collaborative leaders need to be transparent, honest, trustworthy, compassionate, and responsible to build concrete working relationships. In collaboratively leading stakeholders towards sustaining discipline, DeWitt (2016) suggests that collaborative leaders should allow others to have a voice in all decision making, allow for a shared vision, and foster partnerships for learning. Leithwood and Louis (2012) assert that collective leadership is the extent of influence that organizational members and stakeholders exert on decisions in their schools. Participants further stated that when the SMT leads by example, all stakeholders buy-in to the cultivation of a safe school environment. A positive school climate is achieved through a collaborative approach between learners, educators and members of the community working together and planning school improvements, identifying what works best, and what the current needs of the school are.

Participants mentioned a range of non-governmental organisations and external stakeholders who were willing to assist them as schools. However, what was made clear was that the SMT was supposed to be willing to ask for help. Participants further stated that collaboration was a powerful tool that could be used to manage school violence. They further maintained that regardless of the size of the group or team, collaboration

can be successful if all stakeholders within the group or team are willing to work towards a common goal.

In adopting a whole-school approach to school violence, participants asserted that a buy-in of all stakeholders was necessary. Participants mentioned that the only time that approaches to managing school violence were rendered successful was when stakeholders were willing to participate in its implementation, not merely having it present on paper where it remained useless. Participants from schools that had a buy-in of all stakeholders; the SMT, educators, learners, school governing body (SGB) and external stakeholders, observed that collaboration was at its optimum where every stakeholder was driven to protect the school against indiscipline. One participant even mentioned that, as a principal, he got the SMT to buy-in to managing school violence by getting level one teachers involved in the management of the school. This is demonstrative of collaborative leadership. The key finding was that participants asserted that the buy-in and collaboration could be influenced by the leader of the school through collaborative leadership practices. If a leader sees a threat to collaboration, he can apply his collaborative leadership skills and influence the situation by asking the 'owners' of the school, i.e., the community, to get on board and to elect those who are willing to serve in the best interest of the learners and the school at large. They stated that by the leader leading by example, the community sees the investment made by the leader. Participants who claimed that school violence was successfully managed at their schools stated that the SMT established networks with organizations that were helping other schools in the education district. They did not sit back and complain about the many things that the Department of Education (DoE) was not doing to assist them. Rather, they took it upon themselves to engage, form networks and work towards the creation of a safe environment for all. The findings also revealed that, if all members are accountable, collaboration can be heightened as all SMT members would contribute to the implementation of policy once they are held accountable and are responsible.

Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the collaborative leadership strategies used by school management teams to manage school violence and the findings of the study showed that such strategies were in existence and that through collaborative leadership, school management teams were influencing all stakeholders to collaborate for the good of the school. It is recommended that school management teams adopt a collaborative leadership approach in managing violence in schools, and further lead by example of what they want to achieve for their schools. In doing so, adopting a collaborative leadership approach will encourage stakeholders to approach all aspects of school management with stakeholders who have a vested interest in the school.

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Challenges Associated with Sustainable Research Capacity Building: A Comparative Study between BRICS Nations and African Countries

Abstract

In alignment with the theme of the conference *Education in Developing, Emerging, and Developed Countries: Different Worlds, Common Challenges*, this paper brings attention to the challenges associated with the implementation of sustainable research capacity building (SRCB) in the context of BRICS nations and African countries. Employing a comparative document analysis method to explore the unique contexts of developing nations, this research provides insights and recommendations to strengthen research capacity in academia, address shared challenges and promote national prosperity. The scholarly literature revealed that higher education institutions (HEIs) in developing countries have intensified their efforts in building the research capacity of their academics and institutions. Regardless of their commitment, HEIs face challenges such as gender inequalities, teaching workloads, doctoral program deficiencies, lack of multidisciplinary research approaches and funding constraints. Addressing the challenges will require improved funding for research training and research productivity. One of the main concerns is that instead of advancing knowledge and being producers thereof, most developing countries remain knowledge consumers. The findings revealed that developing the next generation of academics plays a critical role in the sustainability of an emerging country's research system.

Keywords: research training, capacity building, sustainable research capacity building, higher education, developing countries, BRICS nations

Introduction

HEIs and their academics are placed under immense pressure by the competitive nature of academia. According to Mafenya (2019), increasing investment and resources dedicated to research is critical since it is through research, that new innovative educational and societal practices are established and prosperity is endorsed. Therefore, it is essential for adequate financial support to research and those individuals responsible for conducting it. The BRICS and African nations have devoted increased attention and resources to nurturing the research competencies of their academics. In turn, these emerging nations have managed to increase their research productivity, improve their global rankings, attract funding and promote national prosperity (Niemczyk, 2020). Universities house concentrated communities of talented scholars, world-class facilities and collective expertise. Therefore, HEIs assume the main role in preparing future researchers that are able to meet globalized expectations for their future careers within and outside academia (Niemczyk & Rossouw, 2018). Globalization has changed the

research environment, encouraging new methods of collecting and analysing data, altering communication in research communities and necessitating multidisciplinary and multicultural collaborations. In this context, academics are expected to develop top-notch research competencies in shorter periods of time, with limited resources. Consequently, it is critical for academics to continuously develop their research skills. Mafenya (2019) warned that without SRCB strategies in place, HEIs will find it challenging to fulfil their responsibility towards responding to the needs of society and contribute to the national development of their countries. Niemczyk (2020) reported that instead of advancing knowledge and being producers thereof, most developing countries remain knowledge consumers. Pushing the knowledge frontier is challenging for developing countries because they are pursuing a moving target. Employing a qualitative document analysis method, this study analysed 40 documents to explore the challenges associated with SRCB in BRICS nations and African countries.

Research and development landscape in BRICS nations

Research collaboration among BRICS countries has been ongoing since 2013. By pooling their resources, individual strengths and expertise, BRICS countries are well positioned to advance knowledge and enhance innovation. According to Niemczyk, de Beer and Steyn (2021), synchronising the functioning of their economies and education systems is unique due to the size of the BRICS organisation. Combined, the BRICS countries make up 26% of the world's surface, 42% of the total world population and 27% of the world's GDP (Niemczyk, de Beer & Steyn, 2021). Bornmann, Wagner and Leydesdorff (2015) highlighted that the BRICS nations contribute significantly to the global number of academics, scientists and engineers. To this end, there is little known doubt that BRICS nations take up a unique strategic position in research and development (R&D) on their respective continents, serving as role models to other developing countries in science and technology.

Zooming in on the first BRICS nation, the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) are key funding agencies supporting research in Brazil. However, recent budget cuts have affected research infrastructure funding and hindered research productivity. Consequently, the growth of emerging researchers has been disrupted, with decreases reported in the number of masters and PhD graduates due to insufficient investment from state entities. Meanwhile, the Russian government supports research through entities such as the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, which funds grants, conferences, and access to research databases for institutions. While Russia has seen a growth in scientific publications, there has been a concerning decline in patent applications, alongside fluctuations in the enrolment of doctoral students.

India has the lowest GDP ratio allocated dedicated towards R&D compared to the BRICS member states. Regardless, India still manages to rank as the third highest global producer of research output, showcasing its research prowess. Similar to China, a large portion of India's PhD graduates graduate from STEM fields such as mathematics and science. China's substantial investment in R&D is the highest among BRICS member states. The country's dedication to SRCB is in the establishment of research centres such as the Chinese Academy of Engineering, focusing on biotechnology and environmental research. South Africa leads Africa in terms of financial contribution dedicated to R&D. However, compared to other BRICS nations, South Africa's annual increase in R&D

investment has been relatively modest. The country's National Research Foundation plays a pivotal role in funding research initiatives and has significantly impacted the scientific landscape in South Africa since its establishment in 1999. The establishment of the NRF led to notable increases in scientific publications by the year 2018, although at a slower rate than other BRICS countries (Niemczyk, 2020).

BRICS nations have increased their investments in R&D, which has created economic growth and enhanced their capacity to advance the knowledge frontier similar to their international counterparts, especially in China and India. Although BRICS nations show economic progress, partnership with industry and improved research productivity is required to sustain economic growth (Niemczyk, 2020). Furthermore, if they are to contribute to developing solutions that are relevant to their own contexts, the development of the next generation of academics (doctoral students) must be prioritized through adequate investment and policy.

Research and development landscape in African nations

Knowledge production requires adequate financial investment, therefore developed countries lead the pack in terms of knowledge creation (Niemczyk, 2020). Focusing on the developing nations in Africa, after a global trend of massification, the number and size of HEIs in Africa have grown rapidly. Student enrolments in African HEIs have increased, from less than 200000 in the 1970s to over 5 million in the early 2000s (Zavale & Schneijderberg, 2022). In terms of Africa's research prowess, despite containing 12.5% of the global population (Duermeijer, 2018), Africa accounts for less than 1% of global research output (Duermeijer, 2018). It is promising that when Duermeijer explored data measuring the research performance of 8500 research institutions and 220 nations globally, using Elsevier's SciVal tool, Duermeijer found that Africa has by far the strongest growing scientific production. The evidence presented by the author was that between the years 2012 and 2016, African HEIs increased research productivity by 38.6% and increased the number of authors by 43%, which is 10% higher (33%) than the next fastest growing author population in the world (the Middle East) in the same time period (Duermeijer, 2018).

Zooming in on countries located on the continent of Africa, Ethiopia has a thriving research environment (Duermeijer, 2018). Senegal has implemented a policy to provide top-notch resources to their researchers to support their research endeavours and put measures in place to mitigate the challenges their researchers face (Duermeijer, 2018). Egypt, Tunisia and Nigeria's research productivity, investment in research and RCB initiatives have been growing at a consistent rate. Egypt's thriving research environment, characterized by strong research infrastructure and experienced researchers, has propelled the country to maintain its top rank in Africa for the third consecutive year since 2020. Egypt's research prowess is evident in the fact that the country produced 27% of Africa's total output of international publications. Furthermore, the country excels in key fields such as agriculture, chemistry, engineering, immunology, microbiology, physics, and mathematics. In 2022, Tunisia's gross domestic expenditure on R&D as a percentage of GDP was 0.61%, which was slightly lower than Egypt's expenditure. Over the years 2000 to 2018, Tunisia significantly increased its scientific and technical journal outputs by 4916. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Tunisia plays a key role in supporting research, fostering international

cooperation, and collaborating with countries like South Africa through agreements aimed at enhancing scientific and technological cooperation.

Despite the research potential of Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, the nation is burdened by diseases (Ezeanolue et al., 2019). A lack of skilled research practitioners, inadequate funding, and under-equipped laboratories hinder sustainable disease prevention and treatment strategies in the country (Ezeanolue et al., 2019). Notably, Nigeria's gross domestic expenditure on R&D in 2022 stood at 0.13% of GDP, well below the global average, reflecting a historical underinvestment in science, technology, and innovation. Despite initiatives like the Tertiary Education Trust Fund providing research funding, Nigeria continues to lag behind in research investment compared to developed nations, making it challenging for Nigerian researchers to compete globally.

Challenges hindering the effective implementation of sustainable research capacity building

Based on the review of the scholarly literature, it is evident that the implementation of SRCB comes with challenges and requires the preparation of educational leaders and research practitioners. The successful implementation of SRCB will depend on the extent to which the challenges towards SRCB are identified and addressed. After analysing the scholarly literature each article revealed different yet pressing challenges that HEIs face when building research capacity. In addition to the challenges, scholars provided recommendations to stakeholders (management, researchers, and government) to consider when addressing challenges towards building research capacity. The challenges are many, this section focuses on the main five and provides recommendations for improvement.

The first challenge, as reported from Africa (Marongwe et al., 2022), is that women researchers experience negative impacts of organisational and structural gender inequalities. Consequently, negative ramifications follow such as low contribution to published research on the part of women and a scarcity of women being the lead author of publications. In terms of promotion, men are three times more likely than women to reach top-level positions in the sciences and research. To achieve certain career milestones, during their childbearing life stage, women are expected to demonstrate extraordinary capacity and performance.

The challenges women face are exacerbated by the second challenge, which is to demonstrate high levels of research productivity while balancing overwhelming teaching workloads and time constraints, leading to stress, pressure and burnout for academics. South African academics were expected to complete administration, teach, mark and engage in their family responsibilities in unfamiliar circumstances during the pandemic. Margongwe et al. (2022) reported that the large teaching load and obligations place strain on academics as they are unable to conduct research efficiently due to their heavy schedule. The previously mentioned authors, reporting from Africa informed that academics employed in these institutions educate 50% more students than their peers employed in the global arena.

Many doctoral and training programs in BRICS and African nations are inadequate (Ezeanolue et al., 2019), therefore, programs do not equip researchers with the necessary research capacity to conduct research in diverse research environments, which accounts for the third challenge (Niemczyk, 2019). In Brazil, the shortcomings of the research system are due to a lack of investment and resources in doctoral programs. Under such

conditions, Mafenya (2019) predicted that it would be challenging to attract and retain highly qualified, young academics. As a consequence, HEIs experience a low rate of innovative ideas, and a weak capacity for research, creativity and critical thinking. A starting point to respond to the challenge is to provide clear stipulations of the type of experiences, knowledge and skills that doctoral students should possess (Niemczyk & Rossouw, 2018).

Mafenya (2019) observed that integrating research from different disciplines has received growing attention in academia and has become a part of funding criteria. In fact, Niemczyk (2022) informs that in academia, collaborating with a variety of disciplines has become mandatory. However, the fourth challenge is that research, especially in the Faculty of Education, has been mono-disciplined, lacking multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches. Although mono-disciplinary approaches have advanced the frontiers of knowledge in many disciplines, multidisciplinary methods have enhanced the understanding of observed phenomena from multiple perspectives.

Ezeanolue et al. (2019) reported that inadequate funding from the state and HEIs is arguably the biggest challenge hindering SRCB, which accounts for the last challenge. As indicated by Niemczyk and Rossouw (2018), delivering quality research outputs, to promote national prosperity can only be achieved if adequate investments are made in the development of citizens responsible for research output. In fact, a prerequisite to increasing research productivity is sustained financial investments for developing capacity. Inadequate funding of the state is compounded by limited internal funding (in HEIs) directed at supporting research, developing research skills and travelling abroad for conferences. Although efforts are made to fund research projects through external sources (Mafenya, 2019), securing external funding is highly competitive (Niemczyk, 2020). A lack of funding (especially in developing countries) is one of the biggest challenges hindering research training and research productivity. The potential of research to address challenges in Africa is often undervalued by government officials and policy-makers as indicated by their lack of commitment and negligible support for research.

Similarities and differences between BRICS nations and African countries

Comparative research differs from non-comparative studies because it identifies the differences and similarities between contexts under investigation and relationships between contexts with consideration to their contextual conditions. Knowing that similarities and differences exist between education systems is not enough; therefore, this study paid attention to contextual conditions of the countries under study to uncover why similarities and differences exist.

In this regard, the similarities between BRICS nations and African nations are grounded in their increased investments in R&D to drive economic growth and enhance knowledge production. Both regions recognize the importance of funding agencies in fostering research SRCB. Additionally, both BRICS and African nations emphasize the need to prioritize the development of the next generation of academics through adequate investment and policy support. As per the differences, the BRICS nations have global influence and leverage due to their vast surface area, population size, GDP and trade share. These countries have made substantial R&D investments, with China standing out as the highest investor among the BRICS states. On the other hand, African nations face

challenges such as historical underinvestment in R&D, leading to lower research output and limited resources for research infrastructure.

The contextual conditions that cause the aforementioned similarities and differences can be attributed to the economic development of the country, the historical background of developing nations, government and HEI policies supporting research and collaboration with international partners. The BRICS nations generally have stronger economies and well-established research infrastructures compared to many African countries, allowing them to invest more in R&D and drive scientific progress. In contrast, African nations often face challenges related to limited resources, including funding and infrastructure which impact their research productivity and ability to compete globally. Addressing these contextual factors through increased investment, policy support and research collaboration can assist both BRICS nations and African countries to further advance their research and development landscapes.

Conclusion

The scholarly literature revealed that the implementation of SRCB in the context of BRICS nations and African countries plays an essential role in promoting national prosperity. The associated challenges include gender inequalities, high teaching workloads, inadequate doctoral programs, lack of multidisciplinary research approaches, and insufficient funding. Despite these challenges, there have been notable efforts and progress in building the research capacity in the emerging nations under investigation, particularly in terms of increased research productivity and international collaborations. Responding to challenges in developing nations such as poor disease management, poor infrastructural development, food insecurity and the effects of climate change will require sustainable investment in research. By improving investment in R&D in BRICS nations and Africa, these countries will be able to harness its potential to develop solutions applicable to their population. Current research practitioners, research infrastructure and available funding in most developing countries are not resilient enough to address the challenges of the 21st century. To this end, promoting national prosperity in developing countries, in a sustainable manner, will require HEIs to develop the next generation of academics by enhancing the quality of their doctoral programs.

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Gergana Sakarski

Are Homeschoolers Happy with Their Educational Experience?

Abstract

Homeschooling, as a controversial educational practice, raises many questions about its outcomes, which still remain unanswered. The homeschooling population has been growing over the past years, as has interest in this educational paradigm. The increased accessibility and use of emerging information technologies also hold significance in facilitating access to knowledge and contributing to the expansion of this educational trend. In this context, numerous families contemplate homeschooling for several reasons. Yet, the decision to homeschool or not their children is often difficult, as the outcomes are not predictable. Researchers have explored the academic achievements of homeschooling; however, a more significant question remains unanswered: Are homeschoolers happy? This paper aims to provide insight into homeschoolers' perceptions of this matter. Research findings on the life satisfaction of homeschoolers presented here were based on the anonymous responses of an online survey collected between July 2022 and July 2023 from 33 current or former homeschoolers from five countries. This study used the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) to evaluate the well-being of homeschooled individuals who self-assessed their educational experience as well. The paper also examines the advantages and disadvantages of the educational practice as perceived by homeschoolers themselves in an attempt to provide a picture of the satisfaction of homeschoolers with their educational journey.

Keywords: homeschooling, home education, emotional well-being, happiness, life satisfaction, SWLS

Introduction

As homeschooling continues to gain popularity as an alternative educational approach, questions regarding the well-being and happiness of homeschooled individuals have become increasingly relevant. Homeschooling, characterized by its difference from traditional school settings and reliance on home-based instruction, presents a unique educational environment that may influence various aspects of individuals' lives, including their overall happiness and life satisfaction. While research has explored the academic achievements of homeschooling, relatively little attention has been paid to the subjective experiences and emotional well-being of homeschooled individuals. Understanding the factors that contribute to homeschoolers' happiness is crucial for policymakers, educators, and parents considering homeschooling as an educational option. By examining the satisfaction levels and perceived advantages and disadvantages of homeschooling from the perspective of homeschooled individuals themselves, we can gain valuable insights into the broader implications of this educational approach on

personal development, socialization, and overall well-being. This study aims to address a gap in the literature by investigating the life satisfaction of homeschoolers through an analysis of anonymous survey data collected from a diverse sample of homeschooled individuals across five countries. Through this exploration, it was sought to shed light on the implications of homeschooling for individuals' life satisfaction and overall satisfaction with their educational experience as homeschoolers.

Literature review

A crucial question regarding the outcomes of education is the well-being and life satisfaction of the learners, which can be influenced by a wide range of factors. According to Bakracheva who has widely explored the topic of life satisfaction:

The portrait of the satisfied with life is the one person, who has attained personal goals and has a sense of success ensuring her/him balance and harmony. The satisfied person has positions in the community, good relations with others, feels love and is healthy. (S)he is financially stable, experiences positive emotions, travels and has a meaningful life. (S)he is concerned for the environment and the expectations of others, however, value leisure time and inner hope. (Bakracheva, 2020, p. 96)

Various studies have shown a link between extracurricular activities, leading to the development of certain soft skills and stronger cognitive abilities, as well as a sense of life satisfaction (Feraco et al., 2022; Bruna et al., 2019). According to the model suggested by Feraco et al. the participation in extracurricular activities can positively impact students' life satisfaction. In addition, they found that self-regulated learning and motivation are not only crucial for academic achievement, but also play a significant role in promoting students' overall well-being and life satisfaction (Feraco et al., 2022). Although this study did not address the homeschooling practice directly, the integration of extracurricular activities and the cultivation of self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies is at the heart of the homeschooling paradigm; thus, a link can be deduced.

Another factor contributing to the sense of fulfilment and well-being of homeschoolers is parental involvement, considered "the most important factor in children's attainment" (Rothermel, 2022, p. 17). The literature also suggests that homeschoolers, regardless of the duration of their homeschooling, showed similar social and life outcomes, including subjective well-being, as their peers, who had attended traditional schools (Hamlin & Cheng, 2021). The psychological wellbeing of homeschoolers has also been examined in the context of their transition to college and the author suggested that more longitudinal studies needed to be conducted in order to evaluate the long-term impact of homeschooling on the home educated individuals (Glock, 2022), as the research on this matter remains scarce.

Research design

This study aimed to investigate the outcomes of homeschooling in relation to life satisfaction, as measured by the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener & al., 1985). The SWLS is a widely used psychological assessment tool designed to measure subjective well-being and overall life satisfaction. It consists of five questions that prompt respondents to rate their agreement with statements regarding their life satisfaction. Scores on the SWLS can range from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating greater life satisfaction.

Additionally, this research aimed to explore participants' perceptions of the positive aspects and weaknesses of homeschooling, their reasons in favor of the choice to homeschool, and their potential willingness to homeschool their own children. Furthermore, factors contributing to the academic and career achievements of homeschoolers, as well as those that could potentially hinder their success, were examined through open-ended questions, allowing the collection of qualitative responses.

The survey was distributed online using Google Forms. It was randomly sent to homeschooling families, organizations, social media groups, and conference participants via email or social media posts. A total of 33 responses were collected from participants residing in five countries, including Bulgaria, Canada, France, South Africa, and the USA. The data were gathered in two separate phases between July 2022 and July 2023. The initial results from the first phase of the survey circulation, where 13 responses had been collected, were presented in 2023 (Sakarski, 2023). Data analysis was conducted using Excel and employing both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Results

Demographics

The study comprised 33 homeschoolers from five countries – Bulgaria (15.15%), Canada (15.15%), France (3.03%), South Africa (39.39%), and the USA (27.27%) – with a gender distribution of 64% female and 36% male. The respondents had an average age of 22 years, ranging from 12 to 45 years old. Among the respondents, there were individuals with different levels of education, including higher education, secondary education, or education still in progress, which depended also on the age of the respondents. From the responses it was observed that the homeschooled individuals most often continued their education after completing homeschooling. 2 of the respondents, who were of high school age, had gone through homeschooling but were currently attending conventional school at the time of the survey. Other respondents mentioned that they had started their education in conventional school but later transitioned to homeschooling.

SWLS scores analysis

Results from the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) indicated that the majority of participants reported feeling satisfied (42.4%) or extremely satisfied (33.3%) with their lives. Additionally, 18.2% of the respondents felt slightly satisfied, while 6.1% felt slightly dissatisfied. Notably, none of the respondents were within the dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied range. These findings suggest that while homeschooling might contribute to overall satisfaction for many individuals, there are still some who may experience challenges or areas of dissatisfaction. Further analysis of the factors that influence life satisfaction among homeschoolers could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact of homeschooling on well-being.

Participants' responses to the question of whether they would still choose to be homeschooled today varied. Some expressed unequivocal affirmation, citing reasons such as the enjoyment of homeschooling and the opportunity to focus on personal interests. Others highlighted the practical advantages of homeschooling, such as the ability to pursue professional sports alongside academic studies and the development of time management skills.

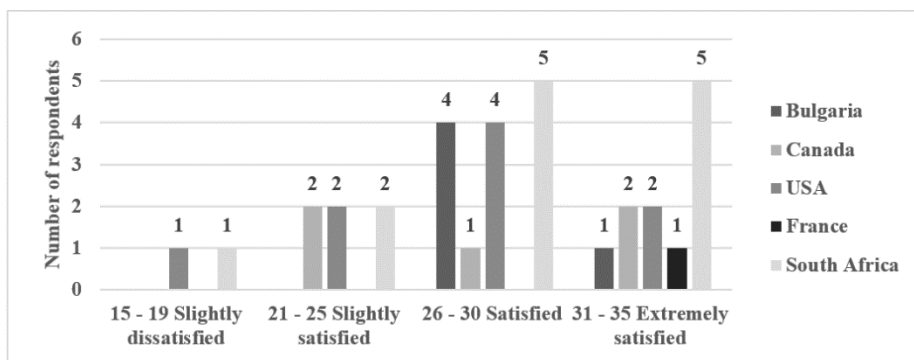


Figure 1. SWLS scores repartition by country

Some participants expressed ambivalence, acknowledging both positive and negative aspects of their homeschooling experience. For instance, while some appreciated the freedom and flexibility afforded by homeschooling, others criticized missed opportunities for social interactions and cultural experiences. Nevertheless, many participants affirmed their decision would still be to be homeschooled, emphasizing its role in shaping their character, fostering a love for learning, and cultivating core values. The responses also reflected diverse perspectives on the effectiveness of homeschooling in preparing individuals for academic and professional life, with some attributing their achievements to homeschooling while others expressed doubts about its efficacy. Overall, the responses highlighted the complexity of the decision-making process regarding homeschooling, and the diverse experiences and outcomes associated with this educational approach.

Respondents' answers to the question of whether they would homeschool their own children also varied widely. Some expressed a strong inclination towards homeschooling, citing reasons such as the desire to foster a deep bond with their children, cater to their educational needs better than public schools, and nurture values aligned with their beliefs. Others proposed a hybrid education method combining homeschooling with an external school system to provide more peer interaction. Some participants expressed uncertainty, highlighting concerns about their ability to teach effectively, the potential impact on their relationship with their children, and the practicality of homeschooling given their lifestyle and career aspirations. On the other hand, several participants expressed a clear preference against homeschooling, citing reasons such as concerns about social skills development, the adequacy of the standard school system, and the desire for their children to have exposure to diverse perspectives. Overall, the responses reflected a broad range of opinions on the feasibility and desirability of homeschooling as an educational approach for their own children.

Benefits of homeschooling from homeschoolers' perspective

The responses from the survey highlighted various advantageous aspects of homeschooling. Firstly, homeschooling provided a high degree of flexibility in scheduling, enabling individuals to explore their interests and progress at their own pace, while accommodating travel and extracurricular appointments without compromising

educational objectives. Secondly, homeschooling facilitated tailored education that addressed the unique needs and interests of each student, thereby fostering enhanced academic proficiency and a heightened enthusiasm for learning.

From personal experience, HS focuses more on learning for the sake of learning; good grades are treated as a test of performance, as opposed to being treated as the goal of learning. This can prevent the laziness that is sometimes exhibited by naturally gifted students; “If my grades are already good, why should I continue challenging myself?”. (Respondent 22)

Moreover, homeschooling contributed to the cultivation of stronger family relationships by affording more time for familial interactions and incorporating familial values into the educational process.

Additionally, homeschooling offered the opportunity to integrate religious teachings into education in some families, which may not be feasible within the framework of public schooling. Furthermore, homeschooling served as a catalyst for personal growth, instilling valuable skills such as time management, self-discipline, creativity, and critical thinking. Despite concerns regarding socialization, homeschooling could also effectively facilitate social interactions through deliberate engagement with peers and diverse communities. Moreover, homeschooling engendered a healthier learning environment devoid of bullying, with an emphasis on intrinsic motivation and a growth-oriented mindset. Finally, homeschooling promoted independence and self-management skills, equipping individuals with the necessary tools to navigate real-world challenges successfully. In summary, homeschooling is seen by the questioned homeschoolers as a beneficial educational option that fosters individual development, academic achievement, and the creation of strong familial bonds.

