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Transformative Learning Experiences of Students in Repurposed Service-Learning Projects During COVID-19 at a University of Technology

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ABSTRACT

The potential of transformative learning through repurposed service-learning initiatives is explored by examining the transformative learning experiences of three first-year Communication students of Marketing from a university of technology in South Africa while implementing service-learning projects during the COVID-19 pandemic. To examine the differences between service-learning projects during the pandemic and the traditional face-to-face models, traditional service-learning frameworks are explored and the motivation for adapting traditional service-learning is explained. The study used a qualitative research approach to examine the viewpoints of participants. To assess student transformative learning, the Transformative Learning Theory is employed as a lens. Participants were interviewed and their verbatim statements constituted the data analyzed using thematic analysis. A deductive coding approach was used as data was analyzed and a set of established themes served as the foundation for the discussion of the findings. The transformative learning experiences of the participants are discussed to illustrate how service-learning projects can be repurposed. It is evident that communication skills were practiced, and transformative learning occurred. As a result, "home-based" service-learning is recommended as a form of alternative service-learning. The article contributes to the current education climate in which teaching methodologies require increased flexibility and innovation.

KEYWORDS: Communication Skills; COVID-19; Experiences; Higher Education; Service-Learning; Transformative

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) proclaimed COVID-19 a global pandemic in March 2020 and a global public health disaster ensued (World Health Organization, 2020). According to Toguero (2020), COVID-19 affected higher education institutions in all 188 countries as of April 06, 2020. To contain the global spread of the pandemic, educational institutions such as colleges, schools, and universities had to alter their teaching and learning methods (Karakose, 2021; Khan, 2021). An urgent shift to emergency remote learning and teaching was required (Mafenya, 2021).

Service learning (SL), a type of experiential learning (Furco, 1996; Jacoby, 2015), challenges students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to real-world situations through face-to-face interactions with community members. During the pandemic, this was impossible as interaction with other individuals was restricted to curtail transmission of the virus. Due to the pandemic, many SL projects in universities had to be cancelled