I had a lot of free time, which in the end grew my creativity because it caused me to have to think outside of the box for things to do. It also allowed me to spend more time with family as I was growing up. I was also able to be more flexible in when I was doing school. (Respondent 28)

Findings from previous research (Abuzandah, 2022; Guterman & Neuman, 2017) also confirm that despite some challenges, homeschooling was found to be effective in developing certain desirable traits without the influence of negative peer interactions. The closer relationship between children and their parents enforces social skills development through the cultivation of stronger bonds. “The most important thing is that parents who decide to homeschool their children put deliberate efforts to enhance the social life of such children to ensure the holistic growth of a child both intellectually and socially” (Abuzandah, 2022, p. 1068).

Homeschooling experience limitations from homeschoolers perspective

The survey respondents highlighted various limitations associated with homeschooling. One significant concern was that homeschooling was perceived to offer fewer avenues for social interaction beyond the immediate family circle.

Homeschooling means a family will have to work harder to find opportunities for their children to socialize with those outside the family. This can be accomplished in so many great ways, but it just takes more effort than public school because in public school, students have many social opportunities by default. (Respondent 3)

Consequently, this shortage of external socialization opportunities was seen as potentially hindering the development of interpersonal skills and complicating the

formation of friendships, along with understanding cultural norms by some of the respondents. Furthermore, the survey revealed concerns regarding accountability and discipline within the homeschooling context. Some respondents highlighted the importance of self-motivation and accountability in homeschooling, emphasizing that the absence of external oversight could pose challenges for some students lacking discipline or for parents who were overly lenient in their approach to education. Transitioning from homeschooling to traditional schooling was identified as another significant challenge by some survey participants. Previous studies have revealed similar challenges for unschoolers in integrating the school system (Gaudreau & Brabant, 2021) or for homeschoolers while transitioning to college (Hamlin & Cheng, 2021; Glock, 2022), yet depending on various and complex factors. The structured environment and accelerated pace of formal education settings were cited as potential sources of difficulty for students accustomed to the more flexible and self-directed learning setting of homeschooling.

Moreover, homeschoolers were reported to have fewer opportunities to engage in organized group activities and sports, limiting their exposure to teamwork and competitive experiences if the family did not provide such. Compared to traditional school settings, homeschoolers were challenged by the limited access to specialized equipment, professionals, and resources, which could potentially impact their learning experiences and academic outcomes. Finally, the survey highlighted potential deficiencies in interpersonal and conflict resolution skills, as well as self confidence among homeschoolers due to limited exposure to diverse social environments in some families and classroom dynamics.

Home-schooling indirectly leads to a lack of self confidence in my own academic abilities. I felt that I would be inadequate in a more traditional school setting. This was only because of outside input however, and had more to do with societal norms than home-schooling itself. This lack of confidence was also largely disproven once I did join a more typical school setting. (Respondent 11)

Academic and career success factors

Participants identified various factors contributing to the academic and career achievements of homeschoolers. These included the development of independence, self-motivation, and self-discipline, as homeschoolers are often responsible for managing their own time and pursuing their interests. Additionally, homeschooling allowed for an individualized approach to learning, tailored to the pace and needs of each child. Participants also highlighted the importance of family support, broad interests, and background knowledge in facilitating academic success. Furthermore, homeschoolers benefit from the flexibility to pursue part-time jobs and other educational experiences, which can contribute to their future vocational pursuits. Other factors cited included active engagement in various life experiences, relationships, and the ability to find areas of talent and explore subjects deeply based on personal interests. Ultimately, participants emphasized the role of self-sustaining tools, curiosity, critical thinking, communication skills, determination, and goal awareness in fostering academic and career achievements among homeschoolers.

In assessing the satisfaction level of homeschoolers with their educational experience it is interesting to consider the provision of career or school counselling services. Among the surveyed respondents, a significant majority of 61% affirmed that

they have had access to such services. Moreover, nearly 70% of the participants expressed a belief in the potential benefits of career counselling services for homeschoolers. This highlights a growing recognition within the homeschooling community of the value that professional guidance can bring to students' educational pathways. While a minority, constituting 27%, remained undecided about the necessity of these services, only 3% indicated a lack of perceived need. These results show there's a growing discussion about the adequate support mechanisms to be provided to homeschoolers to enhance their educational journey.

Barriers to academic and career success

The survey respondents highlighted various factors that could potentially hinder the academic and career success of homeschoolers. These factors include a lack of parental involvement in co-ops and outside activities, insufficient structure and accountability, challenges in forming social connections and maintaining motivation, and the risk of becoming complacent due to the flexible nature of homeschooling. Additionally, issues such as isolation, limited exposure to unchosen experiences, and inadequate preparation for standardized testing were identified by respondents as potential barriers to success. Other concerns mentioned include poor communication skills, financial struggles, and the stigma surrounding homeschooling, which could impact the general perception of homeschoolers' education, although no empirical correlation has been clearly established. Overall, the responses underlined the importance of addressing these challenges to ensure the academic and career fulfilment of homeschooling students.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings presented in this paper are suggestive rather than definitive, as they rely on self-assessment from a restricted sample size, making generalization difficult. Nonetheless, they still contribute to the literature gap, offering insights into life satisfaction and overall satisfaction of homeschoolers with their educational experience. The SWLS scores analysis revealed that the majority of participants reported satisfaction with their lives, indicating positive overall well-being among homeschoolers. However, while many respondents expressed contentment with homeschooling, some highlighted challenges such as limited social opportunities, accountability issues, and difficulties transitioning to traditional schooling. These findings highlighted the importance of addressing these challenges in the educational process to ensure homeschoolers' academic and career fulfilment. On the other hand, respondents identified various factors contributing to academic and career achievements among homeschoolers, including independence, self-motivation, family support, and ground for the development of broad interests.

Overall, while many homeschoolers reported life satisfaction and happiness with their educational experiences, it is crucial to consider the individual circumstances and perspectives of each homeschooling family. What has worked well for one family might not have worked as effectively for another, and there is no one-size-fits-all answer to whether homeschoolers are universally happy with their educational experience. These insights provide valuable perspectives on the complexities of homeschooling and the diverse experiences and outcomes associated with this educational approach, emphasizing the need for further research and support to optimize the homeschooling experience of the individuals involved.

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Part 3

School Education: Policies, Innovations, Practices & Entrepreneurship

Gillian L. S. Hilton

Dealing with a Nightmare Situation – Teachers in English Schools and Trans/gender Distressed/gender Dysphoria Students

Abstract

This paper discusses the responses of schools and teachers in England and some other developed countries to Trans children, that is, those who feel that their assigned sex at birth was not correct. These children may be defined as Trans, that is wanting to change their assigned sex, or in other ways, such as having gender distress or dysphoria, or not being cisnormative which is, accepting one's sex assigned at birth. Recent years have seen a steady increase in the numbers of school children concerned about their birth assigned sex, presenting numerous problems. These include areas such as toilet facilities, changing rooms, sports studied, clothing, names and the use of pronouns and how to allot sleeping accommodation on a school journey. Parents in many cases are very concerned over schools' reactions, which have included schools agreeing to allow social transitioning without informing parents, ignoring the safeguarding instructions to schools, that parents must be informed of physical or mental health issues a child discloses. In addition, parents and schools can be at odds, with how schools should respond. In England, teachers have been waiting for guidance from the DfE on this matter since 2018, but this was not produced for schools until the end of 2023 for consultation, leaving schools to make individual decisions on actions. Comparisons are made with how schools in other developed countries have responded to this challenge and a small group of teachers in England, were asked to express their personal views on this subject and how it had affected their role in school.

Keywords: schools, teachers, gender dysphoria/distress, Trans, cisnormative safeguarding, social transitioning

Introduction

A recent report by Policy Exchange Unit on Trans issues in schools in England (Moore, 2023) caused alarm and consternation amongst Members of Parliament, parents and teachers. Criticised as ‘right-wing’ and possibly presenting a danger to children, who will be punished or rejected by their parents, if they ‘come out’ as Trans and schools inform their parents. Hansford (2023) claims that four out of ten secondary schools accept student self-identification, in this area of personal gender beliefs. The main question here is what are the responsibilities of teachers in this area, where the need to support and help students who are having problems of any kind, clashes with government safeguarding instructions, that parents must be informed if their children have ongoing mental or physical concerns? Brill and Pepper (2022) suggest that there are three main periods when people acknowledge their gender diversity: childhood, preteen/early adolescence, and late adolescence or adulthood. A US study, for example, found that the mean age for when participants became aware of being trans or gender diverse was 5.4 years (Beemyn & Rankin, 2011).

Moss and Parry (2023), responsible for LGBT BBC News, raise questions as to why the promise of government to produce guidance documents for schools in 2018 on the issues raised by transgender pupils, was not swiftly honoured. A further promise was made for this support from the DfE to be published in the summer term of 2023, but nothing appeared, apart from a draft document put out for comment, to those with understanding of present laws. In a difficult and divisive situation, this was not of much help to individual teachers. These authors speculated on the slow progress on this guidance, possibly being influenced they believe, by the highly controversial nature of its content, including teachers accepting or rejecting the social transitioning of pupils to another sex, via name, pronouns used and clothing changes. As a result of this lack of guidance by the DfE, some schools decided to make their own decisions, but many teachers are very afraid to speak out about such a controversial issue, as parents have been known to sue individual teachers, or schools for attempting to advise a child on this contentious area. It is impossible to win, one teacher reported to a BBC News survey, as to how schools were responding to this issue and in some cases has resulted in the dismissal of teachers from their jobs (Moss & Parry, 2022). The aim therefore of this paper, is to examine the latest reports and issues raised by this challenging area, examine how schools in England and in other developed countries are dealing with this challenge and the consequences of these reactions. A small study of individual teachers’ reactions in England is also included.

Horton (2023) raised the question of how the culture and reaction in schools can seriously and negatively affect the lives of Trans students. Cisnormativity appears to be present in many schools, where the attitude held is one of expecting children to conform and accept without question, their birth assigned sex. This the author claims, can be extremely damaging to children, affecting their social life in school and this rigid response can cause distress and social injustice including bullying, which adversely affects learning. From his research, it appears that in many schools cisnormativity is seen as normal, conformation from all students is expected without question. He feels this is unjust and can make schools dangerous places for Trans children, resulting in trauma and poor attendance. Schools, teachers and leaders, he believes, should make far greater efforts to support and protect Trans students. In addition, the author points to the lack of previous research in the UK on primary aged children who socially transition or desire

to do so. The Children’s Commissioner, interviewed by the Telegraph newspaper (Clarence-Smith & Lough, 2023), expressed extreme concern over lack of guidance for schools, which had left teachers in an impossible situation.

In addition, recent events in England (in December 2023) have demonstrated the possible danger to Trans children from their peers. Two teenagers one male one female, were convicted of the plotting and execution of the murder of a girl, who had been born as male and transitioned. The communication between the two accused, displayed hatred and disgust and a determination to kill this person by a variety of means, which finally resulted in stabbing, after poisoning had failed. This is an extreme case and highly distressing to all who had heard or read about it, mainly for the hatred felt by these two young people towards someone who was perceived as ‘not normal’ (Barlow, 2023).

Reactions of teacher unions

In the situation of a lack of clear action from the DfE in England (Scotland and Wales had issued guidance to their teaching staff), the position remained confusing, with some clearly marked ‘sides’ to the argument. The BBC attempted to survey schools for reactions on this issue, but had difficulty persuading any teachers/heads to respond openly and be named. Unions have noted that teachers are extremely worried about saying or doing the ‘wrong thing’ and causing ructions with parents, or in attempting to help, damaging the child in some way. Unions reported numerous queries on this issue on how teachers should respond, but with little guidance from the DfE, it was difficult for Unions to give clear, measured advice, on how to act. Schools therefore began to make their own decisions, venturing into this area alone. This led to situations where schools either refused to change their activities like sports offered, or the provision of mixed/unisex toilets, or changing rooms for Trans pupils, or conversely offered a great deal of support, for example, unisex facilities, or special Trans facilities. This, might upset and offend parents who feel supporting a child with gender dysphoria is their role not a school’s (Weale, 2023). Or, such actions could enrage parents who feel such unisex facilities for teenagers are wrong. The idea of boys who believe they are females, wanting to use girl’s changing rooms is, for many parents totally unacceptable. Weale (2023) points out some schools allow this, whilst some of their parents, who judge the whole idea of transitioning, to be against their religion and nature, are highly negative. Conflict therefore is rife between schools’ reactions to children who declare misgivings about their birth sex. In some cases, there have been concerns that some schools are telling children that it is possible they were born into the wrong bodies, thereby making pupils in some cases question their own sexual identity. These issues, such as changing a child’s name, or the pronouns used in class is welcomed in some schools, but considered wrong in others, unless parents request it (Moss & Parry, 2023) as cisnormativity, is how the schools’ function. However, some schools have it appears contravened their safeguarding duties, which insist that for any child with issues such as gender dysphoria, parents must be consulted. Some schools say this could put the children a serious risk of abuse or even, so called treatment in some groups in society.

Our research reveals there to be a safeguarding blind spot when it comes to the issue of sex and gender. Safeguarding principles are being routinely disregarded in many secondary schools, which are neglecting their safeguarding responsibilities and principles in favour of a set of contested beliefs, in ways that risk jeopardising child wellbeing and safety. (Moore, 2023, p. 10)

Schools' reactions

Weale (2023) says that the issues became intensely polarised and not all schools are informing parents of students' requests, which is directly opposed to their safeguarding duties. In some accepting schools, counselling services are offered, which many doctors believe is outside the knowledge and understanding of teachers, who are not medical professionals. In some cases, schools have reacted against the wishes of parents, encouraging social transitioning and even celebrating it in school, without any parental involvement (Weale, 2023). This has resulted in a breakdown of communication between schools, parents and the student. Such students need referral to NHS gender services. However, these have been heavily criticised of late as inadequate, in helping gender questioning children (Cass, 2022). The Cass Review of services offered by NHS Gender Identity Service (GIDS) Clinics to gender questioning children, strongly criticised the approaches used, questioning the too early provision of puberty blockers to prevent natural changes to children's bodies, basically saying that too much was being offered too early, to confused and unsure young people. However, other doctors strongly disagreed with the Cass Report findings. Some doctors, insisting that there is no clear medical guidance on how to respond to children's concerns about gender. Lees (2022) had raised questions about this issue in education, especially the mostly affirmative approach to Trans children's self-diagnosis, resulting in schools and teachers on the whole, supporting their wishes. This author, discussing the negative judgement of the NHS GIDS provision of affirming reactions as it was set to change, to treatment in eight clinics around the country, linked to mental health services, points out that there had been a realisation, that children with gender dysphoria were often challenged by other issues such as autism, depression and reactions to food and their bodies.

Some schools are refusing to accept Trans students in future to preserve their single sex status. The Girls' Day School Trust is opposed to a positive approach to gender identity change, Parry (2022) on BBC News raised the question of Nottingham Girls High School, one of the Trust's 25 non state schools. The school had refused to accept Trans children into the school, to protect its single sex status. Only girls whose biological sex at birth was determined as female, will be accepted in future. However, this attitude was strongly criticised by the local MP saying that the status of the school as regards sex was protected by the Equality Act. In addition, a group called 'Bayswater' strongly disagrees that schools and teachers should support a child wishing to transition socially. The group has over 600 members and campaigns strongly to stop schools from allowing, without medical guidance, these actions to occur. The group offers information, support, resources and advice on the use of puberty blocking medication, which may be offered to their child by an NHS clinic and on how to respond to a child claiming gender dysphoria (Bayswater Support Group, 2023).

The Guidance appears

ITV NEWS (19.12.2023) gave a short account of the directives of the non-statutory guidance, gathered from a variety of sources. It is not law, but under safeguarding regulations schools will be expected to conform.

- Schools will have to inform parents if students ask for the opportunity to transition in school, with minor exceptions to this directive if a child would be put at

significant risk by exposure. Parents generally must be consulted at all stages unless this could endanger the child.

- Single sex spaces must be retained and transitioned children not allowed to use other sexes' spaces, toilets, changing rooms etc. unless it causes them to be distressed. Mixed sports forbidden at least for older pupils where safety could be an issue. (Some schools therefore may have to remove unisex toilet facilities.)
- There would be no general expectation that schools would accept requests to socially transition, or individual teachers be forced to allow change of names, pronouns used, if they have a 'good faith' reason etc. This point was underlined by the Minister for Women and Equalities, but at present it is unclear what the reasons to refuse to allow social transitioning actually are! However, requests from primary children to transition must be treated with extra caution; generally refused.
- Schools will also be told they have no obligation to provide gender-neutral facilities such as toilets and changing rooms, for Trans students, while single sex schools will be told that they do not need to accommodate transgender pupils.

Education Unions have to some extent welcomed the arrival of the guidance, but note its non-statutory nature; that it is still in draft form and out for general consultation for nine weeks. This looks little better than the status quo, where schools are reacting in many ways, concerned about parent reaction and the need to make Trans children feel valued and safe in school. This draft appears to continue the do-it-yourself schools' culture, including the teacher's right to decide whether to acknowledge transitioning individually, rather than following a whole school directive. This is in many ways impossible for all concerned, seems unclear and likely to raise objections about its inconsistency. It appears to have been written by people who lack real knowledge about what working in schools entails and the need for continuity and agreement between all staff, as to how to react to requests for transition. Surely it is better for the whole school to have one policy? It is also clear that there is not all-round agreement over this approach in the government. One group have asked that social transitioning should not be allowed for any student under eighteen years of age and worries that there are too many loopholes in the guidance for Trans activists to exploit. This, after the UK government had blocked the request of the Scottish government to allow sex change operations at sixteen. Plus, the Cass Report (Cass, 2022) concerns over too early use of puberty blocking drugs by NHS clinics.

Further consultations are occurring, but at present it appears that in most areas schools and individual teachers have to abide by the Guidance unless the child would be distressed, which appears regularly, presenting only confusion and uncertainty in many areas, as a Trans child told to continue accepting cisnormativity, will undoubtedly be distressed. Unions have expressed frustration at the publication's timing which was a few days before schools finished the term, plus the problem with many questions remained unanswered.

Reactions to the Trans debate in other developed countries

Bartholomaeus et al. (2017) surveyed South Australian primary and pre-service teachers on Trans children in schools. Results showed, that women were more likely to accept Trans students, positively and were more relaxed than male teachers, when

working with them. Good training programmes exist to help staff to support Trans children, but staff wanted that training to be intensified and more support material being made available on this subject area, in primary schools. Numbers of children identifying as Trans, was increasing rapidly and if not correctly approached, could lead to violence and bullying. Research showed that creating a positive and supportive school culture for these children is essential and policies in schools need to support teachers in their efforts to help the Trans children. It was noted that open discussion of gender dysphoria needs to occur with staff, students and parents and that provision of mixed sex facilities and clothing changes needs to be openly discussed, with all parties. Without this, students can be intimidated and excluded. However, parents may negatively react to a child's Trans disclosure, causing dispute and stress for all. In Australia an organisation, Safe Schools Coalition, supports a wide variety of schools in the south of the country on inclusion for LGBT and gender diverse students, However, research on this area has come under attack from right wing groups, politicians and lobby groups (Bartholomaeus et al., 2017). Conversely, parents, particularly mothers in the area of Sydney seem to be more accepting of gender diversity, than is the general rule in the country (Ferfolja & Ullman, 2018). Their understanding of sexuality in all its forms, was accepting and sympathetic.

A study in the USA where States make decisions on reactions in schools to gender diverse issues, demonstrated wide differences between individual States' reactions. In parts of the USA, schools outed the gender dysphoria students to their parents without students' permission. The State of Vermont (Reed, 2023) has introduced new regulations. Formally, many States had barred Trans individuals from sporting activities, refused to provide mixed sex facilities, or to allow books about gender distress, to be present in school libraries. A new policy for Trans students' treatment, in Vermont Schools has been passed, stating clearly the rights of Trans children and all schools must adhere to it. However, other States strongly disagree with this approach, so reactions across the whole country are very diverse. Recently, the removal of books from school libraries across the country, differing in individual States, has raised anger, parental concern and even physical attacks on school officials (Youngs, 2023). The books included sexual content or themes, gender identity and race. This banning of books has risen massively of late, especially after Covid, when many parents in the USA, found out what their children were learning about and strongly protested and a group, Pen America has been formed to fight for freedom of expression for authors there.

In Canada, a study in secondary schools in British Columbia (Frohard-Dourlent, 2016) raised the issue of how teachers respond in discussions with and about Trans children, in secondary schools there. The approaches used by teachers this author describes, include verbal bullying responses, presenting themselves as open minded and emphasising their difficulties with outside, higher powers in school or beyond. All this influenced their personal responses to Trans children. The author suggests that the respondents play down their own influences in school when discussing these issues and that they have more powers over school cultures than they appear to accept. This she believes, negatively affects cultural change, other provinces are also changing their policies, as many Trans children, come out to their teachers, not their parents. Some have now insisted if a child discloses to a teacher, then the parents must be informed (Bai, 2023). This has been very controversial, as some experts believe that it could put some students in danger at home.

Teachers' opinions

Individual teachers in a wide variety of schools in several areas of England, academies, community schools, secondary and primary were asked, as a random sample if they would be willing to answer some questions relating to reactions to Trans children in their school. Despite confidentiality being assured with the use of nick names or numbers only, almost half of the teachers asked, declined to take part, saying that the issue was too controversial and their school leadership would not consent to their involvement, or themselves were concerned about possible reactions, if it became known they had participated in this research. These reactions echoed responses, to the BBC when they were attempting to ask schools to comment on the lack of government guidance on this issue. The respondents who took part were, one male primary classroom assistant, two female teachers in single sex secondary schools, a female Year Head in an academy and a male Head of a Physical Education Department in an academy. All were experienced teachers, not newly qualified. The questions related to their schools' reactions to the Trans issue, guidance of staff and actions undertaken in school, personal opinions as to what the individuals thought should be the response and their personal experiences of Trans children. As there were two single sex schools involved those respondents were asked if that had led to additional problems for the school if students wanted to transition in school. These interviews were conducted prior to the release of the Guidance Document release late December 2023.

Responses about the guidance they had received from their schools varied widely. The classroom assistant (CA) who works with seven-to-eight-year-olds, has not heard the issue mentioned in school. He was however, aware of difficulties occurring in other schools and the lack of guidance from the DfE. Plus, also conscious of the problems of dealing with certain religious groups in England on sexuality issues, which for some parents was a taboo subject. There had been a backlash previously from parents on the introduction of the new RSE curriculum, though it adhered to government policy and the Headteacher was anxious not to raise another controversy. CA had not read any of the national reports, but was aware of the non-appearance of guidance from the DfE saying, 'It makes life very difficult for everyone' particularly as some students 'use abusive language about LGBT people, obviously learned at home'. He worried about saying the wrong thing about anything related to sex or gender, as so many parents seemed to be very sensitive about these areas. He had not experienced any Trans issues related to his class, but as he said 'aware of the existence of 'girlish' boys and 'boyish' girls in that group. This could be a phase he believed and said 'the male female divide is not a clear line it differs between people'. If he was approached by a child re Trans issues, he would immediately contact his teacher and the Head for help.

The two teachers Subject Heads (SH) working in single sex girls' schools shared their concerns over the lack of clear guidance on how to react if a girl claimed that, to her belief, she was male. There was no male part of the schools and no special provisions for Trans students. The reaction of both schools had been to defend their single sex status, whilst offering their sympathy and understanding, but not allowing social transformation during school time in areas such as uniforms, names or pronouns used. The females in question had, in both schools, been advised to consider transferring to a mixed sex school in the area, or to a boys' only school. However, this latter raised questions as to whether the local single sex boys' schools were willing to accept a Trans student, with all the

associated problems re safety, changing facilities and the reactions of parents to mention only a few.

The Year Head (YH) female said that there had been an increase in students with gender concerns and the wish to socially transition. The school had done its best to support these individuals and contacted parents. The school was mixed with no unisex facilities and the Head had expressed concerns that some of these students were 'following the trend to be concerned about their gender'. Some of the staff were very against allowing gender changes in school, causing some problems between colleagues. However, as soon as the Guidance was issued the Head set out clear proposals as to how the school should deal with the issues. 'The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will have the relevant training and discussions with the Leadership team and all staff. They will also have support from the MAT Safeguarding Lead. Individual teachers merely log a safeguarding concern and then refer to the DSL who actions the response'. This is a clear design for action with individual teachers it appears, taken out of the decision-making process on how to react. The Leadership team in this school will, after consultation with staff and further information from the DfE, decide the whole school's reaction.

The male Head of PE (HPE) in an academy explained what problems and challenges he and his staff had faced recently. The school was mixed sex, but a growing number of students, or their parents had requested social transition. In a PE department where normally boys and girls change in different rooms supervised by a teacher of the same sex, follow sports activities generally aligned to their sex, agreeing to these requests was not possible. That is, girls and boys may follow different areas of the PE curriculum for example, dance for girls, gymnastics for both but, where they both play similar games, say football or rugby (more girls are playing these games in single sex teams), no mixed sex games are allowed, even for Trans students. This is deemed dangerous, as boys are often far heavier and stronger than girls who can be injured from heavy physical contact with boys. In addition, it is difficult to balance staffing and the curriculum as more girls wish to play games previously offered only to males and most boys do not want, even if Trans, to take part in dance or netball. The HPE received requests from both boys and girls, to use changing rooms aligned to the other sex, as there is no special provision for Trans students. The school has no finances to provide this facility and is against unisex toilet facilities. The HPE explained when using collective nouns in groups which contain Trans students, they often object if words, girls or boys are used. So, he uses words such as Teams none sex defining. He had also had complaints from parents, that their Trans child is being discriminated against because of the refusal to allow them to use other sex changing rooms etc. This request had produced extreme anxiety from parents of non-trans students. This juggling and need to accommodate all students' needs, he said was 'exhausting and worrying' for his staff and himself. So far, little had been done to change provision as the School Head wanted to wait for the government guidance so long promised. This HPE said was 'a nightmare for all concerned'.

After the official Guidance release, all the respondents said their schools were planning discussing the matter and considering how to respond, particularly in allowing individual teachers their right to choose the acceptance or not of students' transitioning. This was they all felt a difficult course to follow, as it could cause dissent amongst staff and distress for the Trans students, if individual staff were allowed to make personal

decisions on this issue. However, consultations were still taking place at national level, so schools' responses were cautious, as changes were expected.

Conclusion

The findings from the research in English schools, clearly demonstrates the difficult situation that schools, their leaders and teachers face in their daily work. The lack of clear guidance, as to how schools should respond, so long promised by the DfE, led to highly disparate responses in schools when deciding how to provide for the needs of Trans students, plus those cisnormative students who make up the larger part of the school community. The widely differing responses in relation to mixed sex provision, special provision for Trans students and the decision to out or even celebrate transitioning, varies widely between schools. NHS provision to support those with gender dysphoria, it appears, has proved to be inadequate. However, this confusion is not only to be noted in English schools, but it appears is echoed in other developed countries, where individual States as in the USA, Canada and Australia, disagree on how to respond to the needs of Trans students. This international picture presents misperceptions and uncertainty, apparently to continue in England after the DfE published its guidance document, leaving many unanswered questions, possibly making even more difficulties for the Trans child and those in authority in schools. Developing countries may have an even more difficult task.

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Ricardo Lozano

Educational Leadership Matters: Educational Leadership Preparation Matters Too

Abstract

There is a growing understanding that, after engaging teaching, educational leadership is the second most important factor accounting for student success. Despite this fundamental declaration, educational leadership has fallen through the cracks. Little interest has developed concerning in-depth studies of this important position in education. Educational leaders carry the unique responsibility to unify the many independent variables at play in schools, and create an atmosphere in which the synergy produced delivers results far beyond academic achievement. As such, educational leadership preparation programs carry the enormous responsibility to address the fundamental difference between an effective school manager and an effective leader.

Keywords: educational leadership, leadership preparation programs

Introduction: The importance of educational leadership

Leadership is at the heart of quality education. There is a growing understanding that, after engaging teaching, educational leadership is the second most important factor explaining learning outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004; 2020; Louis et al., 2010). This means that, as we further our efforts to increase student intellectual development, in addition to focusing on the preparation of effective classroom teachers, it is imperative to broaden our perspective and vision, and understand school leadership preparation programs as paramount to advancements in academic achievement at the school, district, state, and national levels. The idea of school leadership being a major factor influencing learning becomes increasingly important in the context of schools in underprivileged and underserved areas (Wallace Foundation, 2014).

Educational leadership has fallen through the cracks

In modern times, a school leader, known in different contexts as principal, director, headmaster or administrator, is faced with the responsibility to deal with an entire school swayed by an incredibly wide array of inputs from political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, systemic, institutional, and educational forces (Gurr, 2024). Despite the fact that school leaders are expected to deal with unrealistic demands concerning an incredibly mixed assortment of areas of expertise, little interest has developed concerning in-depth studies on the characteristics of this important position in education, perhaps because of the easily observable direct impact teachers have on the day-to-day life of the classroom. School leaders have fallen through the cracks, perceived as people

who obediently complete administrative tasks while ordering others to be obedient to them (Rousmaniere, 2013).

School leadership matters

Leadership is of the greatest consequence. Leaders have the power to unbind untapped dormant potentials in organizations. In other words: each school variable, considered independently, has only a small effect on student achievement, but in order

[t]o obtain large effects, educators need to create synergy across the relevant variables.

Among all the parents, teachers, and policy makers who work hard to improve education, educators in leadership positions are uniquely well positioned to ensure the necessary synergy. (Louis et al., 2010, p. 9)

Moreover, when viewed from the perspective of academic achievement, Superville (2021, p. 1) states that

replacing a below-average principal with someone in the above-average category, can add the equivalent of 2.9 more months of learning in math and 2.7 more months of learning in reading during a single school year.

Furthermore, principals also possess the potential to positively impact outcomes beyond academics like attendance, teacher satisfaction, and overall working conditions, resulting in a significant, positive transformation of school culture and climate. According to the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (2010), no school sustainably improves the quality of education in the absence of an effective school leadership.

The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (2010) also concludes that school leadership matters, since effective educational leaders: 1) define values and vision to raise expectations; 2) restructure the organization and assign roles and responsibilities; 3) shape conditions to enhance the quality of teaching and learning; 4) enhance teacher quality and enrich the curriculum; and 4) build strong relationships inside and outside the school community. In accordance with the conclusions drawn by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (2010), research commissioned by the Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB) (2018) has also shown that school leadership matters for quality education because: 1) school leaders who develop, support, and evaluate the quality of teaching, influence learning outcomes; 2) the impact of school leadership on learning outcomes is second only to the quality of teaching and learning; 3) effective school leadership is critical for raising learners' achievement; 4) effective school leadership is particularly important in improving poorly performing and disadvantaged schools; and 5) successful school leadership has a positive impact on the entire school.

At this point, it is safe to conclude that school leadership matters, as it plays a critical role in driving improvement and influencing practices and behaviors through the establishment of strong connections which, in turn, enable leaders to inspire and mobilize all members of their communities (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000).

Educational leadership extends beyond the managerial responsibilities of principals

The functions of educational leadership are broader than simply managing a school and addressing the logistics of schedules, cafeterias, bus lines, and discipline. It involves,

among other responsibilities, setting institutional guidelines, fostering professional development, and facilitating collaboration with community stakeholders, including families (UNESCO, 2018; Vaillant, 2015). Moreover, educational leadership, as a function, goes beyond academic exercise. Educational leadership is crucial for the development of policies that benefit not only individual schools but also entire education systems (Weinstein & Muñoz, 2014). This recognition highlights the importance of contextualized knowledge about leadership. Consequently, educational leaders must be able to apply research findings meaningfully within their specific contexts (School Leadership Network, 2022).

A compilation of more than 20 years of studies concerning successful leadership have served as a reliable source of evidence establishing some of the most notable leadership practices, beyond academic exercise and school management, required of effective educational leaders. Among them, it is possible to enumerate: 1) defining and modeling vision, values, and direction; 2) sharing leadership; 3) building relationships and engaging the community outside the school; 4) redesigning the organization and aligning roles and responsibilities; 5) staying current with legal and policy changes; 6) providing access and equity for all; and 7) ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the entire learning community (Day et al., 2020; Gurr & Drysdale, 2021).

The challenge: transforming a school principal into an effective school leader

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2008): School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas internationally. School leadership plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, addressing school-specific needs, and providing guidance during challenging circumstances (Priya & Sampat, 2021). Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling. However, School Leadership Network (2022) also reminds us that “the transformation of every school principal into an effective leader, equipped with clear evidence-based tools tailored to their unique academic and policy context, remains an ongoing challenge” (p. 2).

In the United States, with hundreds of school leadership preparation programs, there has been extensive questioning of the quality and added value provided by these programs (Elmore, 2000; Levine, 2005). Some of the recorded issues of concern include: 1) the substandard quality of leadership preparation programs as perceived by school district leaders; 2) the lack of strong partnerships between preparation programs and school districts; 3) the lack of connectedness between the preparation program contents and the real work of educational leaders; and 4) the barriers created by university policies (Davis, 2016).

In-service professional development for educational leaders has also been examined and found wanting. The main claims concerning the inadequacy of professional development for educational leaders include: 1) too focused on technical issues; 2) programs too far removed from practice; and 3) insufficient use of contemporary learning practices (Murphy, 2020; Parylo & Zepeda, 2015; Shah, 2023; Webster-Wright, 2009; Zhang, 2019).

Building capacity in school leadership

Building capacity in school leadership starts with building the capacity of those who provide professional development for school leaders (VVOB, 2018). This translates into integrating the idea of educational leadership as a stand-alone notion, and establishing a clear differentiation between educational leadership and educational administration as independent components of academic preparation programs.

Successful capacity building programs in educational leadership: 1) are embedded in the overall school leadership support system; 2) are stimulated by educational leadership at higher levels; 3) are tailored to school leaders' practices and context; 4) evolve from passive to active learning; 5) provide opportunities for effective transitions into the leadership role; 6) evaluate leadership performance; 7) create research and development roles for universities; and 8) validate indigenous knowledge bases across cultures (Pont et al., 2008; Hallinger, 2003).

It has been made clear that standards and competencies are important components of a leadership preparation program, however, Robinson (2010, p. 23) wisely observes that

[L]earning to lead is not about mastering a long list of capabilities. It is about learning how to draw on and integrate appropriate cognitive and emotional resources in context-sensitive and goal-relevant ways.

Furthermore, educational leadership preparation programs also require the continuous support and provision of opportunities for leaders to actively engage with the community and set strategic goals to foster an optimal learning environment for all (Latham, 2024).

Final remarks

Educational leadership matters

In the school setting, an effective leader has the immense responsibility to unite the many independent variables at play and create an atmosphere in which the synergy produced positively impacts not only the academic achievement of every student, but also the overall school culture and climate. Quality education cannot exist in the absence of an effective leadership.

Leadership preparation and development matters

The transformation of every school principal into an effective leader remains an ongoing challenge. The building of the capacity of school leaders starts with the building of the capacity of the programs providing pre-service and in-service leadership preparation and development. Future school principals must be cognizant of the fundamental difference between functioning as an effective school manager and functioning as an effective leader.

Principals really matter. Indeed, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership (Grissom et al., 2021).

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Gillian L. S. Hilton

School Counsellors in England, Tackling a Children's Mental Health Crisis

Abstract

This paper explores the current provision and roles of school counsellors in England's schools. Government interventions are discussed and the ongoing problems with the deteriorating mental health of children and adolescents, caused by social pressures, and then the Covid 19 pandemic, addressed. The numbers of counsellors available has risen, but is in no way equal to the provision in other countries and the response of the National Health Service (NHS) is also under severe pressure. Attitudes of parents, teachers and young people to counselling are explored, together with the wide-ranging qualifications and duties required of counsellors in England's schools. The conclusion is that the change of attitude by government towards counselling in schools, is still too little and too late. as many children have no access to in-school help with mental issues, or teachers the support they need to understand the mental health problems affecting children in their classes.

Keywords: counselling in school, mental health, qualifications for counsellors, Covid 19 effects on children's mental health

Introduction

At the end of 2021 the House of Commons was presented with research briefing *Provision of School-based Counselling Services* (DfE, 2021), as a means of updating Parliament on the practice and state of counselling services in schools in England and Wales. Concerns had begun to rise about the numbers of young people suffering from mental health issues, pre the Covid 19 pandemic. The virus has subsequently exacerbated the problem, giving rise to further worries related to the mental health of young children and adolescents. Theberath et al. (2022) conducted a study of reports from multiple surveys, which had explored the effects on the mental health of the age groups (4-19 years of age) in the pandemic. Mental health they confirmed, was adversely affected by issues such as social distancing, lockdowns, school closures and quarantine restrictions. This led to depression, anxiety, loneliness, stress and tension. The authors called for family and social support to be increased and that coping strategies, needed to be taught to young people to help them manage the adverse effects of the pandemic Their conclusions were, that more support was needed for sufferers and this included adolescents who overused the internet during the isolation times, which was not good for their mental or physical health. At the height of the Covid pandemic and from earlier reports on the declining mental health of young people in the country, the government thought it right to inform MPs on what was happening in schools, where many children

had missed months of on-site schooling and were learning online, with all the inherent implications for their socialisation, mental health and disrupted learning. The report, underlined the state of the law, in that providing in-school counselling services is not a statutory requirement in schools in England. However, since the 1970s many schools, starting with public schools and then moving into the state school sector, had been providing some type of mental support for children with social, emotional, or disability issues, mental or physical. The author had, in her second teaching employment, as a Head of Department in a large comprehensive school at the end of the 1960s, encountered a school counsellor for the first time. On dealing with a sixteen-year-old girl who, because of mental health issues over puberty, had reverted to infancy, believing and acting if she was a child of four. The author was thankful for the support of the school counsellor, in dealing with this classroom crisis. Not only with the individual involved, but her classmates who were also distressed and concerned by the events that occurred. Both schools that had employed this author, had school nurses on site, who also provided useful support.

NHS self-reporting surveys of the mental health of children and young people (NHS Digital, 2022) raise alarming statistics showing that now, a quarter of seventeen- to nineteen-year-olds has some kind of mental health disorder, up from one in six the year before. Rates of mental problems in teenagers were similar but twice as high in seventeen- to twenty-four-year-old women. It appears from the survey that in classes of seven- to sixteen-year-olds, there could be five children in each classroom with mental health issues. Separate NHS figures also show a rise in the numbers of under eighteens in contact with children's mental health services in the last year, had risen by thirty percent. These results point to a severe crisis in the mental health of our young people requiring prompt action, including enhanced availability of counsellors in schools.

Counselling in schools

DfE (2016, p. 10) had produced guidance, bringing schools' attention to a group of priorities for developing counselling services in schools. These included: practices should be evidence-based with careful monitoring of outcomes; ensuring that ethnic minorities were equally entitled to counselling services; that the services should, in particular, meet the needs of vulnerable people, for example, foster children, or those in Local Authority care and young people with SEND issues; better monitoring and liaison and work with other mental health services and ensuring children are consulted on the services provided. This led to a further push to ensure the links between school and health service liaison on children's mental health were improved and was followed by a green paper (DHSC & DfE, 2017). This paper suggested areas to be developed, including mental health support teams and the need to shorten waiting times for access by children, to young people's mental health services. This latter partly, as a result of the pandemic and its isolation and its effects on young people, has in no way been realised. As a result, in 2021 extra funding was proposed to support the mental health of children and young people, including expanding mental health teams in schools. In May 2021, the Government announced more than £17 million to improve mental health and well-being support in schools and colleges, to help their students recover from the challenges of the pandemic.

The most recent survey of the provision of counselling in schools showed a result of 84% for secondary schools, as opposed to 56% of primary schools (DfE, 2017, p. 29).

These show growth in the numbers of schools offering counselling, but it is in no way universal and costs can be too high for schools to afford. A considerable proportion of schools, despite advice from government on how counsellors should be qualified to The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) level or above, admit to employing staff with no formal qualifications in counselling which gives rise to concern. The Former Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, had demanded that NHS funded counsellors should be in post in every school, but this has not occurred. In her annual report on children and young people's mental health services for 2020/21 (Children's Commissioner for England, 2021) she criticised the lack of action on this and admitted that these services were still not easily available to all children and should be. After the pandemic, it was vital that counselling services were offered to all children, many of whom had suffered so badly as a result of the crisis.

Place2Be, a mental health charity and the National Association of Headteachers (Place2Be/NAHT, 2020) undertook a survey in 2019, which discovered that provision of help to support students with emotional and mental well-being had risen from around 36% to around 66% in 2019, but this is still way below the 100% provision required for school students. Most staff surveyed said they would recognise children with mental health issues. However, there was concern that the provision by the NHS for children with these difficulties, was not sufficiently prompt in supplying help, due to a large backlog of cases. BACP have continued to campaign for all schools to offer counselling services to young people, as England is lagging far behind other parts of the United Kingdom in provision, as it has less government financial support than the other nations. After the effects of the pandemic on children's mental health, more needs to be done to support this area of their development.

Parents' opinions

BACP (2019) conducted a survey of adults' attitudes to school counselling. The results demonstrated that 72% of those questioned, believed that schools should offer counselling services and for parents with children under eighteen, it was 79%. Interestingly it appears that school counselling services were most popular with the sixteen to twenty-four age group, 83% of who were strong advocates for provision of counselling in schools and colleges. Post pandemic, it is likely that these figures of approval for in-school counselling service provision would have increased.

The positive effects of counselling

The positive opinions expressed above about the efficacy of counselling for young people, was supported by a study undertaken by University of Roehampton of the efficacy of counselling in schools (Cooper et al., 2021). The research published, was conducted between 2016 and 2018 across 18 London schools and surveyed 329 children aged between 13 and 16 years old, at six-week intervals. The study found that counselling led to long term reductions in physiological distress in children, compared to merely providing pastoral care. The problem was though, the high costs of providing these services, totalling between three to four hundred pounds per pupil, funding that schools did not have. This was in the main, caused by the nature of the counselling offered, that is one to one meeting between counsellor and pupil, rather than the less expensive group approach, when working with young people. The study revealed that one in eight five-

to nineteen-year-olds in the UK, have serious mental health issues and clearly demonstrated that there should be an expansion of mental health services in schools, as pupils who had counselling, had improved self-esteem, resulting in an increase in achievement in their personal goals.

The qualifications required to become a school counsellor

There are no specific qualifications required to become a school counsellor in the UK, but to work in a school it is generally expected that candidates will possess a first degree, for example in social work, education or psychology. This can then be enhanced by study at Masters or even Doctorate level, if so wished, but the most essential element is a qualification in counselling under the control of a professional body such as BACP. These courses are designed to give practical experience as well as theoretical knowledge. BACP suggest following a Diploma programme, offered in colleges around the country, part or full-time. These involve practical, supervised experience. Most schools expect this element of practicing counselling skills for at least a year, as well an academic qualification, before being considered for a counsellor's role is essential and this attitude is supported by government encouragement, though it is not as yet embedded in all schools. Once this core training is completed it is suggested that individuals register with an approved body such as BACP, as a counsellor or psychotherapist. Many schools' counsellor job vacancies, now ask for a degree or Masters qualification, counselling qualification from an accepted body and at least one year of practical counselling experience.

To be a school counsellor in England the required qualifications are intended to aid counsellors in helping students address their emotional problems and allow a student to discuss their problems and concerns in either a confidential setting, one to one, or in a group session with other students of their age. Counsellors aid students in fitting into a school's culture, as this differs across the country and starting into a new school, for example, because of family movements or immigration, which can prove very challenging to young people. In addition, the counsellor can act as an intermediary between student and staff, providing valuable information to a teacher who is having difficulty with a particular student, who has concerns and stresses unknown to that staff member. Above all, they need to work with teachers, so as to help a student with problems adjust to their environment and act as an intermediary between student and teacher. They can also involve parents in helping the student, teacher and the parents themselves, in understanding the concerns of the student and offer support so the student overcomes their problems.

What the role entails in England and Wales

In England and Wales school counsellors work with staff, students and the parents of students in order to encourage an environment that fosters good health, particularly mental health and helps student succeed and be productive in school. Their role is to listen and aid students in overcoming worry and stress about school work or achievement levels, but also help with concerns about the school culture, bullying etc. Counsellors work with school staff to design programmes to help individual students succeed. The whole process of school counselling is to enable students to discuss concerns and problems in confidence and obtain help in overcoming those issues. Adapting to a school

culture is very important for educational success and this is particularly so with students who have SEND issues. Administration of the records of individual students is required and the ability to obtain a student's trust is essential, in order for counselling to be successful. A counsellor will also attend open days and parents' discussion evenings and meet parents individually if deemed necessary. Counsellors' roles vary from school to school and can involve developing academic plans for SEND students; collaboration with teaching staff; observations of students in classroom situations; designing programmes to help students through particular areas of difficulty, so as to improve their academic success; discussing students' problems with parents and school teachers; providing non-judgemental relationships where students can talk freely about their concerns; aiding students to unburden their feelings and discuss their choices and attitudes in class and in their lives.

These outcomes can be achieved through:

- Individual counselling sessions for young people aged 11-18.
- Student support through drop-in style sessions.
- Staff support through drop-in style sessions.
- Work with the staff teams to facilitate a whole school approach to good mental health and wellbeing.

Advertisements for school counsellors ask for the possession of the following skills, good verbal communication, listening skills, calm approaches in times of crisis and stress, empathy, ability to balance providing professional counselling and administrative duties and knowledge and understanding of how the school system operates. Counsellors are valued members of staff but do not, as in other countries such as Argentina have leadership roles in questioning staff on their own mental health backgrounds, or advising staff on teaching methods or class organisation (Hilton, 2022).

Employment can be on a single school basis, though often term time only, or may be part-time with several schools in, for example an Academy Chain, or working for a Local Authority and visiting a certain number of schools under the control of that Authority. Public schools have their own systems of employment depending on size and fees charged to parents. Salaries for counsellors vary but are around £30,000 pounds for part of a week say four days during term time. However, this can be raised if working in more than one school and also if providing in addition, private counselling services.

In other countries where counsellors in schools are mandatory, there is sometimes a requirement to have trained teachers who have then completed a counselling qualification before being allowed to work as counsellors in schools (Harris, 2013). However, this author points out that in some areas this need to be a trained teacher is not required and most counsellors have a psychological or social work background. She points to the wide variety of requirements for counsellors world-wide, for example some being students' careers oriented, others leaving that to careers specialists in schools, as in the UK. Many counties are now moving towards, what the author terms 'a pluralistic approach to counselling in schools, because of the diverse needs of students' (Harris, 2013, p. 2).

There is pressing need for a diverse and comprehensive mental health provision and care for young people in schools across the UK, but it is essential that this is properly assessed to establish what works and what should be widely implemented to improve the mental well-being of young generations. (Cooper, 2021, p. 1)

In their study, Cooper et al. (2021) employed one to one sessions with a counsellor, based in school. Unlike therapist-led approaches, such as CBT, this is a child-centred approach, with children talking about their issues and developing solutions with the aid of the counsellor and not group therapy so popular in countries like Argentina. This of course greatly adds to the costs as pointed out by the leader of the study quoted above. In addition, it is essential to accept that the effects of the school disruption during the pandemic have had individual, but not all-encompassing effects on students. Oates et al. (2022) suggest that action needs to be specifically targeted at those who have been most affected by the disruption of learning, including responses directed at individual specific needs and include tutoring, special classes and extra school time, despite the financial difficulties now faced worldwide. Possibly easy, quick, access to counselling should be included in this action list. Owston (2023) in a Blog from Ofsted examining the effects of lack of school attendance, raises the effects of Covid on present school attendance, made worse by recent teacher strikes. In autumn 2022 one in four students were missing ten percent of school sessions, nearly double that in 2019. Ofsted are most concerned about this rise. It is not just missing learning opportunities as this can badly affect later ambitions, but also the lack of social interaction and mixing, which being part of a school community entails. DfE is most concerned about these issues. Schools have an important role to play in improving attendance, but so do parents, who must ensure good regular attendance. In addition, the NHS has issued guidance to parents on when and when not to send children to school, if suffering from some illness. It is essential that schools learn from each other and follow good practice, such as supporting families via Attendance Hubs where groups of schools share good practice and set up attendance monitors who can be trained by the charity Barnardo's.

The effects on young children's mental health resulting from the pandemic

This is a small case study of one infant department in a Primary School in a county outside of London. Discussions were held with teachers and the infant headteacher, related to the effects of the pandemic on the children's development. This, in a good school with generally excellent discipline and high academic results. It is a large, four stream entry infant/junior mixed school in a middle-class area. Now, after the pandemic, when so many children have been isolated as nurseries and schools closed, mixing was forbidden and many adults themselves became depressed and anxious, as a result of being cut off from families and friends; the effects on children are clearly displayed. National reports have noted that young children are coming to school unprepared for social mixing, unused to sharing and suffering from serious delays in the ability to express themselves, in a manner adequate for their age. These problems had been noted in this particular school for the first time. Teachers have expressed their concerns to their unions about mothers bringing children to reception classes, not toilet trained and being unable to express themselves in a manner expected for four-year-olds and the teachers in this school shared these concerns. It had been a shock to the teachers, as these problems were not normally faced in this school.

Teachers said:

Other children are seen as threats and something to avoid, rather than potential playmates and lack of language competency is presenting severe difficulties, for teachers and other children in the classroom. Some children have started school between ages four and five, unable to say their own name.

This the teachers agreed, is putting tremendous burdens onto staff, who are supposed to be building on what has been already achieved, only to find those expected competencies lacking. There appears to be little opportunity to offer such children, suffering from the effects of being cut off from society, help from counsellors in infant schools. It has therefore fallen often onto classroom assistants, to attempt to make some type of social relationships with these lonely and frightened individuals, bewildered by a world they had not previously experienced, with large numbers of other children and adults who expected responses to their verbal commands.

One infant reception class teacher told the author:

It is so sad, we have a boy, a four-year-old who has hit and kicked in the stomach other boys, also aged four, terrifying them. He uses violence against other children, as some are really articulate and he is not. He is unable to express his feelings clearly to anyone else, so he is afraid and resorts to hitting and kicking other children and even teachers. We have had numerous complaints from parents and children afraid of coming to school. He himself is terrified of coming to school and has to be dragged from his mother's grasp at the school entrance, really distressed. His mother does not know how to cope.

The infant headteacher in the same school said:

We have never had such difficult reception classes before this year, I am sure it is due to the Covid restrictions. It is obvious that the isolation the children have undergone has seriously affected their social skills and mental health. We have had very difficult behaviour to confront and children who are afraid of social situations, speaking, and a lack of understanding of how to share. In all my years of teaching, I have never had to struggle so much with discipline and lack of social ability in young children. I am really concerned for their future development. These early years are so important and we have had to lower our expectations for this year group. It is obvious that urgent help is required, but at present the pandemic affected children are having to cope with little or no support for their socialisation and language deficiencies. More has to be done to help them, but the finance is not easily available.

Conclusion

From the evidence presented it is clear that urgent responses have to be made, especially for younger children, whose development, in some cases, has been severely delayed by their inability to attend nurseries or preschool groups and learn by trial and error, how to mix and play with other children, develop their language skills and some ability to control their emotions. Counselling provision is expensive, but unless we are to lose a large number of children to a life of low achievement due to lockdowns, isolation and school closures, we have to provide support for them. In addition, it is of concern that so many older students are badly affected by social media slurs, bullying and hateful comments, that can lead to mental stress, eating disorders or even of late in the UK, suicide. Schools and the students in them, need a person they can trust not to judge them and to offer release, from what is often despair. We need counsellors in every school and teachers working with them, to ensure that children in difficulty have the support of someone who listens, helps them to address loss of self-esteem and confidence and enables them to adjust and grow in strength emotionally and socially as well as academically. Not all parents are able to supply this type of support, so it needs to be easily available to children in school, or in future we are facing a mental health crisis not experienced previously, as young people now have pressures on them that most adults have never had to face.

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Mashraky Mustary

Private Tutoring in Bangladesh: Its Implications and Suggestions for Policy Change, in Order to Mitigate Its Adverse Effects on the Education System

Abstract

Private tutoring has become a pervasive phenomenon in Bangladesh, with significant implications for educational equity and quality. This paper examines the policy landscape surrounding private tutoring and proposes comprehensive strategies to mitigate its adverse effects on the education system. Through a systematic review of existing literature and policy documents, this study elucidates the multifaceted challenges posed by private tutoring, including exacerbating educational inequalities, compromising teacher accountability, and perpetuating a two-tiered education system. Drawing on insights from international experiences and stakeholder consultations, the paper presents a framework for policy interventions tailored to the context of Bangladesh. These interventions encompass regulatory measures, teacher training and capacity-building initiatives, curriculum reforms, and community engagement strategies. Furthermore, the paper explores the potential synergies between formal schooling and supplementary tutoring services to harness the benefits of private tutoring while addressing its negative externalities. By illuminating the complex dynamics surrounding private tutoring and offering evidence-based policy recommendations, this research aims to catalyze informed dialogue and action among policymakers, educators, and civil society stakeholders to foster a more equitable and inclusive education system in Bangladesh.

Keywords: private tutoring, educational equity, policy responses, Bangladesh curriculum reforms

Introduction

Today's education system in Bangladesh is challenged by the widespread and growing phenomenon of private tutoring. According to a recent survey, about 75% of secondary school students and 35% of primary school students in Bangladesh receive some form of private tutoring (Alam & Zhu, 2021). This paper examines its effects on the quality and equity of education and proposes policy responses. It explores the causes and consequences of private tutoring, its impact on students' learning and opportunities, the current policies and regulations, the best practices and lessons learned from other countries, and the possible policy interventions. This topic is significant and relevant for the learning and well-being of millions of students, the professional and ethical standards of teachers, the education system as a whole, and the society and the economy (Bray, 2017).

Private tutoring in Bangladesh, the history behind it

Private tutoring in Bangladesh has a rich and intricate history that stretches back to the colonial period and the evolution of the modern education framework. In the era of British rule, private tutoring was primarily accessible to the affluent classes who had the means to engage tutors for their children, particularly to ready them for rigorous competitive examinations. After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, private tutoring became more widespread and accessible, as the demand for education increased and the supply of public schools and teachers remained inadequate (Alam & Zhu, 2022). It has also become more diverse and differentiated, as various types and modes of tutoring emerged, such as individual, group, coaching center, online, and home-based tutoring (Hamid et al., 2009).

This system of private tutoring has been influenced by several socio-economic and cultural factors, such as the high-stakes examination system, the low quality of public education, parental aspirations and expectations, the social norms and pressures, and the economic opportunities and incentives (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2016). Classroom environments which facilitate a positive culture, as well as healthy associations, are critical for motivating learners to study more (Mustary, 2019).

Private tutoring has also been affected by political and policy developments, such as the introduction of the National Education Policy in 2010, the expansion of the madrasah education system, and the regulation of the coaching centers (Majumder, 2014). Private tutoring in Bangladesh has thus evolved and expanded over time, reflecting the changing needs and realities of the society and the education system.

Existing literature on private tutoring and its impact on educational equity and quality

While private tutoring has been extensively researched, and debated, there are still gaps and limitations in the existing literature and knowledge on this phenomenon, especially in the context of Bangladesh. Most of the studies have adopted a quantitative approach, using survey data and statistical methods, to measure and compare the prevalence, expenditure, and impact of private tutoring (Bray, 2017). However, these studies have not sufficiently explored the qualitative aspects, such as the perspectives, experiences, and motivations of the stakeholders, and the dynamics and complexities of the tutoring phenomenon. For instance, Subedi (2018) conducted a qualitative study on private tutoring in Bangladesh, using interviews and focus group discussions with students, parents, teachers, and tutors. They found that private tutoring was influenced by various factors, such as the examination system, the quality of public education, the parental aspirations and expectations, the social norms and pressures, and the economic opportunities and incentives.

They also found that private tutoring had diverse and contradictory effects on the stakeholders, such as enhancing or reducing the students' learning and well-being, increasing or decreasing the teachers' income and professional development, and creating or resolving the educational inequalities and conflict (Subedi, 2018).

Additionally, the existing literature on private tutoring and its impact on educational equity and quality has also revealed mixed and contradictory findings, which may reflect the different contexts, methods, and perspectives of the studies. On the one hand, some studies have suggested that private tutoring can have positive effects on the students'

academic performance, confidence, and motivation, as well as on the teachers' income and professional development. Dongre and Tewary (2015) conducted a randomized controlled trial in India, where they provided free private tutoring to a group of low-performing students, and compared their outcomes with a control group of students who did not receive tutoring. They found that private tutoring improved the students' test scores, attendance, and self-confidence, and also increased the teachers' earnings and satisfaction. On the other hand, some studies have indicated that private tutoring can have negative effects on the students' learning and well-being, as well as on the teachers' accountability and ethics.

Similarly, private tutoring might sometimes create stress and anxiety for students hence reducing their interest and creativity in learning, and compromise their physical and mental health. It can also undermine the accountability and responsibility of the teachers in the public schools, as they neglected their duties, reduced their efforts, or lowered their standards, and instead focused on their private tutoring activities (Rahman et al., 2018). Private tutoring can also create or widen educational inequalities, as it may favor the students who can afford and access quality tutoring, and disadvantage the students who cannot. For example, Azmat et al. (2021) found that private tutoring had a positive and significant effect on the students' test scores, but this effect varied across different groups of students, depending on their socio-economic status, gender, location, and type of school.

The study stressed that private tutoring increased the achievement gap between the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural, and the English-medium and the Bangla-medium students. Furthermore, some studies have argued that private tutoring can undermine the quality and relevance of the formal education system, as it may distort the curriculum, the assessment, and the learning outcomes. Chowdhury and Haque (2018) conducted a qualitative study in Bangladesh, where they interviewed students, parents, teachers, and tutors, and analyzed the curriculum and the assessment of the secondary English education. They found that private tutoring deviated from or contradicted the official syllabus, objectives, and standards of the English education, and instead focused on rote memorization, exam preparation, and grammar rules. They also found that private tutoring distorted the balance and breadth of the English curriculum, as it emphasized or overemphasized certain topics or skills, and neglected or ignored others.

Identification of key challenges associated with private tutoring in Bangladesh

Based on the review of the existing literature, the following key challenges and issues associated with private tutoring in Bangladesh can be identified:

- **Educational inequalities:** Private tutoring can exacerbate the existing disparities and gaps in the education system, such as the urban-rural divide, the gender gap, the socio-economic stratification, and the religious segmentation (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2016). Private tutoring can also create new forms of inequalities, such as the quality and cost of tutoring, the availability and accessibility of tutoring, and the opportunity and outcome of tutoring (Nath & Sylva, 2015).
- **Teacher accountability:** Private tutoring can compromise the accountability and responsibility of the teachers in the public schools, as they may neglect their duties, reduce their efforts, or lower their standards, and instead focus on their

private tutoring activities (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). Private tutoring can also create conflicts of interest and ethical dilemmas for the teachers, as they may favor or pressure their students to join their private tutoring classes, or manipulate the curriculum or the examination to suit their tutoring interests (Hamid et al., 2009).

- **Curriculum alignment:** Private tutoring can undermine the alignment and coherence of the curriculum and the assessment in the formal education system, as it may deviate from or contradict the official syllabus, objectives, and standards (Chowdhury & Haque, 2018). Private tutoring can also distort the balance and breadth of the curriculum, as it may emphasize or overemphasize certain subjects, topics, or skills, and neglect or ignore others (Alam et al., 2022).
- **Quality assurance:** Private tutoring can pose challenges and difficulties for the quality assurance and regulation of the education system, as it may operate in an informal, unregulated, or unmonitored manner. Private tutoring can also vary widely in terms of the quality and effectiveness of the tutoring services, depending on the qualifications, competencies, and practices of the tutors, and the expectations and satisfaction of the students and parents (Sujauddin & Hossain, 2017).

Research objectives and questions

The research objectives of this study are to understand and address the adverse effects of private tutoring on students, teachers, and society in Bangladesh. It has become a widespread phenomenon in many countries, especially in Bangladesh, where it is seen as a means to enhance academic achievement and competitiveness. However, private tutoring also has negative consequences, such as increasing educational inequality, undermining the quality and relevance of formal schooling, and creating psychological and financial burdens for students and parents. To achieve the research objectives, the study will address the following specific research questions:

1. What are the main factors that influence the demand and supply of private tutoring in Bangladesh?
2. What are the impacts of private tutoring on students' academic performance, motivation, well-being, and socialization in Bangladesh?
3. What are the impacts of private tutoring on teachers' professional development, workload, and ethics?
4. What are the impacts of private tutoring on the formal education system, the labor market, and the social cohesion in Bangladesh?
5. What are the existing policies and practices that regulate, monitor, or support private tutoring in Bangladesh?
6. What are the best practices and recommendations for improving the quality and equity of education and reducing the negative effects of private tutoring?

Research methodology

This research paper employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the phenomenon of private tutoring in Bangladesh and other countries. The main method used is a systematic review of the existing literature and policy documents on private tutoring, which provides a comprehensive and objective overview of the current state of

knowledge and practice on the topic. The systematic review follows a rigorous and transparent process of identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing the relevant sources and data, using predefined and explicit criteria and procedures. The systematic review also uses a quality assessment framework and a thematic analysis approach to appraise and analyze the sources and data, and to identify and present the key findings and themes (Bento & Ribeiro, 2011).

In addition to the systematic review, this research paper also conducts some stakeholder consultations or interviews to collect and analyze primary data on private tutoring in Bangladesh. The stakeholder consultations or interviews are a valuable and useful method to obtain more qualitative and in-depth insights and perspectives from the key actors and participants involved in or affected by private tutoring, such as the students, parents, teachers, tutors, policymakers, and researchers (Dongre & Tewary, 2015). The stakeholder consultations or interviews follow a purposive and convenience sampling strategy and a semi-structured and open-ended question design. The stakeholder consultations or interviews are conducted and recorded using online or phone interviews, and are transcribed and analyzed using a thematic analysis technique.

The mixed-methods approach adopted in this research paper allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of private tutoring in Bangladesh and other countries. The systematic review provides a broad and general picture of the causes, consequences, and characteristics of private tutoring, as well as the policy responses and recommendations to address its challenges and issues. The stakeholder consultations or interviews provide a specific and detailed picture of the perspectives, experiences, and motivations of the stakeholders, as well as the dynamics and complexities of the tutoring phenomenon. The mixed-methods approach also enables the validation and triangulation of the findings and themes from the secondary and primary data sources, and enhances the reliability and validity of the research paper (Kaur & Agnihotri, 2021).

Research analysis

In some way, it can be argued that private tutoring is a symptom of the underlying problems and gaps in the formal education system in Bangladesh, as well as a response to the changing needs and demands of the society and the economy. Private tutoring reflects the dissatisfaction and distrust of the students and parents with the quality and equity of the public education, as well as the aspiration and expectation of the students and parents for better educational outcomes and opportunities.

Private tutoring also reveals the challenges and difficulties of the teachers and the policymakers in ensuring the accountability and effectiveness of the public education, as well as the innovation and adaptation of the teachers and the tutors in providing the supplementary and complementary education. Therefore, private tutoring poses multifaceted and complex challenges for the education system in Bangladesh, which require comprehensive and contextualized policy responses. Based on the systematic review of the literature and policy documents, and the stakeholder consultations or interviews, the following common themes or patterns emerged from the research analysis:

1. Private tutoring is shaped by a variety of interconnected factors, including the demanding nature of examination systems, the inadequacies of public education, parental ambitions and expectations, societal norms and pressures, and

economic incentives and opportunities. These elements collectively impact the supply and demand for private tutoring, as well as its specific characteristics and dynamics, such as the varieties, methods, costs, and standards of tutoring services.

2. Private tutoring has diverse and contradictory effects on the stakeholders, such as the students, parents, teachers, and tutors. Private tutoring can have positive effects, such as improving the students' academic performance, confidence, and motivation, and increasing the teachers' income and professional development. Private tutoring can also have negative effects, such as creating stress and anxiety for the students, reducing their interest and creativity in learning, and compromising their physical and mental health, and undermining the accountability and responsibility of the teachers in the public schools.
3. Private tutoring creates or widens educational inequalities, as it may favor the students who can afford and access quality tutoring, and disadvantage the students who cannot. Private tutoring can exacerbate the existing disparities and gaps in the education system, such as the urban-rural divide, the gender gap, the socio-economic stratification, and the religious segmentation. Additionally, it can also create new forms of inequalities, such as the quality and cost of tutoring, the availability and accessibility of tutoring, and the opportunity and outcome of tutoring (Nath & Sylva, 2015).
4. Private tutoring undermines the quality and relevance of the formal education system, as it may distort the curriculum, the assessment, and the learning outcomes. Private tutoring may deviate from or contradict the official syllabus, objectives, and standards of the public education, and instead focus on rote memorization, exam preparation, and grammar rules.

Research result discussion

The research analysis also examined the international experiences and best practices in addressing the similar challenges and issues of private tutoring, and compared and contrasted them with the situation in Bangladesh. The research analysis found that different countries have adopted different policy responses and strategies to regulate, monitor, or improve the quality and equity of private tutoring, such as legal and administrative measures, such as banning, licensing, or registering the private tutoring providers, imposing taxes or fees on the private tutoring services, or enforcing rules or codes of conduct for the private tutoring activities.

Similarly, teacher training and capacity-building initiatives, such as providing professional development opportunities, incentives, or recognition for the teachers in the public schools, or enhancing the qualifications, competencies, or practices of the tutors in the private tutoring sector is very important (Dongre & Tewary, 2015). Curriculum reforms and alignment, such as revising or updating the syllabus, objectives, and standards of the public education, or ensuring the coherence and consistency of the curriculum and the assessment between the public and the private tutoring sectors (Chowdhury & Haque, 2018).

Lastly, community engagement and awareness-raising, including involving or consulting the stakeholders, such as the students, parents, teachers, and tutors, in the policy formulation and implementation, or providing information or guidance for the stakeholders on the benefits and risks of private tutoring (Bento & Ribeiro, 2011).

However, the research analysis also recognized that the policy responses and strategies that work in one country may not work in another country, as the context and the conditions of private tutoring may vary widely across different countries. Therefore, the research analysis suggested that the policy responses and strategies for private tutoring in Bangladesh should be tailored and adapted to the specific context and needs of the country, and should take into account the perspectives and experiences of the stakeholders.

Conclusion

Overall, while private tutoring is a prevalent and significant phenomenon in Bangladesh, it also poses complex challenges for the education system. This paper has analyzed the causes, consequences, and characteristics of private tutoring, and has suggested policy responses and strategies to address its adverse effects. This paper has also contributed to the literature and knowledge on private tutoring, and has called for further research and action to foster equity and inclusivity in education.

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Reflections on Language Development in Infants

Abstract

Language is the basis of human communication and is the most important key to complete mental development and thinking. Therefore, children must learn to communicate using appropriate language. For this to happen, the development of language in the child must be understood as a biological process, complete with internal laws and with marked stages of evolution. Despite the research that has been conducted, the origin of language is not clearly understood. Language is the faculty that human beings use to communicate with other people through a system of linguistic signs. It is the product of integration of various semantic, morphosyntactic, and phonological components.

Keywords: language development, empiricist approach, nativist approach, cognitive approach, mental processes

Introduction

Over time, two philosophical currents have emerged that oppose each other: the nativist theory that maintains that language is a gift that humans are born with, and the empirical theory that maintains that the social environment is the only determining factor in language development. From these currents, theories are developed to account for the acquisition of language. These theories are not necessarily in conflict, but at some point in human development they interact and complement each other.

The objective of this work is to study the linguistic components, the evolutionary stages, the history of the field of language study in infants, and the applicability of this knowledge in our current environment. In nature, everything has an origin and an evolutionary development according to the different needs and concerns. Similarly, there is a process of development in human language, to make their communication more effective.

Evolution of language

Language is the most important element in the life of human beings, dating back at least to the origins of homo sapiens, who has always needed to communicate. Language has evolved to meet the needs of human beings, and human beings have devised the

different types of languages that we recognize today. An example of this can be found in prehistory, when homo sapiens learned to communicate with signs, since it was necessary to organize to develop activities that ensured their subsistence (Habermas, 2010). But the nativist and empiricist approaches offer important insights into language acquisition. These theories are set out in the following sections.

Empiricist approach

In the empiricist approach, behavioral theory is central. Skinner (1994) and Bandura (2021) are linked to behaviorism, and treat language as a behavior that arises or is inhibited based on the stimuli and responses from the environment in which the child develops. They consider that language is learned through imitation and reinforcement, through a process of adaptation to external stimuli of correction and repetition of the adult. Vocabulary and grammar are acquired by the child through operant conditioning. For Skinner (1994) all human behavior is governed by the general scheme of stimulus-response. He argues that imitation is the ability that allows the child to access language. Therefore, parents are of vital importance in the development of the child's language, since they are the ones who will support language learning by shaping and reinforcing grammar.

Nativist approach

For Papalia and Martorell (2021) the nativist approach maintains that certain abilities are fixed in the brain from the moment of a person's birth; the brain has characteristics at birth that allow it to learn from the environment. This is the innate theory of the renowned psycholinguist Chomsky (1989), who argues that the beginnings of language are innate and not learned. He maintains that language is acquired because human beings are biologically programmed for it. Chomsky (Ibid.) argues that all human beings develop a language because they are prepared for it, however hard it may be. Human beings have a language device that programs the brain to analyze language and decipher its rules.

Cognitive approach

According to Piaget (1997), the cognitive approach to language establishes that thought appears when the symbolic function develops and these action schemes underpin language. Language arises from the synchronization of sensory-motor intelligence and symbolic function. Intelligence allows the development of language. The development of language schemes is synonymous with intelligence, and is a fundamental element for the subject to adapt to his or her environment and to survive. From this perspective, learning begins with the first sensory motor practices, and therein is the start of their cognitive and linguistic development. The individual builds knowledge through interaction with the environment. Piaget (1997) studies the development of logical processes and defines two types of language:

- 1) Egocentric language, where the words are accompanied by actions and movements. It is divided into three categories:
 - Repetition (0 to 12 months approximately).
 - Monologue (12 to 18 months approximately).
 - Collective monologue (18 months to 24 months approximately).

- 2) Socialized language, which is the domain of information and communication in society. Piaget (1997) divides it into three categories:
 - Adapted information (2 to 3 years approximately).
 - Criticism (3 to 4 years approximately).
 - Orders, requests and threats (4 to 7 years approximately).

Formation of mental processes

Vygotsky (2020) was the first to highlight the fundamental role of speech for the formation of mental processes. Speech has two functions: external communication with others, and internal manipulation of thoughts. The development of the human being occurs through processes of exchange and transmission of knowledge in a communicative and social environment. For Vygotsky (Ibid.) language in children is initially social and external in form and function. That is, language is produced externally through socialization, but it is internalized to form the thought that is the internal part. In the development of the child's language there are stages or levels which are described in the following.

- 1) Pre-linguistic level from birth to 12 months approximately.
 - Phonological component: addresses the suprasegmental aspects of speech such as intonation and stress.
 - Semantic component: addresses the decoding of non-verbal language, continuous feedback from the environment, and imitation.
- 2) Linguistic level from 12 months to 5 years approximately.
 - Semantic component: growing comprehension of vocabulary.
 - Phonological component: the acquisition of increasingly complex phonemes.
 - Syntactic component: begins with isolated words, later joining them to form simple phrases, and then sentences. This happens around 3 years approximately.
- 3) Pure verbal level from 5 years to 12 years approximately.
 - Symbolizes the meanings of words. At this stage the child builds abstractions that are age appropriate, such as the reading-writing process and mathematical calculation.

Components of language

Semantic component: Semantics studies the meaning, and its minimum unit is the same. The seme is the minimum unit of meaning and therefore cannot be isolated, but is joined to other semes forming a sememe. Thus, the 'chair' sememe is made up of the semes 'with backrest', 'with legs', 'for one person'. It is constructed through the word. This branch of linguistics studies the meaning of language, a very important specialty, since language must mean something (Chomsky, 1989).

Morphosyntactic component: This combines morphology and syntax. It studies the shape of words, their internal structure and the rules of combination, which is what we know as grammar. Words form sentences or phrases. Sentences express something complete, and have all the characteristics of a sentence. Phrases express something incomplete (Chomsky, 1988).

Pragmatic component: This deals with the relationship between words and their users. It is the analysis of how what is meant is expressed and how it is understood. It is said that pragmatics had its origins in philosophy, and for this reason there are many ideas about it. For pragmatics, it is essential to develop communicative competence precisely in order to be able to argue on any subject and with anyone (Chomsky, 1989).

Phonological component: It covers the smallest units that can be distinguished in the language. They are units that have only a signifier, because until they are combined with others they do not acquire meaning. Its units are phonemes and sounds. A phoneme is the abstract image that speakers have of a sound, while the sound is the material and effective pronunciation of a phoneme (Chomsky, 1993).

One of the main and important characteristics of human beings is their ability to communicate with others. This is achieved through speech. Speech is the production of sound that, when combined with other sounds, produces words. Words make up the language of a country. There are malformations that occur in some human beings and these prevent them from developing speech, but it does not limit their power to communicate, since the exchange of ideas can be given through gestures, moans, or signs. Two very important factors influence the production of speech. One that is 'the machine' which produces the sounds, and the other the actual sound that comes out of 'the machine'. Phonetics analyses the acoustics and the organs involved in the production and reception of sounds. These are called 'phones', and are part of speech (Chomsky, 1994).

Pedagogical knowledge of the infant

Pedagogical knowledge of the infant has been chosen as a field of study of teaching in infancy, because Foucault (2002) argues for the possibility of combining epistemologically oriented archaeological analysis with genealogical analysis to account for the formation of objects, concepts and techniques within social practices (Castro, 2014).

The discourse about pedagogical knowledge of the infant is disparate and embraces a range of ideas:

- Those who contribute to the discourse include various organs of the State; professional associations, parents, and advocates of popular reforms of the curriculum.
- The discourse embraces the concepts of the historicity of pedagogy as well as those that belong to other domains of knowledge.
- Citizens have the power to contribute to speech to legitimate political power.
- Pedagogical knowledge of the infant reproduces hegemonic knowledge of other fields at the level of objects, concepts, forms of discussion and strategic choices.
- The production of knowledge by the subjects of knowledge delimits the institutionalization process for the institutions of pedagogical practice.
- The institutions where pedagogical practices are implemented depend upon the selection of one or more pedagogic strategies.
- The teacher can only occupy certain permitted positions in our social formation.
- The norms that govern the operation of educational institutions (teaching procedures and school discipline) are set by state institutions (sanctions, discipline, requirements) (Zuluaga, 1976).

Careful observation of the conceptual deployment of pedagogical knowledge refers to:

- The function it fulfills in general knowledge and between the intricacies of education, pedagogy and didactics.
- The episteme where it appears. The narrative that underpins and legitimizes it in the wide (unlimited) world of education and pedagogy.
- The generative themes around which it is organized, which are closely related to education, pedagogy, didactics, and the broader discourse of the professional and citizenship development of people (skills, attitudes and competencies).
- The interaction with other knowledge or with variants of the same pedagogical knowledge.
- The virtual and real instances (institutions and practices, symbols) that support it (Zuluaga, 1977).

Pedagogical knowledge of the infant, failing to attain scientific standards that are universally accepted, must make an epistemological retreat and regroup its efforts to provide a satisfactory explanation, in principle, of its own strengths as a discipline, and perhaps as a science (Zuluaga, 1999). To do this, it must start by accepting its weakness (epistemic fragility) and diversity. Knowledge, stories, experience, practice, and institutions, are at its base, they characterize it, but at the same time they set a trap of lack of definition and ambiguity (Foucault, 2012).

Pedagogical knowledge is the essential basis for seriousness, to collect meaning and articulate that deliquescent notion and concept. In a special and critical way, this is the archaeological model.

The work of Foucault opens the way, since it accounts for the instability of the concepts and the repercussions for the institutional daily work of the agents of education and pedagogy. Above all, it clarifies what is due, precisely, to the permeability, diffusion and contingency of its objects: the constitution of the subjects and their vital world. It also points out the lack of theory in this regard and the difficulty of describing, explaining and innovating within and around this area (Foucault, 2005).

Pedagogical knowledge of the infant is based, in the social and human sciences, on the axis of socialization and subjectification (in the double sense: being placed in a social order and being converted into a subject – a person at the center of their own development) and empowerment for the work (skills) that in the academic field are translated into education, pedagogy and didactics (Veyne, 2009).

The strength of the expression lies in its capacity for convergence, grouping, and containment, while incorporating the most open aspects of formative and educational matters. Pedagogical knowledge of the infant is much more comprehensive than any theory, approach, paradigm or current. Its great interest is knowledge in general, the conditions of its appearance, its beginnings, its development, its interactions, and its claim to being a science. It intersects with power practices and micro-powers (Foucault, 1992).

Conclusions

Once the approaches to language development have been described and the most important aspects of these have been disclosed, it can be said that the theories put forward by Chomsky (1989), Papalia and Martorell (2021), Foucault (2002), Zuluaga (1999),

Piaget (1997) and Vygotsky (2020) focus on cognitive ability, although each theory has its own approaches. On the other hand, Skinner's (1989) behavioral theory does not take into account the infant's potential to develop linguistic processes when interacting in a social context. It ignores the semantic and pragmatic aspects. It cannot explain how the rules of language are developed. The acquisition of language allows people specific ways to relate in social environments. It is the means by which human beings transmit their beliefs and values, thereby allowing the acquisition of knowledge and the development of culture. In a broader context, oral expression is important for learning. This analysis applied to the infant's linguistic development and processes of building up components is an excellent starting point in understanding the elements that make up the linguistic system. Language is an arbitrary system and, as such, to be an effective communication system it requires a stable social group. The infant must live in a context that stimulates the need and the desire to communicate. These are fundamental tools in the acquisition of new words, when socializing with people of different social status, and with people from a largely enriched culture. This is how the lexicon of each person increases and the means by which they are used. Communication allows the person to express any number of things as they choose, but they must also want to communicate (Habermas, 2010).

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Part 4

Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training

Lorna M Dreyer & Annaly M Strauss

Affirming Inclusive Education at University: A Case of Two Sub-Saharan African Universities

Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the experiences of students with learning disabilities (LD) at two universities in Sub-Saharan Africa. While universities are increasingly addressing the needs of students with sensory and physical disabilities, there is less emphasis on LD which does not present physically, thus often referred to as invisible or hidden disabilities. The research was conducted as qualitative case studies, guided by Vygotsky's social cultural theory (SCT). A basic qualitative research methodology, embedded in an interpretive paradigm was used. Data was collected through an online background survey and semi-structured interviews. Thematic qualitative content analysis was used to analyse collected data systematically. From a social justice perspective, the major findings suggest that there are several factors that impede on equal education for students with LD at university. The research outcomes revealed that the hidden nature of LD becomes apparent as participants must self-declare their needs. They further experienced a lack of acknowledgement and support from lecturers. Most participants revert to valuing the support of family and friends more than that of lecturers. While both universities have policies and structures of support for students with LD, it is concluded that university lecturers need to adopt an inclusive pedagogical stance by acknowledging the factors that affect the learning of students with LD. Recommendations from the findings include the need for professional development for lecturers and increased awareness of learning support services on campus. It is further concluded that university lecturers need to be reflective of their pedagogical practices to transform higher education learning spaces in pursuit of authentic inclusion.

Keywords: learning disabilities, inclusion, university lecturers, transformation, inclusive pedagogy, social cultural theory, learning support, policy

Introduction

Inclusive education has been solidified as priority by many countries across the globe. Developing countries, too have accepted this challenge to prepare trainee teachers to be able to teach within diverse educational settings and being able to address diverse needs of students. With this, higher education institutions (HEI) have instituted various courses and modules within their teacher education programmes that are designed to prepare students to be able to teach a diverse learner population (Jacobs & Dreyer, 2022). Several years later, this has proven valuable and has contributed to establish inclusive educational practices in basic education systems. This become apparent as there is currently an increase of students at university that present with disabilities and particularly also learning disabilities (Ebo, 2016). Our contention is that as we prepare trainee teachers to be able to apply inclusive education practices, these practices need to be acknowledged and demonstrated by lecturers who teach these students.

The South African Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education (DoE), 2001) states that the term “barriers to learning and development” refer to a diverse range of factors. These factors may lead to the education system being incapable to address diverse needs of learners. This can negatively impact on the learning process and prevent access to the provision of appropriate educational support even at higher education level. Dreyer (2015) identifies four broad categories in which barriers to learning can be grouped: 1) systemic; 2) societal; 3) pedagogic and curriculum; and 4) intrinsic. Intrinsic barriers are further classified as neurological, physical, sensory, and cognitive. Learning disabilities falls within the category of neurological barriers. For this paper, it is acknowledged that all four types of barriers come into play at some point as we endeavour comprehending the subjective experiences of the participants in this study.

The debate on inclusive education in higher education institutions is directly related to the efforts to transform higher education (Couzensa et al., 2015).

Transforming higher education

Many African countries have embarked on policy and strategies to transform the educational landscapes that were shaped by colonial forces. In order to enact transformation in higher education, it is imperative that these efforts are contextually responsive (Dreyer, 2021). Namibia and South Africa have close links established under colonial rule. With this shared history both countries are currently still on a path to rectify and transform society to promote unity within the diverse populations. It, then, come as no surprise that both countries are signatories to various declarations and conventions on inclusion, such as the Salamanca Statement and the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All, among others. With this they have also accepted the call for inclusion as a “strategy” to transform higher education (Department of Education, 1997; Ministry of Education, 2013). Both Namibia and South Africa have enshrined, in their respective constitutions, inclusion as a social justice issue. There is a large body of literature on social inclusion in pursuit of social justice internationally and both these countries (Polat, 2010).

As basic education progressed with inclusive education, these students are now entering university. This is aligned with the international trend that higher education institutions are increasingly also accepting students with disabilities (Hadjikakou & Hartas, 2008; Ebo, 2016). According to research there is a strong link between learning

experiences of students, the contextual factors (such as policies and institutional support structures), and pedagogy applied by teachers. In this paper, due to its limited scope, we want to briefly touch on all three these aspects. Regarding student experiences, research (Gibson, 2012) indicates it is important to listen to the views (voices) of students with disabilities to fully understand their education experiences. While universities are increasingly accepting students with disabilities, studies show that students do not always get the required support or feel that they belong (Ryan, 2007). The notion of pedagogy is frequently used to refer to how teaching is undertaken. However, research (Loughran, 2013) indicates that pedagogy should instead be viewed as the complex inter-relationship between teaching and learning. According to Moriña (2020), an inclusive pedagogy does not refer solely to teaching actions, but that it involves other teaching skills as well. However, it is significant to note that to fully contextualise students' experiences, one needs to acknowledge pre-university factors.

Student voices

International research mainly focuses on the implementation of education and policies on restructuring policies. However, it is becoming increasingly important to listen to the voices of those included. Their subjective views on their experiences of inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation are important. There is a growing body of knowledge on the significance of the voices of students with disabilities, regarding their experiences of being included in higher education. This can contribute significantly assessing their needs, identifying barriers and subsequently inform provision of support (Gibson, 2012). Barriers to learning refer to a range of factors, including disability, which impede on access to and participation in educational institutions (DoE, 2001).

Contextual factors play a significant role in how students with disabilities experience university. However, according to Ryan (2007) very few studies investigated the experiences of students once they have been accepted at university. Contextual factors that influence students with disabilities' experiences vastly range from classroom and lecturer experiences to access and knowledge of institutional support structures.

Learning disabilities are not as observable as sensory or physical disabilities but have an effect on the basic cognitive processes essential for comprehension and/or the use of spoken or printed language. These are very important in education at any level but particularly so at university. These students are commonly of average or above average intelligence. It is therefore significant that lecturers are cognisant and reflective of their own pedagogical stance. Research is increasingly pointing out that teachers at university should embrace an inclusive pedagogy. Florian (2015) asserts that an inclusive pedagogy challenges some traditional ways of rationalising inclusive education. It encourages teachers to be contextually responsive to the changing demographic composition of educational institutions. Instead of focussing on providing support to some students, which is a deficit model approach, to a pedagogical stance which supports everybody while acknowledging difference (diversity) in the class.

Lastly, research has shown that pre-university factors can play a fundamental role in student experiences and success at university (Pather et al., 2017). These include family support, food- and financial security, etc. These external factors can influence students' experiences at university.

This paper aimed to comparatively highlight the experiences of students with learning disabilities (LD) at two universities in Sub-Saharan Africa. While universities are

increasingly addressing the needs of students with sensory and physical disabilities, there is less emphasis on LD which does not present physically, thus often referred to as invisible or hidden disabilities. The emphasis is on students' voices to inform policy implementation and the provision of student support services at HEIs in pursuit of transformation.

Theoretical framework

This research is framed by Vygotsky's social cultural theory (SCT). SCT embraces the notion that social, cultural-historical, and individual factors are key in human development and learning. Inclusive education and thus also, an inclusive pedagogy embraces the notion that there are individual factors that play a role in a students' (dis-)ability. At the same time, it does not assume that these individual differences between learners are attributed to problems located within the learner. This is a deficit, medical approach to disabilities, which assumes that these differences should be "treated" by a specialist. It thus does not hold an inclusive pedagogy.

The socio-cultural perspective is significant in that it allows teachers to consider individual differences as something to be expected. It further provides an understanding of these differences in terms of the interactions between several different variables. Difference is thus not seen as a problem. SCT allows us to understand that students differ as result of social, cultural-historic, and other individual factors. Furthermore, it highlights how the different aspects of human development interact with experience to produce individual differences (Florian, 2015). Vygotsky further saw human learning and development as the transformation of shared social activity to internalised processes. Learning thus takes place on two levels; first on a social level where knowledge is constructed during shared activities such as lectures, group work, discussions, etc. The classroom provides the social context in which these learning activities play out and the teacher takes on the role as more knowledgeable other (MKO) as they provide guidance through the learning process. On the second level, the individual level, the student internalises the learning and new experiences. The new learning subsequently becomes part of their cognitive repertoire.

This theoretical underpinning provides a premise from which we can understand the complex inter-relationship between teaching and learning. It can thus provide insight into the experiences of students with learning disabilities at university.

Methodology

A basic qualitative research methodology, embedded in an interpretive paradigm was used. The research was, conducted as qualitative case studies, guided by Vygotsky's social cultural theory (SCT). The goal of case studies is not to generalise but to explore and understand participants experiences, understanding and beliefs, regarding the phenomenon of interest. In this study, the experiences of university students with a learning disability.

The participants were purposefully selected from the 2 identified university campuses. The criteria for participation were that they had to be:

- 1) full-time registered students currently studying education in the Faculty of Education;
- 2) diagnosed with a learning disability while at school;

- 3) have received educational and assessment support up to and including grade 12;
- 4) and that they have access to the internet.

All possible participants were invited to take part in the study through both universities' online platforms. With the initial invitation, students had to indicate their willingness to take part in the project. From the South African university, there were 14 students who responded positively and 13 from the Namibian university. There were thus 27 participants. This small sample is representative of the relative still small number of students who have learning disabilities at university. It may also be an indication that there are students who did not want to self-declare that they have a learning disability due to fear of possible stigmatisation. Although not all the participants in this study had a formal diagnosis of learning disability, they voluntarily acknowledged that they experienced most of the learning difficulties that characterise LD. They were further all conscious of the possibility of being labelled negatively as a result thereof.

Data was then collected through an online background survey and semi-structured interviews. Data from the background survey was used to inform the interviews. During the interviews the themes that emerged from the survey could be explored in more detail. Thematic qualitative content analysis was used to analyse collected data systematically.

Findings

The following five themes have emerged during the data analysis process: 1) Support received at school; 2) Knowledge of support structures at university; 3) Requesting academic support; 4) Experiences of inclusion; and 5) Factors contributing to academic success. The findings are presented below, showing the student experiences in comparison between the two institutions.

Theme 1. Support received at school

Uni.SA	Uni.NAM
The support provided at school level was mainly focused on providing support during assessment opportunities in the form of concessions such as extra writing time.	The main form of support provided at school was in the form of afternoon classes or summer school. Some did not get any support.

Theme 2. Knowledge of support structures at university

Uni.SA	Uni.NAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New undergraduate students generally did not know that support is provided at university level before they started the academic program. • However, parents played an instrumental role in enquiring. • Not all students felt comfortable about self-declaring their LD and are thus reluctant to request any form of academic support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of the who responded to this question, indicated that they were not aware of any support services for students with learning disabilities at university. • Friends played a valuable role as sources of information. • Participants who responded indicated that they did not inform the lecturer that they have a learning disability. They cited fear of stigmatisation for disclosure.

Theme 3. Requesting academic support

Uni.SA	Uni.NAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student generally explained that they would rather ask a classmate or friend for help when necessary. • One in 1st year group would ask lecturer for help. • In the 2nd year group no one would ask the lecturer. • 3 indicated that they would rather ask a family member for help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority prefer to request support from the lecturer. • Some would ask friends to help. • A few indicated that support would consult the psychologist. • 2 of the eleven respondents indicated that they would not ask anybody for help.

Theme 4. Experiences of inclusion

Uni.SA	Uni.NAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the first-year students reacted positively since they experienced a general feeling of being included in academic activities. • One exception - not feeling included and explained: <i>No, because I did not make them aware of my issue.</i> • In contrast, most second-year students were ambivalent since they experienced varied forms of inclusion (or exclusion) from class to class. • One student who felt excluded from the class, specifically mentioned the difficulty experienced in trying to keep up focussing and making notes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the participants responded positively to the question: <i>Do you feel that lecturers include you in classroom activities?</i> • Only one indicated that he/she only feel included at some points. • While another indicated that none of the lecturers made her/him feel included.

Theme 5. Factors contributing to academic success

Uni.SA	Uni.NAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the participants indicated that support from their friends were the main contributors to their academic success. • Only 1 regarded support from lecturers as contributing to their academic success thus far. • 1 attributed success to concessions received. • 1 to student support services at university. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-university factors plays a fundamental role in student experiences and success at university. They highlighted contextual social factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the need for the university to “meet students halfway to render financial support”; ○ university must “provide meals to improve their concentration” as they come from different backgrounds, and some has this need; food security.

Discussion

It has been established that internationally basic education systems are increasingly supporting students within inclusive education systems. This includes students who have been identified with a learning disability. Therefore, students with learning disabilities

are increasingly entering higher education (Couzensa et al., 2015; Kendall, 2016; Ryan, 2007). While higher education institutions are challenged to accept students with learning disabilities, they must, at the same time, provide them with opportunities for equal participation. This poses some challenges as learning disabilities do not present in the same way as physical and sensory disabilities and are often referred to as invisible disabilities (Couzensa et al., 2015). Therefore, unlike at school level where teachers and parents are the first to identify that the child has a learning problem and seek appropriate support, students at university must self-declare that they have a learning disability in order to access academic support.

The findings indicate that in comparison to students in South Africa, the Namibian students did not receive any formal support while at school. This might be attributed to the possibility that they were mostly not formally diagnosed with a learning disability. They, however, received some formal support through extra classes after school. In contrast, the students at the SA university reported to have received support in the form of assessment concessions, such as extra writing time and a scribe, during examinations.

Students from both universities were aware of possible stigmatisation if they should declare their disability. Nevertheless, before students can request support, they need to be aware of available support structures. In both cases, most students did not know that the university have academic support policies and support structures in place. This is even though both universities have information regarding the available support services on their websites. While parents played an important role to enquire about support for their child at uni.SA, findings suggest that most students at uni.NAM relied on their friends for information. This reluctance to enquire about support at the university stems from a fear of stigmatisation. This is true for participants at both the universities which corresponds with the literature internationally.

This reluctance to enquire about possible support for students with learning disabilities inevitably spills over into the lecture halls. However, while students at uni.SA would rather ask family and friends to help them, most of the participants from uni.NAM did not have any problem asking the lecturer for help. This is further confirmed in that the majority of participants from uni.NAM experienced that they were positively included during lectures. In contrast, only the participants from the first-year cohort at uni.SA had positive experiences of being included in the lecture room. The students in their second year were indecisive as they experienced different levels of feeling included which differed from class to class. These findings resonate with the literature on student experiences (Ebo, 2016). It also resonates with the understanding of an inclusive pedagogy (Florian, 2015). It seems as if lecturers at uni.NAM have greater success in providing support to all students.

Some unanticipated responses emanated to the question “What do you think contributed most to your academic success thus far?”. While participants at uni.SA focussed on the support they receive from friends and family, participants from uni.NAM pointed out some pre-university factors such as food- and financial insecurity and the needs they have, to enable to continue their studies successfully. This finding resonates with the notion of SCT that there are various social and other factors that impact on the learning and development of the individual. It affirms the differences of the individuals that goes beyond the learning disability. It is further interesting to note that only two students from uni.SA attributed their experience of success to the support structures of the university and concessions provided during assessment.

While both these universities have policy and structures for the support of students with LD, it is clear that they are not as visible as they should be. Furthermore, these findings indicate that university lecturers need to adopt an inclusive pedagogical stance by acknowledging the factors that affect the learning of students with LD.

Inclusive education in pursuit of transformation in higher education, requires a whole repertoire of knowledge and skills from lecturers. It is also imperative that the voices of students with learning disabilities, are listened to. The implications of the findings from this research are thus two-fold: 1) lecturers need to continuously develop as professionals through in-service training; and 2) existing support services for students at the two institutions must be made more visible through explicit information sessions to new students.

Conclusion

From a social justice perspective, the major findings suggest that there are several factors that impede on equal education for students with LD at university. The social cultural lens through which these findings are viewed helps to understand the contextual lived realities that students with learning disabilities experience at university.

Recommendations from the findings include the need for professional development for lecturers and increased awareness of learning support services on campus. It is concluded that university lecturers need to be reflective of their pedagogical practices to transform higher education learning spaces in pursuit of authentic inclusion.

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Gertrude Shotte

Widening and Narrowing Pedagogical Spaces: Imperatives for English Language Teaching Approaches

Abstract

The English language is the most widely-spoken language in the world. This fact deserves serious consideration for educators at all levels of the education system, but more so for those who are tasked with the teaching of English to learners whose Mother Tongue is not English. Globalisation, the internationalisation of education and migratory trends are largely responsible for narrowing the interconnection of world peoples via various means. For this very reason, English language pedagogical issues exist in multilingual countries as well as in those countries that have a migrant multilingual population. This paper explores the value of, and benefits to be gained, from employing tailor-made pedagogical approaches in English language teaching. It contends that the all-embracing educational landscape necessitates a parallel move with the fast-changing times. It also explains why and how pedagogical spaces should be widened and narrowed. The discussion draws from a wide literature base, research findings and personal experiences, but zeros in on theoretical frameworks such as constructivism, social constructivism and scaffolding. The paper concludes with the assertion that the widening and narrowing of pedagogical approaches have become an imperative in an ever-changing world. This is especially pertinent for countries that are concerned with the development of productive and participating citizens, which in turn stimulates and produces national development.

Keywords: pedagogy, Mother Tongue, migratory patterns, globalisation, constructivism, social constructivism, scaffolding

In the face of glocalisation's frustrations and challenges, the call to revisit pedagogy resounds loud and clear. A one-size-fits-all pedagogical approach belies the very essence of education, which has teaching and learning at its core, and development, expansion and sustainability as its framework. – Gertrude Shotte

There is no true pedagogy without criticality, without dialogue, without change, without reachability, without impartiality, without interdependency and learner empowerment. – Gertrude Shotte

Introduction

The realities of how languages play a major role in various national and international activities, render the English language the most widely spoken in the world. The use of the language in political, economic, social, and culture discourses, as well as in academic, business and trading legalities has earned the English language its global status (Gohil, 2013; Rohmah, 2005). This status brings with it a respectable level of importance for

developmental growth of the global citizenry. It is for this incontestable reason that educators at all levels of the education system should pay focused attention to English language teaching. This descriptive paper focuses on English language learners, but targets the pedagogy employed by teachers who are tasked with the teaching of English to learners whose Mother Tongue is not English.

The expression *the world is a global village*, finds full resonance in the outworkings of globalisation, the internationalisation of education and migratory trends. The increasing high levels of interconnection among societies across the world are largely responsible for narrowing the interconnection of world peoples via various means (Purba, 2021; Chirico, 2014). It follows therefore that English language pedagogical issues exist in multilingual countries and in those countries that have a migrant multilingual population. It is against this backdrop that the paper explores the value of, and benefits to be gained, from employing tailor-made pedagogical approaches in English language teaching. Obviously, it becomes necessary for the all-embracing educational landscape to be in step with the fast-changing times.

Following a brief note about the methodology, the paper takes a peek at the concepts and the theories that frame the discussion. It next explains why and how pedagogical spaces should be widened and narrowed. The explanations were strengthened by some practical examples and suggestions that are based on personal experiences. The paper concludes with the assertion that the widening and narrowing of pedagogical approaches is vitally important in all teaching learning activities, especially in the teaching of English for learners whose Mother Tongue is not English. This is especially pertinent for countries that are concerned with the development of productive and participating citizens, which in turn stimulates and produces national development.

Methodology

There are voluminous data sources that addresses the topic under discussion. In order to expand and support my information base and to discover what other researchers have found about the said topic, I employed a literature-based methodological approach, where the literature is the main data source. Snyder (2019, p. 334) affirms: “a literature review is an excellent way of synthesizing research findings to show evidence on a meta-level and to uncover areas in which more research is needed, which is a critical component of creating theoretical frameworks and building conceptual models”. The meta-level used here does not focus “on data, as reflected by the operationalization of variables, the magnitude of effect sizes, and the sample sizes”, but on narrative review (King & He, 2005, p. 670). The paper is wholly qualitative in nature and is built within conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Personal experiences also formed part of the discussion.

One of the limitations of the qualitative design is researcher bias because of personal experiences and/or the area of expertise, which may lead to the possibility of making incorrect assertions, or even making erroneous inferences. In building and presenting the discussion, I constantly reflected on the limitations of the approach, with a view to avoiding, as much as possible, the surfacing of biases and subjectivity in content selection and data analysis.

Conceptualisations and theoretical perspectives

Globalisation, internationalisation of education, migratory trends and pedagogy are the main concepts that bound the claims presented in this paper. Associated to these are several theories that support teaching learning practices. The confines of this paper do not allow the space that can demonstrate a full interaction with the concepts and related theories. It will therefore present brief perspectives on constructivism, social constructivism and scaffolding, as well as show their connection to other useful theories.

Concepts

Globalisation

This is a concept that is so complex that it has attracted numerous debates on definitional levels. Put simply, it is the influential methods used by organisations to do business on a global scale. It refers to the global-scale changes that happen in political, economic, social and cultural spaces of life (Purba, 2021; Appadurai, 1996). For the purpose of this paper, I will concentrate on Appadurai's (1996) five proposed 'scapes' – ethnoscape (global migratory trends), technoscape (links people via technology), finanscape (unstable economies), mediascape (information flows), and ideoscape (political ideologies). There are inextricable continuous interactions between the scapes, which have serious implications for teaching learning activities around the world.

Internationalisation of education

The literature shows a strong developmental link between internationalisation and higher education, within cross-border activities (Marginson, 2022). Given that international, regional and local share a complex relationship that interacts on various levels, which are encased by cultural hybridity, it seems safe to conclude that the internationalisation of education can also be interpreted within other non-tertiary education processes. Knight contends that the integration of international dimensions into teaching learning and research activities, is what creates an international stance (2004, p. 7). This means that non-tertiary institutions who integrate international dimensions on the basis of their action research work, can too be linked to an internationalised status. In a world that is influenced by the globalisation 'scapes', it is a step in the right direction for educators to embrace the incorporation of international elements into their pedagogic activities.

Migratory trends

Migration is not a new phenomenon. Little wonder that it generates a plethora of discussions in national, regional and international settings. Both in and out migration impact education in many ways. But immigrant learners are the ones who seem to be negatively impacted most. European Network of Education Councils (2013) notes:

... excellence and equity should be regarded as the two sides of the same coin, since offering equal opportunities to all students is critical in the process of building the pedagogical context in which all children are ambitious and are challenged to learn and develop, discover their talents and achieve high standards of the learning outcomes.

Clearly, immigrant learners need to have appropriate support if they are to have a smooth integration into a given learning institution. They should also be allowed to experience educational attainment, and success in the labour market.

Pedagogy

The word pedagogy is generally linked to teaching, but it denotes much more. I employ Friesen and Su's (2023) explanation as the framework for this paper. They see pedagogy as "limited neither to sets of instructional strategies or political programs, nor to what occurs in institutional settings and professional practices..., but as a broader conception of human becoming". Taking this position, Friesen and Su link pedagogy to an "unavoidably ethical activity" that is primarily undertaken for the learner.

Theories and related methods

Constructivism and social constructivism

The theory of constructivism is ascribed to the works of Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner. Lev Vygotsky has the credit for social constructivism. Both theories are concerned with how knowledge gained via personal experiences, is constructed and understood. They propose that learners are active participants in their learning. Emphasis is placed on meaning and understanding via a discovery-based approach (Akpan et al., 2020). Sometimes it is necessary to plan discovery-based activities that are outplayed in group settings. This is the precise point where social constructivism enters the theoretical discourse.

Language, interpretation and experience are at the heart of knowledge attainment specific settings where people interact. In these settings knowledge becomes socially constructed. But knowledge is also co-created because it was developed within a group setting. What is demonstrated here is the meeting of 'old' and 'new' knowledges, which prompts action after new knowledge is processed mentally. In social constructivism, there is the acquisition of knowledge within a social context, and this in turn supports cognitive development. Undoubtedly, educational learning spaces are ideal places for the cultivation of learner's social interaction. Bruner and Piaget also support the idea that cognitive development happens in a social space where people influence each other. Constructivist and social constructivist pedagogical approaches are instrumental in motivating learning, which is made possible by applying Piaget's readiness principle to all learning activities. When a learner's development is stimulated, learning as well as the desire to continue to learn, happens spontaneously. This practice facilitates a smooth transition to Bruner's spiral learning ideas.

Scaffolding

This term was coined by Bruner who connected it to Vygotsky's work on Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) – skills or knowledge that learners gain with the help or guidance from others, hence the common use of the term Vygotsky's scaffolding. Although closely linked to Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, scaffolding is actually a teaching method that "helps students learn more by working with a teacher or a more advanced student to achieve their learning goals" (Sarikas, 2020). The literature reviewed points to the effectiveness of scaffolding, but with a caveat to be mindful of creating passive learners (Ibid. et al.). Other theories that are used alongside scaffolding are Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Gardner's multiple intelligences, Ausabel's advanced organisers and Bloom's taxonomy of objectives. The application of theory to pedagogy is a beneficial exercise for learners and teachers alike.

Widening and narrowing spaces

The theorisation of space offers more than explanations of the physical, but also the social meanings that occur within the said material spaces. This acknowledgement points to the unavoidable interrelationship between the material space and the social interaction that governs activities in that space. Wang and Wang (2022, p. 732) claim: “Learning space is not restricted to a physical space where learning occurs intentionally... it also involves a variety of interpersonal, socio-cultural and institutional context...”. They further note that an “interactive learning space is indispensable to the implementation of collaborative learning” (Ibid.). Wang and Wang’s theorisation of the widening and narrowing of space is used in this paper.

Physical space is a crucial element in a learning environment. Sometimes it becomes necessary to have different seating arrangements to accommodate effective learning. Equally important is the consideration given to the value of interpersonal and socio-cultural spaces. In these spaces, educators have numerous opportunities to bring the aforementioned theories to life. The application of constructivism and social constructivism theories may necessitate a widening and/or a narrowing of physical or interpersonal spaces. Learning does not only take place in a standardised seating arrangement, but also in situations where a personal and/or collaborative style is necessary. Some tasks can be dealt with singularly, others need a shared formula, either with peers or a facilitator. For pedagogy to work at its best, there may be even a need to widen or narrow institutional spaces, although there is the recognition that they are governed by national policies.

The relationship between space and pedagogy is clear. Effective planning is likely to result in effective teaching learning interactions and success.

Why revisit pedagogic practices?

The fallout of globalisation, the internationalisation of education and migratory trends have brought about challenging situations for educational institutions. Teacher education institutions and other training organisations are compelled to respond to the ever-changing educational landscapes. However, in some cases, some of the pedagogical practices fall short of meeting high-quality-education expectations.

An English language focus is chosen because English is the most widely-spoken language in the world. For reasons beyond the scope of this paper, English is the official language of many countries, but Mother Tongue and other dialects are widely spoken. The switching between languages is a common occurrence. There is also the situation where English is only spoken at school and at other commemorative events. But teachers and learners live in these very communities, hence the compounding of the language issue. Yet, it is expected that the teaching of English should be taught in a way that produces English language excellence. In situations like these, the need for the utilisation of sound pedagogy is very critical, especially as challenges compound with the changing times. The next section takes a peek at some successful pedagogic examples.

Some practical examples

The examples cited here are based on personal experiences gained from various teaching learning situations in different countries – all have English as an official

language, but regularly use other languages and dialects. All the activities undertaken were framed within the earlier-mentioned theories and techniques.

I have selected a *Parts-of-Speech* theme as the background for the examples chosen because these parts are the cornerstone of meaningful communication. The eight parts of speech (noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection) are words we read, speak, hear and even think! Each has a particular function and occupies a particular position in any given sentence. Elsewhere (Shotte, 2013, p. 153), I note: "... it is not just the word itself that matters; how it is used in the sentence, its position in the sentence and its meaning also need some consideration if one is to know what part of speech a specified word is". Knowledge of how the parts of speech operate, aids the understanding of sentence construction and how speech should be interpreted. But equally valuable, is the knowledge that helps in the improvement in writing skills.

Example 1: The presentation-practice-production (PPP) approach

The PPP technique is one of the successful methods that I have used for English language learning. For presentation, the teacher takes the lead and the learner plays a subordinate role; in the case of practice, it is a balanced teacher-learner collaboration setting; and with regard to production, the learner takes the leading role, while the teacher facilitates if necessary.

Example 2: The music-poetry approach

I hail the music-poetry approach for its highly successful rates. There is no limit as to what teachers can do to present lessons in a variety of interesting and exciting ways. This is because poetry and music are inextricably linked since they are two peas in the same pod. I refer to the following explanation because it worked then, and it is still working today (Shotte, 2013, p. 150):

Both poetry and music are easy to 'digest' because of their rhythmic nature. They also have the power to evoke deep-seated feelings, which suggests that these tools can be used not only to help children to learn, but also to help them 'bring back to mind' what they have been taught. The all-embracing nature of poetry and music puts them in a strong position to be the 'perfect' catalysts for teaching and learning.

The universality of both music and poetry, together with the global reputation of the English language, are practicalities that teachers should consider in reframing pedagogy.

Example 3: The think-about-it approach

Speaking, listening, reading and writing are essential English language skills if learners whose Mother Tongue is not English, are to become masterful in the use this universal language. I have added another skill to the list – *thinking*. From the literature reviewed, this skill is not mentioned alongside the other four, although none of them is fully functional without it. Interestingly, being occupied in receptive or productive mode, demands a respectable degree of thinking for successful engagement to be attained. The receptive skills are listening and reading, and the productive skills are speaking and writing. I place thinking squarely in the intersection of both modes. The art and act of thinking is unrehearsed and unstructured, which make thinking an available and convenient skill to embrace.

The three approaches mentioned in this section offer sufficient scope for the reviewing and reframing of pedagogy at any point on the teaching learning spectrum. The balance and scope that they continuously create can help teachers to allow learners to become active participants in their own learning.

Conclusion

The main focus of this descriptive paper is on pedagogy for teachers who teach English to learners whose Mother Tongue is not English. It acknowledges that the English language is the most widely spoken language in the world, and that its spread continues as a result of globalisation, the internationalisation of education and migratory trends. The paper's focus on pedagogy draws attention to the need for teachers to use techniques that relate to various teaching learning theories. Constructivism and social constructivism are the two main theories that guide the discussion, but reference is made to other related theories such as Gardner's multiple intelligences, Bloom's taxonomy of objectives and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and techniques such as scaffolding, spiral learning and the principles of readiness. In this context, it explains how spaces can be widened and narrowed. Examples of three teaching approaches based on personal experience are cited as practical and successful techniques – *the presentation-practice-production (PPP) approach*, *the music-poetry approach*, and *the think-about-it approach*.

The paper makes clear that named three approaches are as convenient as they are easy to use. Together, and singularly, they offer sufficient latitude for the continuous reexamining and refashioning of pedagogy at any point on the teaching learning continuum. Their self-replicating nature creates stability and balance. This increases a teacher's ability to help learners to be active participants in their own learning.

In this era of ever-changing educational landscapes, the author asserts that the widening and narrowing of pedagogical approaches is an imperative. The need for solid pedagogic environment has never been more acute. May educators never lose sight of the fact that today's learners are tomorrow's leaders.

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Gordana Stankovska, Fatime Ziberi & Dimitar Dimitrovski

Service Quality and Student Satisfaction in Higher Education

Abstract

Education is a significant institution given the shift to a knowledge economy. Today students have numerous expectations that range from choosing what to learn, how to learn and how much to learn based on their individual academic needs. Student satisfaction is an important facet for higher education institutions and specifically, it is highly related to service quality. Thus, the main goal of this study was to investigate the relationship between student perceived service quality and the global satisfaction level among university students. The ServQual instrument was administered to a sample of 250 university students. The results indicated that the higher gap of the service quality is related to the responsiveness dimension, followed by the reliability, assurance, empathy and tangibles dimensions. At the same time, there was a significant positive relationship between student satisfaction and responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy, but negative correlation between student satisfaction and tangibles. The findings generally indicate that a majority of students are satisfied with the facilities provided by the university. Such findings should help the university make a better strategic plan as to enhance student satisfaction in particular and its overall performance in general. So, the service quality in higher education has a significant influence on student satisfaction and in view of this, higher education institutions need to be aware of the service quality dimensions that influence the satisfaction of their students and therefore that it is important to note that these dimensions should be determined by the students, because the students are the primary recipients of the services provided by the institution.

Keywords: service quality, student satisfaction, educational sector, higher education institutions, management

Introduction

The education sector is an important sector, which plays a significant role in the development of human capital and ultimately in the economic development of the country. An educational organization is one of the most important institutional organizations of a nation. Specifically, higher education plays an important role in socio-economic development of a country (Jover & Ones, 2009). Contemporary universities are changing day by day to be able to efficiently deal with the world's numerous challenges. Improving learning is still considered the primary aim of universities. The management and student bodies of academic institutions have functions to perform in the overall achievement of the university's aim (Bush, 2011).

Education is a significant institution given the shift to a knowledge economy. Today students have numerous expectations that range from choosing what to learn, how to learn and how much to learn based on their individual academic needs (Strahlman, 2012). Students' assessment of services in a university can be seen as one of the internal quality

assurance tools used for enhancement of a quality academic environment. Ofosu and Fredua-Kwarteng (2018) indicated that academic institutions acknowledge the significance of students' assessment of quality services, and in most cases would satisfy students' academic needs to a very large extent. Students' assessment of service quality is then considered an efficient tool for improving the quality of teaching and learning in higher education institutions.

Students are likely to be satisfied with their educational institutions when the service provided fits their expectations, or they will be very satisfied when the service is beyond their expectations and they receive more than they expect.

Service quality

In the higher education sector, service quality is considered a key determinant of the performance of higher education institutions and in view of this, Evans (2011, p. 11) defines service quality as "the degree to which the needs and aspirations of students receiving higher education services are fulfilled by their universities". The existing literature on the service quality construct in higher education identifies many dimensions such as competence of staff, reputation of the institution, delivery styles by tutors and lecturers, sufficiency of resources, administrative services, and attitude support among others (Onditi & Wehuli, 2017).

Castleberry and Melntyre (2011, p. 75) define perceived service quality as a belief about the excellence level of the service. Perceived service quality is an attitude that is attained by comparing the expectations with the perceived performance (Pariseau & McDaniel, 1997). The implication of this claim is that the students of a higher education institution define quality. The students determine the perceived or cognitive value of services based on their previous experience with the service delivered and therefore student's expectations, the service delivery process and the service output of higher education institutions have an impact on perceived service quality.

According to Parasuraman, Zeithami and Berry (1994), regardless of the type of service, consumers basically use the same criteria to assess quality. In marketing management, when assessing the service quality, the ServQual model of service is commonly used (Parasuraman, Zeithami & Berry, 1985). Assuming that education is an educational service provided to students, Gallifa and Batalle (2010) presented the following description of the determinants of the quality of educational services for the ServQual model:

- tangibility (the appearance of the university's physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials);
- reliability (the ability of the university to perform the promised services dependably and accurately);
- responsiveness (speed and corrective feedback in the responses according to the changing needs and expectations of the students);
- assurance (the knowledge and courtesy of the academic staff/faculty and their ability to convey trust and confidence);
- empathy (the ability of the academic staff and faculty to provide a caring and individualized attention to students).

Each time students experience a service and evaluate the service quality by judging the experience based on the five dimensions.

Student satisfaction

Saif (2014) defines satisfaction as a feeling of pleasure that people have when their human desires and needs are met. According to Weerasinghe and Fernando (2017, p. 533) “student satisfaction can be defined as a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of students’ educational experience, services and facilities provided by the institution”. Students’ satisfaction in higher education refers to students’ feeling of contentment with the quality of educational experiences and services provided for them by their universities.

Higher education tends to care about student satisfaction in relation to its potential impact on student motivation, retention, recruitment and academic success. Ilias et al. (2008) identified that the main factors that have an impact on the level of student satisfaction were the students’ perception of learning and teaching, such as (libraries, computer and lab facilities), the learning environment (lecture rooms, laboratories, social space and university building), the support facilities (health facilities, student accommodation, student service) and the external aspect of being a student (such as finance, transportation). With all these capabilities, an institution will be able to meet students’ expectations and perform competitively. The students’ satisfaction and the whole exercise is an innovative method to obtain students’ feedback regarding their academic experience, perceptions and expectations from the higher education institution, and ultimately, to assess their satisfaction level.

Service quality and student satisfaction

Service quality and student satisfaction have emerged as twin terms in higher education literature at the global level in the last 20 years. The body of literature on the relationship between service quality and student satisfaction has significantly grown globally in the past two decades. Kajenthiran and Karunanithy (2015) found that service quality, particularly the dimensions of assurance and responsiveness, influenced students’ satisfaction. Baniya (2016) found that service quality affected students’ satisfaction with empathy and responsiveness as critical factors that contribute most to students’ satisfaction. Azam (2018) in his study revealed three aspects pertaining to academic service dimension, namely assurance, empathy and reliability had an influence on students’ satisfaction. As argued by Ali et al. (2020), service quality is one of the important factors enhancing value, and can positively influence students’ success. Hence, the main purpose of this study was to examine the possible relationship between service quality and the global satisfaction level among university students.

Research methods

Participants

The sample of students was randomly selected and all of them participated voluntarily. The participants included 250 university students aged between 21-23 years. The mean calculated age of the students was 21.55 (SD=6.56). Of all participants, 135 were female (54%) and 115 were male (46%). The study group of the research included third year students who studied medical sciences and psychology at the University of Tetova. In this study, we used a simple random sampling technique.

Data collection tools

ServQual questionnaire

The ServQual questionnaire developed by Parasuraman, Zeitham and Berry (1991) was used to measure service quality and student satisfaction. The study questionnaire consists of three parts. Part one is intended to obtain background information about the demographic characteristics of the students. In the second part, the ServQual questionnaire was used to assess undergraduate students' expectation and perception of service quality which included 21 items representing the five service quality dimensions: tangibles (5 items), reliability (5 items), responsiveness (3 items), assurance (4 items), and empathy (4 items). Finally, part three measures the students' satisfaction, which consists of only five items. 7-point Likert scales, ranging from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (7), were used for this study. In this questionnaire for five service quality dimensions and student satisfaction, all Cronbach alpha coefficients were higher than .7, indicating that the internal reliability of each first-level indicator of the questionnaire was high.

Data procedure and data analysis

Data collection tools were administered by the researchers during the winter semester of the academic year 2023/24. Each respondent was personally invited to complete a paper-and-pencil version of the questionnaire. The period for answering the scale was 45 minutes.

The statistical analysis of the result obtained in the research was conducted with SPSS 20.0 for the Windows package program. The ServQual questionnaire was calculated between perceived service quality and expected service quality with respect to the following measures: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Each dimension score was obtained by calculating the difference between the perceived (P) and the expected (E) service score (ServQual score=P-E). The positive scores mean that undergraduate students' expectations have been met and their perceptions of the services of higher education institution are good. The negative scores indicate that undergraduate students' expectations have not been met and their perceptions of the services of higher education institution are poor. The relationship between service quality and student satisfaction was investigated by using the Pearson correlation coefficient.

Results

The mean score of the service quality expectations was high and ranged from 5.06 for the item *Visual appeal of materials* to 6.42 for the item *Professors have the knowledge to answer students*. The total mean score of undergraduate students' service quality expectations was 5.29. Of the five dimensions, the highest expectation was related to the responsiveness dimension (mean score=6.01) and the lowest expectations was related to the tangibles dimension (mean score=5.25). The two items with the highest expectation score were related to the responsiveness dimension, i.e., *The staff provides prompt service to the students/The staff always helps the students* and two items were related to the empathy dimension, i.e., *Dedicated individualized attention/The staff keeps students' interest at heart*. Among the four items, the lowest expectation score was related to the tangibles dimension.

The mean score of the service quality perception ranged from 4.65 for the item *Convenient operating hours* to 6.54 for the item *Students feel safe while receiving*

services. The total mean score of undergraduate students' service quality perception was 5.52. Of the five items with the highest perception score, two items were related to reliability, i.e., *Telling when services will be performed/Providing services at appointed time*, one item was related to assurance, i.e., *Students feel safe while receiving services*, one item was related to empathy, i.e., *Understanding specific needs of students*, and one item was related to responsiveness, i.e., *The staff always helps students*. In addition, among the four items, the lowest perception score was related to the tangibles dimension.

The gap score for each dimension was computed by subtracting the expectation score from the perception score (P-E). The highest gap of the service quality was related to the responsiveness dimension (Gap mean score=0.23) and the lowest gap of the service quality was related to the tangibles dimension (Gap mean score=-.06). The total gap mean score of undergraduate students' overall service quality was 2.09, which is rated as *good*.

According to the findings of Pallant (2010, p. 150), "Correlation analysis uses to define the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables". In our research the Pearson correlation test illustrates the strength and direction of the linear correlation between the dimensions of service quality (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) as independent variable and student satisfaction as dependent variable. The range of Pearson correlation coefficients (r) can be taken on only values from -1 to +1 (Cohen, 1988).

The results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between student satisfaction and responsiveness ($r=.723$, $p<.01$), student satisfaction and reliability ($r=.641$, $p<.01$), student satisfaction and empathy ($r=.484$, $p<.01$) and student satisfaction and assurance ($r=.228$, $p<.01$), but negative correlation between student satisfaction and tangibles ($r=-.236$, $p>.01$).

Discussion

Based on the objectives of the research, this study aimed to measure the perceived service quality from the students' perspective. It also aimed to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of service quality (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) and student satisfaction. Based on the findings of the mean analysis, the majority of students are satisfied with service quality. The obtained results are similar to the results obtained by other researchers (Amoako & Asamoah-Gyimah, 2020). Olmos-Gomez et al. (2021) found that students were satisfied with the tangibles, assurance, reliability and empathy, but not with parking facilities, computer labs, cafeteria service and the complaint handling system.

It was observed that the students in the first rank have differed dimensions that include reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The highest expectation score was related to the dimensions of responsiveness and empathy, while the highest perception score was related to the dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The lowest expectations and perceptions of the score regarding the tangibles dimension is indicative of students' dissatisfaction with the university facilities and designs, and visibility of equipment.

Based on the statistical analysis, we found that the highest gap of the service quality is related to the responsiveness dimension, followed by reliability, assurance and empathy, while the lowest gap of the service quality is related to the tangibles dimension. It is also similar to the results obtained from the study by Zeshan, Afridi and Khan (2010) assessing the service quality in higher education institutions in Ghana and by Khodayari

and Khodayari (2011) with obtained results in regard to the service quality of the Islamic University in Iran. Furthermore, the findings of this study showed that four of the service quality dimensions (responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy) are possibly associated with student satisfaction, except the tangibles dimension, which is negatively associated with student satisfaction. In terms of the aspect of responsiveness, the faculty members enhance their willingness to help by means of providing extra assistance to their students. Regarding the empathy dimension, the university reflects a capability to fulfill students' concerns in terms of their needs, for instance, in regard to individualized attention and having students' best interest at heart. Reliability is positively related to students' satisfaction. Students were satisfied with the quality of university services such as the emphasis on the practical aspect during classes or the possibility of applying knowledge in practice during classes at the universities (El Ahamad & Kawtharani, 2021). At the same time, the students were satisfied with the assurance dimension of service quality, because the academic staff has the ability to transfer and convey knowledge. According to the empathy dimension, the students were satisfied with the quality of the research club at the university, however they were not satisfied with service quality in terms of the physical appearance (tangibles) of the university building (Truong, Pham & Vo, 2016).

Conclusion

Student satisfaction is an important facet for higher education institutions and specifically it is highly related to service quality. Service quality has been one of the most prominent research topics for the past two decades. The main purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between service quality dimensions and student satisfaction. The association between service quality and student satisfaction will assist the university management to clarify what their service quality dimensions mean to the students and to the university itself.

The results from this study indicated that among the five dimensions of ServQual, the highest gap mean score of service quality included responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy, while the lowest gap of service quality was related to tangibles. Thus, responsiveness, reliability, assurance and empathy, except tangibles, were important for the students. Moreover, it was found that positive perceptions of service quality have a significant influence on student satisfaction. The students can be motivated or inspired from both academic performance as well as the administrative efficiency of their institutions (Birhanu, 2018). These results may be attributed to students' belief about the importance of the role of the academic staff in enhancing their knowledge and preparing them for a job or in developing their career skills.

Therefore, this study will particularly be used for the managers and educators within the universities and other institutions by emphasizing the major elements that affect the satisfaction level among students. It would also help in bridging the gap of lack of research on higher education, in general, and on service quality and its effect on students' satisfaction in the context of Macedonian higher education. This research will provide the university administration with feedback regarding the performance of the university, service quality and student satisfaction. This feedback is crucial for guiding and implementing improvements, where needed, which would increase the competitiveness of the university in the industry of higher institutions locally, regionally and internationally, and would enhance student retention.

Based on the results and remarks of this study improvements can be planned across all dimensions of service quality. Policy makers in the services industry in general and in the higher educational sector in particular, may benefit from the findings of this study. Higher education institutions may improve their services in light of the discussion on the dimensions of ServQual as perceived and expected by the undergraduate students. Students' point of view has to be considered in the strategic plan of higher education institutions as quality is defined as achieving strategic goals and incorporated stakeholders' perspective in the strategic management of an organization.

Due to the limitations of the study, its results should not be generalized. Further research is required to consider the perspectives of other stakeholders in higher education. Finally, research is needed to extend our understanding of the importance of service quality evaluation, students' satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth what seems to be a rather important and rich area for further investigation.

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Part 5

Law and Education

Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu

Examine the Notion That AI Has Come to Replace Education Jobs in Classroom Teaching and Learning Done by Human Beings

Abstract

There is a growing concern that AI is likely to replace the work done face to face in the classroom by teachers. The concerns also extend to the students' use of AI to complete assignments which could impact on their grades either positive or negative and in some cases, when a student work is detected with high AI the work could be classified as plagiarism if AI usage is not declared. On another note, there are increasing debates about the use of AI as a valid tool to support work completed by human beings. Whatever maybe the growing concerns, many researchers have argued that AI is not likely to replace education jobs such as teaching and learning done by teachers and education administrators. The purpose of this paper is to explore debates around the use of AI in education, mostly in teaching and learning and assessment of students' work and the link to the university misconduct policy. Teachers' opinions on integrating AI in the classroom are illuminated by empirical evidence gathered via interviews. A lot of educators respond to AI in different ways. Some of the debates falls around AI as God's sent tools that can help reduce some of the admin work and assessment of students' work such as helping with multiple choice questions, on the other hand, some students have been penalised and in some cases failed their work due to use of AI in completing their assignments without acknowledging the use. In addition, others have argued that AI has come to replace the work done by teachers and are anxious about AI in education jobs done by teachers, hence would not bear the idea for classroom teaching and learning.

Keywords: AI, education, teaching and learning, teachers, students and classroom

Introduction

The application of artificial intelligence (AI) in education has witnessed a profound transformation; altering the manner in which instruction and learning are approached (Pedro et al., 2019). Within the realm of education, AI pertains to the implementation of computer systems that emulate cognitive processes analogous to those of human beings. This enables the execution of tasks such as data processing, problem-solving, and decision-making (Chen et al., 2020). In essence, AI improves the field of education through the provision of intelligent systems capable of adapting and personalising courses to suit the needs and preferences of individual students (Pedro et al., 2019). It incorporates natural language processing, machine learning, and data analytics, among other technologies, which assist educational institutions and teachers in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. The purpose of this paper is to present a mini research conducted on AI issues in education and its use in teaching and learning, particularly in assessment of students' work as part of the university policy, examine the principles that underpin the role of AI in teaching and learning environment, analyse the university academic misconduct policy on students' use of AI in completing course work, evaluate the positive and negative use of AI and how it works in teaching and learning and make recommendations on best effective way to implement the use of AI in teaching, learning and assessment policy of 2 UK universities as the focus of this study.

Literature review

Meaning and principles of AI in teaching and learning

The core principles and concepts of AI in the educational setting revolve around its capacity to process and evaluate vast quantities of data while delivering perceptive outcomes for instructors and learners. The purpose of AI systems is to detect patterns in pupil achievement and adapt the curriculum and pace of instruction accordingly. They make it possible for students to have individualised learning pathways and guarantee that they get the help they need to succeed (Chassignol et al., 2018). AI can also provide instructors and students fast feedback, which enables them to modify their teaching strategies and student involvement in real time. The notion behind AI-driven education is that it may greatly increase the efficacy and efficiency of the processes involved in teaching and learning (Srinivasa et al., 2022).

Technology has been progressively incorporated into education, as seen by the historical growth and evolution of AI in education. AI has developed over the last several decades from simple intelligent tutoring systems to complex computer-assisted education, while the current AI systems emphasise adaptive learning—where information is matched to the learner's skill level, learning style, and progress—earlier attempts concentrated on giving rote memory exercises (Harati, 2021). The use of AI in education has evolved to focus more on using its potential to improve educational results, enhance pedagogical practises, and encourage student participation (Vincent-Lancrin & Van der Vlies, 2020). Thus, the development of AI in education reflects a continuous dedication to maximising technology's potential to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of education.

University academic misconduct policy on AI use

Academic institutions have responded quickly to meet the new issues raised by the integration of AI in the classroom by modifying their rules. Based on a review of current academic misconduct rules, colleges have started to include explicit provisions on students' usage of AI technologies. These guidelines are intended to set limits on appropriate AI use and advise students in the moral and responsible use of AI in their schoolwork. According to Striepe et al. (2023), students are obligated by the regulations to make sure that their usage of AI is compliant with academic integrity. Universities have put in place regulations that prioritise openness and disclosure around the use of AI by students to complete their homework. These guidelines usually mandate that students disclose any AI support they received for their projects and specify the degree of that support. For example, students could have to mention using AI-generated material in their submissions. By following these procedures, students are guaranteed to comprehend the value of academic integrity and to follow university policies (Stoesz & Eaton, 2022).

According to Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019), different universities have different implications and repercussions for students that use AI. While some academic institutions see the use of AI as a legitimate type of assistance, others view it as possibly violating their code of ethics. Students who are discovered to have violated AI-related regulations may be subject to more serious sanctions including academic probation or expulsion, in addition to a lower mark on the assignment. The seriousness with which academic institutions perceive AI misbehaviour is shown by the severity of the sanctions (Stone, 2023). Policies of academic misconduct pertaining to AI are heavily influenced by ethical issues. Universities want to make sure that students understand the ethical bounds since they are aware of the ethical ramifications of using AI. Policies on academic misconduct place a strong emphasis on the need of properly attributing and citing the source of AI-generated material in order to prevent plagiarism and infringement of intellectual property. Institutions strive to respect academic honesty and integrity by encouraging ethical AI practises (Ihekweazu et al., 2023).

Overview of AI in teaching and learning

AI has become an essential component of contemporary education, transforming the methods of instruction and learning. There are many different uses for AI tools and technology in education. These consist of machine learning algorithms, Chatbot, recommendation engines, and intelligent tutoring systems. These resources provide real-time feedback, tailored learning experiences, and content adaptation to meet the requirements of specific students (Muñoz et al., 2022). According to Huang et al. (2023), AI is also used in virtual classroom platforms, automated grading and assessment systems, and language processing tools for language acquisition. Inclusion of AI in educational contexts is motivated by the possibility that it will enhance pedagogy and student engagement. By providing educators with data-driven insights regarding students' performance, it enables the implementation of more specialised pedagogical approaches (Kabudi et al., 2021). Platforms equipped with AI capabilities may facilitate adaptive and interactive learning by tailoring content to the individual learning preferences and progress of each pupil. Moreover, AI may improve both online and distance learning by enabling personalised interactions between students and virtual instructors (Almusaed et al., 2023).

While the implementation of AI in education has numerous benefits, it also has some drawbacks. Personalization of education is one advantage of AI; this enhances the efficacy and inclusiveness of education (Pedro et al., 2019). It may improve the effectiveness of the grading and assessment procedures while lessening the administrative burden on teachers. On the other hand, there are obstacles, such as worries about job displacement, the need for sufficient training, and guaranteeing data security and privacy (Brik et al., 2020). It is critical to strike a balance between using AI's advantages and tackling its drawbacks. There are several examples of AI uses in education in a variety of fields. For example, according to Fitria (2021), Duolingo uses AI to customise courses according to each student's level of competence. Recommendation engines are used by AI-driven platforms, such as Coursera, to select courses and learning routes based on students' interests and ability levels. Chatbot and virtual teaching assistants help students with homework navigation, question answering, and coaching throughout the learning process (Parenti, 2018).

Positive and negative use of AI in teaching and learning

The introduction of AI into classrooms offers both advantages and disadvantages for teachers and educational institutions. Positively speaking, AI has the ability to greatly reduce educators' administrative burden. Teachers may spend more of their important time on teaching and student involvement by automating duties like data analysis, record-keeping, and grading (Almaiah et al., 2022). This improved productivity may improve the work-life balance and job satisfaction of educators. AI also provides the ability to create customised learning environments. AI-driven systems are able to adjust educational strategies and material to each student's unique requirements, learning preferences, and rate of progress (Gaikwad et al., 2023). By increasing student engagement and producing more effective learning outcomes, this degree of customization may eventually benefit institutions and teachers alike by raising the success rates of their students.

AI aids in the evaluation and feedback procedures used in education. It can provide teachers and students fast, data-driven feedback, enabling them to make real-time modifications to their lesson plans and students' academic progress (Teng et al., 2023). This improves the educational process and helps teacher's spot areas that may need more help, which eventually leads to improved student results. On the other hand, worries about instructors losing their jobs as a result of AI integration have surfaced. There is concern that some teaching professions might become obsolete as AI systems get more adept at activities that have historically been completed by educators (Alam, 2021). Teachers might be concerned about the future of their careers and the stability of their jobs.

Students may find AI-driven learning environments less interesting or miss the one-on-one interactions and support that come from working with human educators, among other possible negative effects of AI usage in education (Sinha et al., 2021). Concerns over an over-reliance on AI for learning may also exist, since this might impede the growth of analytical and problem-solving abilities. Moreover, there is ongoing discussion over the consequences for the general standard of education. Even though AI may increase customization and efficiency, it is important to make sure that educational standards are maintained. To sustain high educational standards, concerns about data

privacy, ethical issues, and the fairness and accuracy of AI-driven assessments must be carefully considered (Nassar & Kamal, 2021).

Empirical data: Teachers' and students' perspectives

Teachers' opinions on integrating AI in the classroom are illuminated by empirical evidence gathered via interviews. A lot of educators respond to AI in different ways. Some see it as an effective tool that improves education and expedites administrative duties. According to a National Centre for Education Statistics study, 82% of American instructors said they use technology to organise their classes and homework (Winter et al., 2021). But many educators are also worried that AI will eventually supplant conventional teaching techniques. Wogu et al. (2018) found that 60% of American teachers thought that if technology—including artificial intelligence—was used more often, the need for instructors will decline. The divided views on AI's effects on education are reflected in these responses from educators.

It is clear from looking at teachers' concerns and advantages that they value AI's capacity to lessen administrative strain and free up more time for learning activities. According to a Noodle Markets research from 2019, 84% of instructors said AI technologies that performed administrative duties were useful (Berezina et al., 2019). Concerns exist, nonetheless, about the possible loss of employment and the erosion of one's relationship with pupils. According to Coppola et al. (2021), 63% of educators said AI may take over part of their duties. These interviews provide light on teachers varied and complicated viewpoints on the use of AI in the classroom. In a similar vein, student interviews provide light on their encounters with AI in the classroom. Numerous students report using AI tools in a variety of ways, such as AI-powered learning platforms and applications. According to Korkmaz and Correia (2019), 76% of students utilise instructional technologies driven by AI. Students usually mention how easy and flexible AI is—personalized learning, for example, and how quickly they can access materials. Students have different experiences with AI in terms of their academic success. A few describe success stories, pointing to better grades and comprehension of the course content. Some students believe, meanwhile, that an over-reliance on AI might impair their capacity for critical thought and problem-solving. While students recognised the advantages of AI-driven resources, many expressed worries about the possible detrimental effects on their creativity and originality (Markauskaite et al., 2022). These results highlight the need of integrating AI in a way that is balanced and considers both the benefits and any possible downsides that students may perceive.

Case study: Two UK universities

A comparative case study of the use of AI at the University of Oxford and Imperial College London, two prestigious institutions in the UK, demonstrates different strategies and results. The main purpose of integrating AI at the University of Oxford is to improve administrative procedures. AI-driven chatbots have improved operational efficiency at the institution by drastically cutting down on the time spent answering student queries, according to a study from the administration (Bullock et al., 2023). On the other hand, AI has been widely used into teaching and learning at Imperial College London. Their use of virtual laboratories and AI-powered adaptive learning systems is intended to engage students with interactive information and tailor their learning experiences

(Brogan, 2023). This divergence in emphasis highlights the different approaches and goals that these organisations take.

Oxford places a strong emphasis on data privacy and openness in its policies and practises. According to University of Oxford (2023), their AI policies provide top priority to maintaining the security and protection of student data. Imperial College London, on the other hand, focuses on promoting creativity and technology-driven teaching. Regular faculty training in AI integration and the use of data analytics to customise lectures are part of their practises (Imperial College London, 2023). These disparate methods demonstrate the many strategic factors influencing the creation of AI policies and their implementation in higher education. When comparing these two examples, Oxford places more emphasis on administrative improvements, while Imperial College London stresses a thorough approach to AI integration, especially in teaching and learning. The different foci of these institutions highlight how adaptation and flexibility are necessary for AI adoption and policy creation in higher education. Imperial College London's dedication to pedagogical innovation via AI and the University of Oxford's concentration on data protection and operational efficiency provide important insights into the many paths that academic institutions may take to fully realise the promise of AI.

Conclusion

Understanding the meaning and guiding principles of AI in education clarifies the technology's dual roles as a driver of personalised learning and a source of anxiety around job displacement. Examining academic misconduct regulations at universities highlights how AI integration is changing and how important it is to communicate openly and ethically. The overview of AI in teaching and learning emphasises the dual nature of its effects, which present issues with regard to job displacement and preserving educational quality while also providing educators with efficiency improvements. It is obvious that there are pros and cons of AI, however, for this to work, the universities' need to establish clear communication channels for AI policies, invest in educators' training and professional development and foster collaborative research and development.

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Challenges Faced by International Students Studying in the United Kingdom with Main Focus on Nigerian Students

Abstract

The rationale for this research paper is to examine the challenges faced by international students with focus on Nigerian students embracing the British education system and impact on their motivation and academic performance. The paper presents a critical overview in relation to the barriers faced by Nigerian students in terms of obtaining and maintaining their visas, seeking employment, cultural integration, and access to education and how these challenges impact on their motivation and academic performance. The study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by Nigerian students in regard to studying in the UK and keeping up to visa requirements with limited working hours given to study. To ascertain the degree of impact, a primary data was carried out to hear from few of the students. Findings of research shows that majority of the Nigerian students that came to study in the UK had high expectations with the hope that coming to study and work in the UK was the best option to escape from the problem of high unemployment and hardship faced back in their home countries. Some expressed the disappointments on how they struggled to find accommodation with family and not sure if coming to the UK was worth the money, they paid to facilitate their study visa. The most disappointed expectations were the cost of living and not being able to get the twenty hours jobs allowed to work while studying to help them with excessive cost of living. Some felt that more support is needed to help international students in their studies in the UK considering the high fees paid to gain British education.

Keywords: international students, Nigerian students in the UK, language barriers, cultural shock, racism, discrimination, pedagogical differences

Introduction

Nigeria has a long history of ties with the British education system, dating back to its colonial period and has consistently ranked among the top countries as sending students to study overseas. Most of the Nigerian students aspire to pursue their education in the United Kingdom (UK) to access the renowned British education system. However, this transition is not without its challenges as majority of these Nigerian students encounter numerous challenges as they study and work part time to pay their fees which is part of the requirements for their visa renewal. In order to study and work, most of the student face significant challenges that demotivate them which impact on their studies and mostly their academic performance and in some cases attendance, regardless of the Home office police of regular attendance to the lessons to justify their visas, some still

derail due to series of challenges faced in their studies. This critical paper will aim to identify and analyse the key challenges that Nigerian students encounter when embracing the British education system ranging from cultural shock and adjustments, language barriers, economic and financial, racism and discrimination and pedagogical differences.

Literature review

Studying abroad has become increasingly popular among Nigerian students seeking quality education and global exposure. This critical analysis examines the challenges that Nigerian students face while studying in the UK by drawing from literature and theoretical concepts.

Cultural shock and adjustments to education system is one of the key challenges that face Nigerian students in relation to cultural adjustments when transitioning to the British education system. Studies have highlighted the challenges associated with adapting to a different language, educational practices, and social norms (Adekeye, 2012). It is therefore important to identify required adjustments needed in Nigerian students' communication and learning patterns that may hinder their academic success. The high expectations and feeling of belonging have imposed a big problem for Nigerian students. A language barrier and communication skill is one of the key challenges. The language proficiency to study in the UK is crucial for academic success in the British education system, although most Nigerians have English as their first language, but the ascent can be a big barrier in the classroom and may make some to struggle with English language skills, which is the primary medium of instruction in the UK, hence can impact understanding. According to Adeyemo (2018), many Nigerian students have limited exposure to English language usage in their home countries, making it challenging for them to adapt to the British education system, particularly those from the rural areas of Nigeria whom English is their second language. English may be the official language in both the UK and Nigeria, but there are still linguistic challenges faced by Nigerian students studying in the UK. According to Eze et al. (2019), differences in accents, dialects, and colloquial usage can make it difficult for Nigerian students to communicate effectively, impacting their social integration and academic success.

Another noted problem identified in the literature is economic challenges. One of the significant challenges is the economic burden faced by Nigerian students in the UK as identified by Muhyi (2020). The high tuition fees, visa costs, and living expenses place a considerable financial strain on Nigerian students, hence impacts their academic performance with worries of getting money to pay their fees on time, coupled with exchange rate of Nigerian naira to pounds, means raising huge amount of naira to get equivalent of pounds to offset fees in pounds. The economic factor often limits access to certain opportunities and influences their overall experience overseas. The challenge does not limit to Nigerian students, it also applies to other international students, non-EU students also face the financial crisis in their studies in the UK with high cost of fees and accommodation compared to the UK students and same is of Schneider (2016), also, Kew (2016) with the notion that the financial strain and lack of robust financial aid options contribute to stress and anxiety related challenges among international students. This is obviously true in terms of Nigerian students that face similar financial stress, and in most cases, some have gone back home voluntarily as they cannot cope or being deported due to non-payment of fees as one of the criteria for renewal of visa is linked to payment of fees.

Social integration is a crucial aspect of the study abroad experience for Nigerian students. Nigerian students face difficulties connecting with others due to cultural differences that impact on their behaviour to withdraw from socialising and engaging (Achinewhu-Nworgu, 2017). The contact hypothesis, as a theoretical framework, suggests that increased interaction between different ethnic groups can lead to improved understanding and harmony. Most of Nigerian students are reserved and find it difficult to mix easily until they get to know their peers very well. The time it takes them to mix and interact takes longer and can hinder their group activities and learning from others. Other researchers have also contributed to some of the social integration faced by international students, Marginson and Sawir (2005) of which Nigerian students face the same in relation to joining clubs, societies, sports and other social activities due to intimidation, inability to socialise and discrimination faced in these social activities, hence some find it reluctant to belong.

Racism and discrimination are noted in the British education system and impacts on Nigerian students as some often experience incidents of racism and discrimination due to their ethnicity (Ojo, 2020), mostly the stereotyping Nigerians. These challenges not only affect their psychological well-being but can also hinder their academic performance. The concept of racial macroaggressions can help explain the subjective experiences of Nigerian students facing subtle forms of racism both in the universities and job offers to earn money to support their education with the 20 hours allowed to work. Some face housing issues as some landlords may not offer accommodation regardless of the fact that they can pay which leaves some stranded, hence impacts on attendance and achievement, yet these students have already paid huge tuition fees to gain qualifications to institutions. In some cases, some students opted for university accommodation; however, this can be expensive and unaffordable.

The challenges of pedagogical differences in teaching and learning methods can significantly have impact on Nigerian students. The traditional Nigerian education system focuses on rote memorization and teacher-centred instruction, while the British system places emphasis on critical thinking and independent learning (Ibidapo, 2014). This shift requires Nigerian students to adjust their teaching and learning and assessment styles to accommodate the British system of education geared to more interactive and research-based system that obtains in most of the university education in the UK. For instance, some Nigerian students struggle to complete course work as they were mainly assessed through examination, whereas in the UK education system, time constrained, essays and reports are the means of assessments and can be very challenging to Nigerian students. In any case, once settled, they are happy and ready to adjust, but still a big challenge to cope with it all leading to some stress and in some cases, failing the course that can lead to withdrawal or repatriation back to home countries with no qualifications.

Financial constraints can often pose a barrier for Nigerian students pursuing education in the UK. This also applies to other international students' studying in the UK. High cost of tuition fees, cost of living expenses and accommodation can be very costly; particularly those studying in inner London areas, with limited access to scholarships can limit their opportunities and hinder their academic progress (Adekeye, 2012). These challenges may force students to work long hours outside of their studies, adversely affecting their academic performance and overall experience. Some face high cost of accommodation and most cases cannot find suitable accommodation when they come with their families, some end up in bed and breakfast accommodation which can

be very expensive. These challenges result to some lack of concentration in their studies and can lead to poor attendance or failure to persist on the programme.

Inadequate institutional support and guidance can further enhance the challenges faced by Nigerian students. Literature discussed also suggests that some Nigerian students may lack adequate academic counselling, mentoring, and support services, which are crucial for successful education transition. The lack of adequate support may result in students feeling isolated and overwhelmed. Supporting students with language or cultural issues may require additional resources for the institutions, hence may not be fully accessible to the students particularly since after the pandemic as most institutions have reverted to hybridization in delivery.

The question is how Nigerian students are supported to cope with all of these challenges and impact on their motivation to achieve their degrees to which they left their home countries.

Theoretical framework

Motivational theories such as content theories (Maslow Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg Two Factor theory) as well as the Process theories (Expectancy and Equity) can help us address the question on how the identified problems can motivate students if all is well and can demotivate them when the going is tough as the case maybe with some of the Nigerian students. These theories are relevant in finding out how motivation can aid to students achieving their degree when motivated with the basic needs and expectations in their studies. Working hard is dependent on energy, commitment, and motivation. For Nigerian students to keep up to their study expectations and sustain excellent performance, their motivation must be increased through university support. Motivation is an invisible engine that drives individual attitudes and behaviours that leads to higher performance and this multifaceted force according to Kanfer et al. (2017), encompasses the psychological processes that spark, steer and fuel our actions towards converted goals.

Maslow (1970) highlights the importance of meeting the basic needs of life and it is on fulfilment of these needs that human beings feel happy to perform, absence of these needs will lead to non-achievement. Therefore, it is obvious that when a student cannot meet the basic needs of life during studies, motivation to concentrate in studies will diminish as the energy will be diverted to worries and looking for job to make the ends meet.

Motivation to achieve a degree is based on meeting the basic needs of life such as the psychological, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualisation, the absence of these will lead to students not being able to do well to achieve their academic success. Nigerian students that aspire to study overseas such as in the UK obviously can achieve their goals on satisfaction of the psychological needs. Discrimination is one of the challenges faced by some Nigerian students and when human beings sense that the need for belonging is absent, those affected will derail which may have negative impact on completing their programmes.

Passing the programme means being able to meet the basic needs of life of which engaging in part time work allowed under the immigration rules can help them to earn money while studying. The denial of the job will mean that those students who depend on working part time and studying to earn extra money to meet the basic needs of life, will obviously not be able to do so, hence the motivation to study will not be sustained.

However, one of the limitations of this theory is that individual motivation differs and may not apply to all Nigerian students with different needs while studying in the UK.

Effective support systems play a vital role in mitigating the challenges faced by Nigerian students. However, literature suggests that universities in the UK may not always provide adequate support systems for international students (Migration Advisory Committee, 2018). The social capital theory highlights the importance of social networks and institutional support in facilitating successful integration and academic achievement. The problem with this theory is that most of the students feel subdued and find it difficult to mix as some feel discriminated due to language barriers and therefore do not socialise.

Herzberg (1959) theory also helps us to understand some of the work challenges faced by Nigerian students studying in the UK. Herzberg's two factor theory helps us to answer the question raised on why some of these students go back home without achieving. There are several reasons to this such as unconducive study environment that can lead to dissatisfaction as in the theory of Herzberg motivation, known as hygiene factors, that can affect students such as university policy, interpersonal relationship with teachers and fellow students due to cultural differences that can demotivate if not willing to accept the cultural differences studying with others from different cultural backgrounds, this can lead to academic challenges faced by Nigerian students. Getting a part time paid job is a big challenge and some that are lucky to get a part time job face challenges of job insecurity because they are on student visa, most employers want full time staff and jobs may be targeted and offered to those without visa issues. Not only that, but some also have problems getting good jobs hence they make do with what jobs offered leading to job dissatisfaction.

Methodology

The research has considered qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection using WhatsApp group interviews to small group of Nigerian students studying in 3 UK universities with 5 students selected from each of the universities making a total of 15 targeted participants, comprising 8 female and 7 male students that volunteered to take part in the survey with no prejudice. The small group target participants were enough to present the comments below which is sufficient for the mini research derived from the first stage of this work on challenges faced by international students studying in the UK. Data analysis is presented using thematic analysis based on participants' comments which is presented in consideration to confidentiality as reassured to the participants that their names will not be mentioned in presenting the data. Questions were based around the key challenges derived from the literature review.

Findings and analysis

The findings indicate that 9 out of the 15 participants have had financial challenges in their studies in one way or another. Some agreed to financial stress faced in paying their fees and high cost of living in the UK that they never expected causing some stress and worries of future of unknown leading to academic failures or poor performance and in some cases being sent home as stated by one of the students commented that her friend was withdrawn from her programme in the second year of her course due to non-payment of the fees and her visa was withdrawn.

Majority of the participants found homesickness and sense of isolation as their key challenges and this is in line with the findings of Ward et al. (2001), which emphasis the experience and feeling of homesickness and isolation due to being far away from their families, hence in some cases need some support to cope with it all. Same applies to the students interviewed in these universities. The key findings of the survey will fully be presented in future research on challenges faced by Nigerian students studying in the UK. However, the comments share is an indication of the truth about the challenges faced by Nigerian students as well as other international students studying overseas. It is important that more support is given to support these students as their future also lies in gaining British education regarded highly in their home countries for better job opportunities, which is why their parents and sponsors invest hedge amount of their money in British education for a better future for Nigerian students.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by Nigerian students studying in the UK are rooted in economic factors, cultural adjustment, language barriers, social integration, racism, and the available support systems. To address these challenges, it is crucial to develop targeted support programs and policies that aid Nigerian students' integration into the British education system. Some of the support systems will vary from individual needs, such as referral for counselling in terms of missing home, visa issues, tapping into emergency funds to support those in financial crisis, welfare role for well-being, stress and mental health challenges will help support Nigerian students. Coupled with the fact that they also help boost British economy as studying in the UK brings money to the universities and the entire UK education institutions.

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Career Opportunities for Diverse Women in South Africa with Special Reference to Aviation: Life Orientation Perspectives

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore career opportunities for diverse women in South Africa with special reference to aviation. Little has been done on this focus due to its complexities and that after 20 years of South African democracy; female skill shortage in the aviation industry is still not addressed. The researcher utilized a qualitative approach. Mason (2002) argues that a qualitative approach is grounded in philosophy and is largely concerned about how the social world is interpreted and understood. Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological system theory is used in this study as a relevant theoretical framework. This study seeks to understand career opportunities for diverse women in South Africa with special reference to aviation. The study also emphasizes the role of the subject Life Orientation in making people aware of career opportunities. Findings from this study showed that the relative lack of diverse women in the South African aviation sector is not an excuse because the South African government has given us opportunities to explore this field. On this note, it is recommended that more career awareness and bursaries be made available to the ideal candidates and that aviation industries should make piloting more attractive to women.

Keywords: diverse women, aviation, career opportunities, South Africa and Life Orientation

Introduction

Aviation is an industry that is not widely explored in South Africa especially with women as pilots, yet it plays an important role in the country's international, national and domestic economy. Twenty years into South African democracy, diverse women, for that matter young women (White and African) are still not occupying better positions such as flying airplanes as pilots and aviators. This is still dominated by white males, because of imbalances created by apartheid prior 1994. This has led to the exclusion of certain people, including diverse women in the country or societies. Furthermore, gender stereotypes, media programmes as well as motivational materials where only men are portrayed often as pilots, also contributed to this exclusion. This might lead to girls and women thinking that the aviation field industry is exclusively designed for men only. In other words, transformation in the aviation industry is still a challenge, as there are still too few women who occupy highly skilled positions in that regard as compared to their male counterparts even after more than 20 years of freedom and democracy in South Africa (SA).

Literature reviews and problem statement and context of this study

According to the statistics compiled, a total of 57 women are pilots. Women pilots' representation is less than six percent of the worldwide pilot population (Mitchell et al., 2006). To support the above point, (Jackson & Joshi, 2004) found that women were rated less competent and less likely to be selected as leaders when groups were brought together on a diversity-related rationale. Ison (2010) further states that women have been underrepresented in sciences, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. This underrepresentation of women in the STEM fields cannot be balanced overnight but hope for future rise in women in aviation should be encouraged.

From the above researchers' discussions and findings on this topic, as a researcher it is evident that empowering and educating women focusing on diverse career opportunities is important especially in the aviation industries, if South Africa wants to acknowledge both affirmative action and equal employment opportunities as stated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996). If this is not respected and achieved, lack of people's awareness of career opportunities such as aviation can still contribute towards the inequalities of diverse women employment especially with reference to aviation. It is further stated that 89% of the country's pilots are white with 11% blacks only as well as only 8 qualified flight procedure designers in the country (South African Civil Aviation Authority, 2014). This really shows that SA is still having a long way to go in reaching gender equality with regard to aviation as a career opportunity. Westover (2010) supports the above statement by mentioning that there is a large cross-disciplinary research literature on gender and work, and it continues to grow. From this context, one can thus argue that an ongoing point of debate is still on gender-specific expectations and stereotypes, gender segregation in work and occupations.

Most blacks are occupying cabin crew positions. These types of disparities are caused by skills shortages experienced by previously disadvantaged communities (Khoza, 2014). The second cause is that certain courses such as aviation are very expensive. For example, an 18 months aviation course can cost up to R3000 000 in SA. This amount of money is too much for a black disadvantaged South African and thus cannot afford to get an opportunity to pursue a career in aviation. This is really unfair and therefore personally refuse to say, historically disadvantaged individuals stretch only as far as for instance being a cabin crew, as statistics have indicated a high intake in that category. Even though the government is given a credit in as far as spending money on training is concerned, there is still little change as this aviation is still nowhere near transformation after 20 years of democracy. This is supported by the Aviation figures on Table 1 on next page.

The concept of diversity in this study

There is a widely held misconception about diversity, that people think it is static. In this study diversity especially within a workplace is defined as any mixture of components characterized by similarities and differences. The components of a diversity mixture include differences and similarities between and among races, ages, genders, educational levels, religious affiliations, geographical origins, and work styles. Study conducted by Johnston and Packer (1987), regards diversity as significant changes in the composition of the workforce such as the increasing number of women, racial minorities,

senior workers, and immigrants. The definitions above can be further explained by viewing diversity as consisting of humans who differ from one another along any number of dimensions (e.g., race, gender, values, personality, education, experience, sexual orientation, and religion). This is not the case in this article as it will teach the readers to know and understand that diversity's complexities have been at a center of debate in South Africa. Achieving it remains a challenge because of South Africa's complex political, geographic and socio-economic factors. To support the preceding statement, Bendick (2018) adds by saying that the tendency to base decisions on stereotypes is strong when decisions are made. This implies that we should not postpone doing more research and seek solutions on how diversity can be enhanced and achieved. We should strengthen an awareness of diversity by shifting away from the traditional view where certain job opportunities are suitable for males at the expense of females (Banks, 2001). In this context this means that diversity at the workplace should also acknowledge the employment of women especially in aviation industries where there is still prevalence of male domination.

Table 1: Aviation figures

	South African Air Ways		SA		Comair	
	male	female	male	female	male	female
African	55	4	21	11	2	0
Colored	27	2	3	1	4	1
Indian	42	4	7	1	4	1
White	582	62	181	20	183	12
Total	706	72	212	33	193	14

Sources: Modified table from sources SAA, SA express and Comair 2013 as taken from Sowetan newspaper, p. 9, Tuesday, 24 June 2014. Sowetan is a local newspaper in South Africa.

The role of Life Orientation in making people aware of career opportunities

Before 1994 the subjects of School Guidance, Physical Education, Religious Education and Moral Education were offered at South African schools. However, in the early nineties these subjects were merged, and a new subject called Life Orientation was formed because of the new democracy in South Africa and the rationalization process that was taking place in education. Life Orientation as a new subject was introduced into the primary and high school curriculum in 1997 and was then revised in 2002. This was part of the process of restructuring the education system in line with a nonracist, democratic South Africa (DoE, 2004). Life Orientation includes five learning outcomes: health promotion, social development, personal development, physical development and movement, and orientation to the world of work, thus effectively replacing the pre-1994 subjects of School Guidance, Physical Education and Religious Education. On this note, this new subject Life Orientation provides an appropriate platform to promote an awareness of orientation to the world of work. Teaching Life Orientation, focusing on

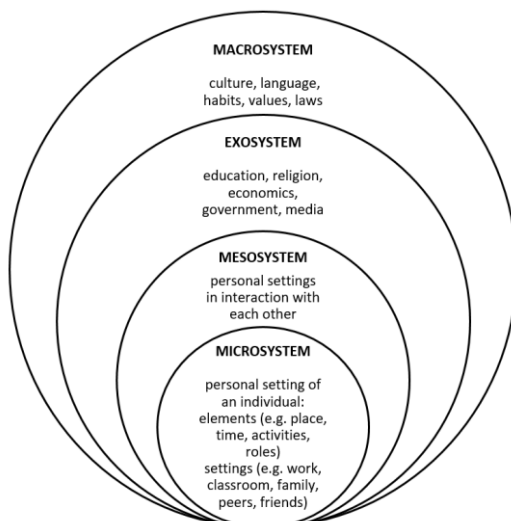
the world of work (career and career choices) as a unit in the curriculum is thus significant since through it, students especially female students can be aware of diverse career paths to follow including aviation. On this note, it is important to show students, female students in particular, that orientation to the world of work is inevitable and important, as this will enhance both their self-esteem and confidence in their career path of aviation. World of work focuses on sub-topics such as career choices, subject choices, an individual’s strengths and weaknesses, abilities and interests, decision making skills, work environment and duration of study as well as study information (DoE, 2007). This means that as teachers we should try by all means to focus more on this subtopic of the world at work in order to make female students aware of this career. This will thus bring into picture diversity in aviation as a career.

Theoretical framework

Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological system theory is therefore relevant to this study and its relevance is seen when as a lecturer and researcher has realized that the systems permeate and interact with one another in order to bring into picture that balance. For example, if students are taught and exposed right from home (macro-system) to school and university level (micro-system) to variety of career opportunities such as aviation, it will be easy for most of female students or women to know that they too can attempt to pursue such career paths at higher education institutions and colleges (meso-system), resulting in them working with their male counterparts in the communities (macro-system).

Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological system theory is very important and relevant in this study because it focuses on the interrelated systems such as the family, school and society/community (Egan & Cowan, 1979). See Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Ecological System Model



Source: Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological system model in Egan & Cowan, 1979, p. 82.

It can therefore once more be emphasized that the preceding theoretical framework is relevant to this study, because we are in the currently ever changing society (chronosystem) that needs an inclusion of both males and females and others in the workplace. It is imperative that the continuing inequities are eradicated to bring into picture equality and equity, and that the process through which the learner, educator and professional support service population becomes representative of the South African population, is accelerated (DoE, 2001). In other words, there should be no segregation in any institution in as far as teaching, learning, training and employability of workers are concerned as well as admission of male and female students into career paths such as aviation.

The study

Research question

Based on the preceding section, the research question from this study is thus stated as: How can diverse women in South Africa be made aware of aviation as a career opportunity?

Aim

The aim of this study is to: Describe and explore aviation as a career opportunity to the South African diverse women.

Limitations of the study

Firstly, this study is theoretically based on the review of literature and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and cannot be generalized to a broader population more so that it is solely conducted in South African contexts. Secondly, it is also focusing on the South African diverse women from Life Orientation perspective, and therefore cannot be generalized to other cases or similar situations.

Findings

From a theoretical stance, it was found that women are still in minority as far as aviation in South Africa is concerned. This is supported by literature discussed in the previous sections, for example, women pilots' representation is less than six percent of the worldwide pilot population (Mitchell et al., 2006). On this note, there is a need to further conduct research on this topic of women in aviation.

Recommendations for future research

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be recommended that:

- The South African government and the National Department of Education should intervene in that regard by starting to see the significance of transforming the industries and also building aviation colleges in all the provinces.
- More bursaries be made available to those women who want to pursue their careers in aviation.
- The aviation industry should make piloting more attractive to women and be taught as a module/course and not as a unit in the curriculum of South African schools and universities.

Ethical consideration

In order to uphold ethical considerations of the study, to start with, I will first apply for ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg. As soon as the ethics committee grants the approval to conduct the research, I will apply for permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research from schools under its jurisdiction. After permission is granted by the department, the consent of the school and individual teachers that will be participating in the study will be sought. The participants will not feel threatened or intimidated and will not be pressurized to answer any specific question on a matter that they might regard as confidential. Participation will be made voluntary and optional. Participants will be informed beforehand that they may withdraw at any stage during the discussions. Precautionary measures will be taken to ensure that participants will not feel upset or uncomfortable and that their right to privacy or dignity will not be infringed upon during the interviews. I will inform participants that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they could withdraw should they feel uncomfortable with the study at any time without penalty. I will protect the privacy of the participants by means of the use of pseudonyms for the participants. The interviews will not be conducted during teaching and learning activities, a convenient time and place will be used for the interview. All participants and schools will remain anonymous in the analysis and the reports arising from the research.

Conclusion

This study has added more insightful awareness of the importance of aviation in South Africa where women are still in minority as far as aviation is concerned. On this note, it can be concluded that diverse females are still in minority as far as employment in aviation is concerned. The researcher is therefore of the opinion that if the subject of Life Orientation's main topics such as Career and Career choices can be taught thoroughly and seriously in schools and universities in South Africa, this can assist learners and students to be aware of more diverse career paths to follow including aviation. The reason why the researcher is mentioning the above point, is because Life Orientation at this moment is not seriously taught at schools.

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Mentoring Higher Education Leaders and Managers through Contextual Intelligence

Abstract

This study investigated the mentoring of academics for leadership and management in higher education institutions through the application of contextual intelligence. Experts and professionals generally agree that effective institutional leadership and management mentorship, using contextual knowledge, is crucial for achieving institutional success. The paper aims to illustrate the significance of mentoring institutional leaders and managers using contextual intelligence skills. The dearth of literature on mentoring academics using contextual intelligence in South Africa might be addressed through mentoring, as this practice poses a significant obstacle. The challenges of applying contextual intelligence in mentoring academics are highlighted with a focus on four key areas: mentoring, leadership and management, contextual intelligence, and achieving organisational success. Despite their relatively tiny proportion within the overall framework, these elements exert influence over all aspects of the institution's activities. While tackling each impact individually may result in success, the continuous emergence of new factors makes it unlikely for this method to maintain improvement. The findings illustrate that the perception of improvement is determined by a dynamic and intricate setting. The paper plays a vital role in considering contextual dynamics when mentoring for contextual intelligence.

Keywords: mentoring, contextual intelligence, leadership, management, institutional success

Introduction

Mentoring leaders and managers through contextual intelligence should help higher education professionals tackle various issues, disputes, and problems. Academics need contextual intelligence mentoring to grow professionally and personally for organisational success. Mentoring contextually knowledgeable higher education leaders and managers requires trust and transparency, understanding their circumstances, issues, and goals to provide guidance. Active listening helps them grasp objectives and they attain growth. Their challenges and goals should be addressed in mentorship materials. Identify their strengths and limitations and encouraging engagement may help their professional development. Contextually intelligent academics could transform organisations and improve leadership and management. It is hard to separate mentorship, leadership/management, context, and organisational performance. Successfully guided staff members for leadership and management will know that all academics are social beings and need mentoring, regardless of their rank (lecturer, associate professor, or professor). Competent contextual intelligence leadership and management mentees have good people skills and understand diversity. Organisational and sociocultural contexts

affect mentoring. The institution has the authority to provide competent contextually intelligent mentors to guide academics for leadership and management, and resources should be provided to ensure academics are well equipped for contextual intelligence leadership and management. HEIs expect effective academics to perform. Leadership and management demands and contextual intelligence difficulties should be addressed. Understanding how contextual intelligence leadership and management (CILM) can help HEIs succeed is necessary because contextual intelligence is an emerging theory.

Literature review

Mentoring has two-fold benefits for leaders and managers. Firstly, it aids professional and personal development. Secondly, it facilitates growth as mentors (Shek & Lin, 2015). While leadership and management are separate concepts, they are used interchangeably in South African education. Leadership is indispensable as management alone is inadequate. Based on the Survey on the Global Agenda conducted by the World Economic Forum in 2015, 86% of the 1767 respondents identified leadership crises as the third most prominent concern confronting the entire world. Leadership style mostly concerns the act of influencing individuals, while management primarily concerns the performance of tasks. These two concepts are opposite and interconnected (Chacha, 2022). Leaders have the power to affect an individual's capacity, and inspire, and empower others to make valuable contributions to the achievement of organisational goals. Leaders are distinguished from managers by their ability to exert influence and provide inspiration, rather than relying on power and control. Leadership is a universal concept that encompasses seven interconnected components, which are influenced by various factors. These components include behaviour, relationships, approach, ability/competency/skill, knowledge, personality, and practice. Each of these components originates from a specific notion that uses influence as a penetrating weapon, spreading through individuals and impacting a certain situation.

Leadership demonstrates contextual intelligence by incorporating these elements and intentionally connecting individuals to the specific circumstances they are now facing. Effective leadership is crucial for the success of organisations, and contextual intelligence plays a critical role in increasing it (Marishane, 2020). Mentors exert significant influence over their mentees by possessing attributes associated with power, authority, leadership, and management. Power and authority can be distinguished by their directionality, which can flow in various ways. It can flow downward from a superior to a subordinate, upward from a junior to a senior, horizontally between individuals at the same level but in different departments of an organisation, or diagonally between individuals at different levels and departments of the same organisation. Thus, it is not restricted by any limits or constraints.

Mentors who possess contextual intelligence can exert influence and exercise control over their mentees. The mentor's trait is derived from their knowledge and expertise. Power is the ability to exert control, while authority refers to the legitimate and official entitlement to issue instructions, commands, and judgments. Power is used in a professional context and is a formal authority granted to the position held (Bush & Glover, 2016). Mentors are those who possess leadership qualities and wield authority, which grants them the ability to shape the actions and conduct of their mentees. They can exert control and wield influence through their power. Their authority is not acquired through their title or job description and is not dependent on hierarchical status, but rather

must be won from the mentee. The position held by a leader grant them authority, and the ability to wield authority is acquired. Authority adheres to the hierarchical structure, possesses legitimacy, and cascades in a downward direction from superiors to subordinates. The environment, people, work, and working conditions are influenced by leadership and management aspects (McKimm & O’Sullivan, 2015).

Why should mentors possess management skills?

To achieve a goal, managers exercise control over a group or an organisation. The characteristics of contextually intelligent mentors include being goal-oriented, being policy-guided, and deploying institutional resources (human, financial, technological, intellectual, and physical), structures, activities, infrastructure, services, systems, and processes (McKimm & O’Sullivan, 2015). Mentors are responsible for guiding and managing mentees by ensuring that the day-to-day duties of leadership and management are acquired and that they are administered. They are in a position to exert influence over other people and bring about changes in behaviour. Planning, organising, leading/directing, delegating, and controlling are some of the responsibilities of mentors (Leiber, 2022). When it comes to management, they are responsible for responding to the internal and external environmental dynamics of an institution, and their performance is determined by the attainment of the organisation’s goals. In the absence of the mentor’s leadership and management abilities, mentees would be unable to achieve the organisation’s vision, or to take concrete measures, and they would not be able to accomplish the goals that are necessary to achieve their vision (Sanyal, 2017).

Leadership-management nexus in higher education

During the process of mentoring, leadership and management work together harmoniously. Symbolically, they embody contrasting aspects of a single entity and collectively determine its value (Marishane, 2020). Although they possess distinct functions, techniques, and foci, they ultimately have a common organisational aim. Effective higher education mentors demonstrate a harmonious combination of leadership and management skills, as well as exhibit a constructive leadership impact and adept resource management.

The interchangeable usage of leadership and management in the South African educational environment may lead to conceptual, theoretical, and practical confusion. Organisational instability can arise when there is a lack of distinction between the vocabulary, beliefs, techniques, and practices of leadership and management (McKimm & O’Sullivan, 2015). This phenomenon arises when individuals are devalued and treated as mere commodities. The two-way connection between leaders and followers involves competent mentors to assist mentees in attaining goals ingrained in the institution’s vision and values. The mentor/leader acquires prestige by actively engaging and assisting mentees in accomplishing tasks (Shek & Lin, 2015). Genuine contextual intelligent mentorship imparts the qualities of flexibility and adaptability. An adept mentor who has cultivated favourable connections will bolster the efficacy of formal endeavours within the institution, and the bedrock of mentorship will manifest in the influence they wield over their subordinates (mentees).

The mentoring process

In an ideal world, a mentor-mentee relationship would last for many years and help both parties develop professionally and personally (Shek & Lin, 2015). In a mentoring relationship, both parties benefit from the mentoring relationship: the mentor helps the mentee grow professionally and personally, and the mentee helps the mentor learn and grow. Mentors employ a wide range of strategies, such as providing constructive criticism while also offering words of encouragement, providing indirect coaching, and focusing on the procedural elements of career advising (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013). Evidence also suggests that certain female leaders are great mentors, and the examples demonstrate that female leaders also mentor, dispelling the stereotype (Sanyal, 2017). When employees receive mentoring, they can grow in their positions and become more effective leaders who can inspire others to follow their lead. Mentoring is a lifelong process of empowering one another via encouragement that leads to greater possibilities for growth and advancement. The three pillars of a successful mentoring relationship are transparency, dedication, and complete trust (Goodsett, 2021). The mentor's good attitude, admirable character traits, and understanding of institutional processes regarding people's abilities and limitations are all signs of a well-rounded mentor.

When communicating organisational goals to a mentee, a mentor should never stop practicing what they preach. Institutions ought to legitimise mentoring programs despite their voluntary nature due to the inadequacy of some leaders and managers (Shek & Lin, 2015). Organisations and individuals alike will be unable to adapt to new circumstances in the absence of mentorship. By integrating diverse ideas for a common purpose and being responsive to contextual dynamics, mentored staff members can achieve goals and realize the institution's vision. This is in what Marishane (2020) calls a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity & ambiguity) sphere of operation and influence, which combines the influences of change and its dynamics (Sarkar, 2016; Breen, 2017).

What is contextual intelligence?

A simple formula can be used to express the definition of contextual intelligence: CI = Situation (context), I = intelligence, and E = experience. According to Kutz and Bamford-Wade's (2013) definition of contextual intelligence, there are three main issues: first, that context/situation is too internal; second, that it is too external; and third, that the identification of each event or occurrence is determined by human variables. Intelligence is data-informed knowledge with practical applications. The capacity to learn from one's experiences is what we mean when we talk about experience. As a result of their innate and rapid awareness of the ever-changing contextual factors at play in any given situation, mentors who possess contextual intelligence can guide their mentees to act in ways that are most effective given those circumstances (Shek & Lin, 2015). The capacity to communicate and accomplish institutional goals, as well as to establish the tone and speed for the institution's operations, are essential abilities for a professional mentor to have when mentoring academics in higher education. Mentors can aid mentees in achieving long-term success by using contextual knowledge to enhance mentees' institutional context and objectives (Marishane, 2020). Contextual intelligence is essential for improving and achieving organisational goals in the face of ever-possible institutional context changes. If the mentee is to maintain the success of the company even after the mentor has departed, the mentorship has been successful.

Leading and managing through contextual intelligence

The leadership and management environment, including research and internationalisation, community engagement, teaching and learning, and social responsiveness and its impact, can be improved through redesigning the organisation. This can be achieved through contextual intelligence. Organisational culture is defined by shared beliefs, needs, objectives, and vision; it is the product of a leadership and management environment that fosters cooperation (Bush & Glover, 2016). Institutional values risk being lost if mentee needs are not considered in institutional development to help the mentee fit in with the organisation. When people stop caring about the organisation's ideals, they get disillusioned and may not give their all on the job. To help their mentees connect and adapt easily, mentors should rethink leadership and management practices (Shek & Lin, 2015). When mentoring, a contextually intelligent leader and manager (CILM) makes sure the mentee understands the organisation's mission and values. Mentors, while guiding their mentees through a reorganisation, should lay the groundwork for a collaborative culture that strengthens ties to the local community.

CILM in the African context

In South Africa and West Africa, researchers looked at effective management and leadership briefly. Whether leaders and managers in South Africa can adapt to various situations depends on contextual circumstances, just as it does in other nations. According to research done in West Africa (Bush & Glover, 2016), the region's dominant managerialism in the institutional setting is responsible for the hierarchical structure that enables effective leadership and management. Geographical considerations, historical disparities, cultural diversity, and socioeconomic status all have an effect on management and leadership in South Africa. The leaders and managers who benefited most from mentorship had a firm conviction in their unwavering resolve to achieve their goals, according to Kamper (2008). They were devoted to achieving academic greatness by being courageous, self-disciplined, and resilient. The majority of supervisors and executives exhibited empathy and could put themselves in others' shoes. Cooperation, empowerment, cooperation, and networking were values they wholeheartedly upheld, and they were passionate were enthusiastic about helping individuals succeed.

Research design and methodology

The purpose of this conceptual paper was to outline how using contextual intelligence can assist faculty members in leadership and management roles within higher education institutions. Knowledge boundaries are recognized and applied in contexts different from their original development by contextual awareness of leadership and management. For example, a mentor who is very competent in contextual intelligence can swiftly guide a recently hired employee through a variety of challenges related to leadership and management because of their extensive knowledge in these areas. Behaviour (insight, foresight, and hindsight), relationships (self, others, and the world), approach (theoretical and practical perspectives), abilities (analytical, creative, and practical), knowledge (practices, abilities, behaviour, personality, and context), and practices (directing, developing, designing, and focusing) are all ways in which one's

contextual intelligence as a leader and manager can be observed. A mentor with high contextual intelligence can help their mentees or new co-workers evaluate what they have learned, spark fresh ideas, and hone their practical abilities. The mentee is expected to mimic the mentor's actions to gain contextual information, which can be seen through three lenses: the past, the present, and the future (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013). Through their interactions with others, with themselves, and with the world at large, mentors exhibit their worldview. Assisting, guiding, and acquiring knowledge are integral to contextual intelligence. In addition to displaying wonderful qualities and beliefs, the mentor's expertise of institutional practices helps him guide the mentee in what he can and cannot accomplish. The mentorship of institutional staff for the promotion of positive values relies heavily on attitude (Holmes, 2005). The mentee exemplifies strong moral principles and consistently puts them into practice, which allows the mentor to convey the organisation's goals to the mentee. In order to help their mentees, thrive and gain institutional values, mentors inform them about institutional plans connected to institutional growth and address their requirements. Mentors risk alienating their mentees by acting in a way that betrays a lack of investment in the organization's mission and values. If a mentor is good at what he does, he trains his mentees to carry on when he is not there. Contextual intelligence and adaptation are necessary responses to the inevitable dynamics of any given institution. Organisations and their employees suffer when mentorship programs are absent. The mentor's responsibility is to help the mentee become more contextually savvy in their leadership and management by rethinking existing systems and processes.

Discussion

The objective of this conceptual study was to delineate the sequential procedures of employing contextual intelligence to support faculty members in leadership and managerial positions inside higher education institutions. Contextually aware leadership and management understand and apply knowledge boundaries in different contexts from their initial formation. For instance, a highly skilled mentor with strong contextual intelligence can efficiently assist a newly hired employee in navigating various leadership and management issues due to their considerable expertise in these domains. Contextual intelligence in leadership and management can be observed through various aspects, including insight, foresight, and hindsight in behaviour, relationships with oneself, others, and the world, theoretical and practical perspectives in approach, analytical, creative, and practical abilities, knowledge in practices, abilities, behaviour, personality, and context, as well as directing, developing, designing, and focusing practices. A mentor possessing a high level of contextual intelligence can assist their mentees or new colleagues in assessing their acquired knowledge, stimulating innovative concepts, and refining their practical skills.

The mentee is required to imitate the mentor's activities to acquire contextual knowledge, which may be analysed from three perspectives: the past, the present, and the future (Kutz & Bamford-Wade, 2013). Mentors demonstrate their viewpoint through their relationships with others, themselves, and the world. Assisting, guiding, and learning knowledge are essential components of contextual intelligence. Mentors assist mentees in comprehending their own strengths and opportunities for growth by imparting knowledge about institutional protocols. The capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and solve issues in management and leadership are signs of contextual

intelligence. Through the application of new behaviours and skills in leadership and management, a mentee who possesses contextual intelligence can transform a complex and varied scenario. According to Heideggerian Perspective, a leader or manager who is contextually intelligent can maintain harmony among the competing demands of the workplace, the organisation, and the industry (Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). Because of their inherent connection to the natural world, they influence how leadership engages with it.

Conclusion

Contextual intelligence-based mentorship programs should help college leaders and managers handle a variety of issues. Academics need contextual intelligence coaching to grow professionally and personally for organisational success. Contextual intelligence helps academics reorganise their institutions for better management and leadership. Because of this, mentoring, leadership/management, context, and organisational performance are intertwined. Mentored staff will recognise that academics at all levels (lecturer, associate professor, and professor) need mentorship since they are social beings and not experts. Successful contextual intelligence and management mentees have great interpersonal skills and a deep grasp of diversity. Mentoring is linked to social and organisational environments. Academic mentorship through contextual intelligence involves two main factors: first, whether the institution can assign qualified mentors with this skill set to help academics with leadership and management, and second, whether enough resources are available to help academics succeed. HEIs expect successful professors to meet the requirements. This requires addressing leadership, management, and contextual intelligence demands. Contextual intelligence leadership and management (CILM) was tested in HEIs due to its uniqueness.

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Tebogo Jillian Mampane

The Induction and Mentorship of New Practitioners in Early Childhood Education Centres: The South African Context

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to emphasise the value of inducting and mentoring new practitioners in Early Childhood Education centres. Early Childhood Education centres are usually located in meaningful buildings. Centres care for more children than the family can provide for. They are usually divided into groups or classrooms of similarly aged children. Child care centres typically have many practitioners who are overseen by a centre manager or a director. Induction and mentoring are components of professional development aimed at enhancing the educational support system for all ECEC practitioners, particularly those who have recently been hired. Because centre managers are responsible for the growth and performance of their children, they should equip practitioners with support measures to help them improve child development and performance. Because most mothers work full-time, usually out of financial necessity, they require regular child care. For these mothers the question is not whether to use day-care, but how to choose among the available options in a way that is best for the child. Quality child care is more beneficial to children than staying at home. As a result, the purpose of this study is to look at conceptual frameworks as well as new approaches of educating and supporting practitioners to facilitate ECE learning excellence. More experienced personnel (mentors) should provide induction and mentorship, guidance, advice, and information to practitioners for career growth and enhanced performance. Findings reveal that induction and mentorship are important to pass along information, skills, and competence to practitioners who may not have had official training in these areas. Based on the appropriateness or inadequacy of the design of practitioner induction and mentoring programs, more study on the influence of induction on performance and practitioner turnover may be conducted (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Transformation and practitioner retention should be the goals of induction and mentorship.

Keywords: induction, mentoring, beginner practitioners, professional development, ECE centres, transformation

Introduction

ECE teachers need induction and mentorship to develop their abilities. The ECE environment requires competence and qualifications to close the practitioner induction and mentorship gap. Daytime working parents can leave their kids with ECE staff at day-cares also called nurseries, preschools, or crèches. Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs for ages 0–4 and 5–6 are available for Grade R learners (Moletsane & Adams-Ojugbele, 2019). The skills and information gained via teacher education and experience may not apply to new situations. ECE centres must be committed to centre dynamics and mindful of societal demands to succeed (Moloney & McCarthy, 2018). The mentor must

learn the mentee's background, needs, societal conventions, and aspirations. The mentor's expertise should help the mentee or practitioner connect ECE practices to the centre's aims. Mentors must consider both the mentee's and the centre's interests while prioritising. The centre management must provide continual professional development for all ECE practitioners, including newcomers. ECE centres often supervise many practitioners. Program-based professional development called induction lists all the actions practitioners should accomplish and how they might help their students. This resource is ongoing and systemic for ECE professionals. Professional mentoring and psychological support can assist new practitioners build job-related skills and feel competent and effective in interactions (Moloney & McCarthy, 2018). The induction process and mentoring relationship increase the protégé's skills. The principles of induction and mentorship encompass all approaches to educating and advancing practitioners. Mentors help non-trained practitioners improve ECE centre practises and their requirements.

Inducting and mentoring practitioners

Induction includes formal and informal professional and social growth (Peeters & Sharmahd, 2014). Thornton and Cherrington (2019) define induction as a school or centre helping new staff members adjust without disturbing the workplace. New practitioners are often mentored or partnered with established practitioners. I think cheerful, caring, and uplifting induction should be dealt with apart from assessment. Mentors assist new practitioners acclimate by providing continuing support. How new practitioners are introduced into the field affects what they bring and how they manage challenges. Effective induction requires regular practitioner review throughout the high-quality mentoring process and organised professional development planning time with practitioners (Moloney & McCarthy, 2018). The inducted and mentored practitioners must reinforce the successes and resolve the concerns to view this as a constructive exercise for the centre's pedagogical goals. According to Langdon et al. (2016), mentoring should benefit practitioners and reduce incompetence, especially among newly recruited government personnel. Some practitioners feel disheartened and depart because their centre managers undervalue their excellent intentions and classroom experiments. General consensus exists that ECE induction programs for new practitioners should take local factors into account. To achieve teaching excellence and the new ECE standards (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010), practitioners need criteria for teacher preparation, classroom performance, and student achievement, as well as continued and focused professional development. Leadership in education is crucial to helping new teachers move from classroom theory to practice.

Importance of induction within the SA context

Newly appointed practitioners have specific expectations when it comes to being trained. Managers and principals have a responsibility to help their employees set and meet reasonable professional goals. Disorientation and feelings of inadequacy are common among novice practitioners because of unclear or confused expectations from centre managers/principals, children, parents, and fellow employees (Akdağ, 2014). It might be difficult to ease newly certified professionals into the work and culture of a new

centre. Having a positive induction strategy that trains and supports new practitioners is the greatest way to support and develop them. Without an appropriate induction programme to direct, introduce, and initiate them, new practitioners will not be able to perform to their full potential or accomplish the goals of the centre that hired them. They require orientation and support as they become acquainted with the centre's operations, their assigned tasks, and the other staff members and students with whom they will be working. Goals for instruction and assessment should be established as early as possible in the induction process.

Researchers have different perspectives on what staff induction actually is; some regard it as a process where novices are helped to show competence, while others see it as an extension of professional preparation for teaching (Moloney & McCarthy, 2018). Managers and principals should create an orientation program to educate newly hired practitioners on crucial aspects of their new work setting. Having the manager/principal or an experienced staff member give an introduction helps newcomers feel more at ease about details related to their responsibilities, ECE guidelines, and the centre's overarching goals and objectives.

Tours that introduce new employees to their surroundings, as well as their co-workers and other those involved, are an important part of the socialisation process. Induction programs ought to stress encouragement, the realisation of intended outcomes, and increased personal responsibility. Lessons during induction should be stimulating in order to encourage critical interaction with peers and the mentor. Students/mentees should be ready to engage in independent, introspective learning. The success of the project is highly dependent on the dedication and hard work of the participants.

Professional development and training through mentoring

ECE leaders establish strategic priorities for their centres. Building educational facilities needs their talents. New trends include induction and mentorship initiatives to improve educators (Clutterbuck, 2011). Thus, face-to-face interaction between experienced and new practitioners is crucial for support and development. Experienced mentors can help new teachers with classroom observation, formative evaluations, feedback, and advice (Moloney & McCarthy, 2018). Mentoring involves being a positive role model and resource for a protégé. A mentor is an experienced expert who advises a less-skilled colleague, advise and guide mentees to career advancement. Mentors help mentees reflect on and learn from their own and others' experiences.

Mentoring programs should be available to all ECE professionals to help them develop the skills needed to teach and learn in ECE settings and identify where educators need more training or resources. If they are not properly trained or mentored before joining the field, practitioners may struggle in the classroom. They must work hard to establish their new talents during this transition due to new demands. Direction and encouragement are needed to gain confidence and skill. Mentoring for PTD emphasizes a well-established procedure that includes all official and informal teacher career advancement activities. Seminars, and in-centre collaborative learning offer mentoring and best practices exchange. Informal training includes reading, conversations, peer learning, and observing colleagues (Mizell, 2010). External expertise from courses, workshops, or formal qualification programmes and collaboration between ECE centres or practitioners (such as observational visits to other centres) can all contribute to mentoring and coaching as part of professional teacher development. Dedicated training

facilities, teacher networks, or ECE facilities where practitioners work can provide formal education (OECD, 2009).

Many teachers/practitioners professional development approaches fail to address learning goals (Moloney & McCarthy, 2018), despite PTD being vital for practically every educational attempt to improve teaching and learning. Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2004) say training works best when integrated into everyday work. Professional development can improve instruction and student performance. If ECE centres want children to succeed, they must work hard to improve their practitioners. Educational facility managers must encourage team planning and collaborative learning to improve classroom instruction (OECD, 2009). Such assistance may inspire instructors to improve classroom performance and student outcomes. Supervisors require interpersonal competency, social awareness, and social abilities (Akdağ, 2014). Most South African practitioners lack mentorship and coaching for professional development. Departments and school districts worldwide spend thousands on in-service training seminars but far less on practitioner mentoring and coaching. To improve ECE expertise and classroom instruction, educators and policymakers worldwide propose additional professional development and support for practitioners (Akdağ, 2014).

Research methodology

Early Childhood Care and Education facilities in Black settlement areas of Gauteng Province were studied using a qualitative research strategy. The study aimed to shed light on the challenges, knowledge, practices, and support afforded to new practitioners in ECE centres in the South African context through induction and mentoring because of the limited research on this topic.

In order to collect information, five centre managers were questioned face-to-face employing semi-structured interviews. To teach and support newly appointed practitioners for learning excellence, conceptual and theoretical induction frameworks were studied. First few years of teaching are considered the practitioner induction period which bridges the gap between pre-service training and ongoing professional growth (Barrett, Zhukov & Welch, 2019). As part of the center's induction procedure, new practitioners were formally introduced to their new duties as teachers. Competing with more seasoned professionals, learning the ins and outs of the prevailing centre culture, and gaining the respect of peers are all common challenges for new practitioners. Data was examined thematically to extract overarching themes and underlying concepts (Owens-Cunningham, 2021).

The results showed that the growth of professionals working in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres is hampered by a lack of training and assistance through induction and mentorship. The takeaway is that most managers rely on practitioners who are neither well-trained nor well-compensated to run the day-to-day business of the centre. Well-trained, informed, visionary, experienced managers/mentors and practitioners are required for sustainable development in ECCE centre induction and mentoring. It is recommended that programs be designed to help practitioners improve the teaching performance of new practitioners and increase their capacity for growth and learning. Centre administrators, policymakers, and others interested in the topic may find the report informative.

Theoretical framework

Teacher Development Theory was used to explore how new ECE practitioners adapt. The idea recognises the complexity of education and the fact that ECE centre teacher preparation rarely provides all the knowledge and skills needed for centre success. Work experience is essential for learning (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010). Thus, the centre's manager/principal must promote skill development and professional advancement. Teacher development emphasises learning, training, and lifelong learning. Learning new skills and knowledge at work is crucial. Formal or informal learning gives practitioners the skills and habits to succeed. Lifelong learning becomes inseparable from employment when education is integrated into the workplace. Training is distinct as an economic input. People can seek education and training for motives other than money because economic incentives are weak. People solve problems themselves, and education from early infancy to retirement helps them adapt to a knowledge-based society and values all forms of education (Soni, 2012).

Both formal and informal education and training are considered "lifelong learning", and involve acquiring attitudes, beliefs, skills, and knowledge via daily experience and educational influences and resources (Soni, 2012). Formal education includes kindergarten through college and school-like technical and professional training programs. Lifelong learning in the home, business, and society promotes effective educational opportunities. Professional work involves ongoing learning and development, not a linear progression through education. Education occurs across the lifespan, in almost every field, and increasingly in official and informal multi-person situations. These cases must inform more comprehensive learning theories and cutting-edge approaches, procedures, and assessments for teachers. A lifetime learning method that combines formal education with informal learning at home, in the community, and at work can improve teaching quality (Soni, 2012).

The role of the mentor and mentee

A mentor is someone who has achieved mastery in her field and is widely regarded as an authority in her field. A mentor's job is to help their mentee grow professionally, whether that means helping them go from novice to expert or from expert to leader in their field. Mentors are expected to help their mentees grow in ways that directly address their specific areas of weakness (Clutterbuck, 2011). The mentor's primary responsibility is to inspire their mentees to engage in the mentoring process and think critically about their experiences. The mentor's expertise enables them to employ a variety of instructional approaches and pertinent resources in order to guide their mentee toward achieving their objectives. Success in a mentoring relationship depends not only on the mentor's dedication, knowledge, and personality, but also on the mentee's willingness to put in the time and effort required to learn from and grow with their mentor. The mentee must view the mentoring relationship as a privilege and not an entitlement and must view the mentoring process as a chance for professional growth and development. The mentor, not the mentee, is the one who takes the lead in a mentoring relationship and ensures that the mentee learns from it. In order to get the most out of mentoring, the mentee must have a genuine interest in developing themselves.

The mentoring and coaching principles acknowledge that there is considerable variation in the applications of mentoring and coaching (Clutterbuck, 2011). Training for

mentorship and coaching should be tailored to the specific settings in which its participants will be working. The mentorship and coaching program should be set up in such a way that participants may talk to one another about their experiences in the classroom and the difficulties they have had putting into words the values they already hold. The mentor's job is to foster an atmosphere conducive to learning by encouraging an open dialogue and acknowledging the value of each trainee's input. When there is mutual regard, everyone feels safe to speak their minds and express their opinions without fear of repercussion.

The bond formed will encourage co-workers to continue their dedication to education, which in turn will increase their proficiency in their respective fields. All mentees will develop the skills, knowledge, and self-awareness to take charge of their own professional progress as a result of the mentoring relationship. The mentees can see where they excel and where they need improvement in the development plan. The new practice and its adaption to diverse learning contexts can be better understood with the help of the identified strengths and shortcomings. Learning from mentors is acknowledged when new methods and techniques are put into practice. Risk-taking and creativity are fostered, and practitioners are prompted to seek out direct proof of practice, when mentoring and coaching skills are incorporated into the classroom setting. The ability to effectively use resources to safeguard and maintain daily learning, action, and contemplation is a direct result of the innovation fostered by consistent practice.

Implications of induction for practitioners

Teachers have different needs since they have different backgrounds and levels of experience. Although experienced practitioners may already know everything their students require, they still need formal training, especially new practitioners because they struggle with issues related to supervision. To help practitioners start quickly, educational leaders should undertake detailed staff assessments before establishing induction and mentorship programs (Akdağ, 2014). Curriculum changes, instructional approaches, technological advances, regulatory shifts, and student needs present distinct challenges to all practitioners undergoing induction and mentoring (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Because of this, becoming a practitioner is not proof of skills acquisition. Any new role requires a commitment to learn and improve, so practitioners should take advantage of introductory CPD to improve their abilities (Clutterbuck, 2011). Good practitioners can develop through professional development and improve their current position. Learning new skills helps professionals brainstorm workplace stress-reduction strategies. Strong interpersonal ties and open communication foster teamwork, good morale, and constant performance (Akdağ, 2014).

Induction session comments can provide new knowledge, professional growth and how to overcome hurdles. In environments that regularly mentor and induct, mentors improve personally and professionally, increase the mentee's subject knowledge, pedagogical, classroom management, and leadership skills. Improved reflective practice and independent study help them impact children's lives. Mentees gain self-confidence, a sense of belonging, and emotional, mental, and physical resilience when facing changes or adversity. Certified teachers help them more (Early Childhood Development Agency, 2016).

Conclusion

Practitioners and learners make ECE centres successful, thus induction and mentorship are vital. Effective ECE programs recruit and retain experienced teachers, train them to improve, and ensure all children receive a quality education. Managers who seek better classroom performance should induct and mentor practitioners. To attain this goal, staff must be able to understand best practices and encourage practitioners to engage in continuous improvement activities like research.

The most crucial questions are “What have they learned during induction?” and “What has this experience taught them about themselves?”. Induction and mentorship sound good, but centres may implement them differently. Managers of large preschool centres may not be able to provide in-depth, hands-on mentoring and curriculum development with their staff due to access to quality training for prospective and current practitioners, a mismatch between supply and demand for certain practitioners, the system’s inability to dramatically improve ECE centre teaching and learning, and a disjointed and uncoordinated system.

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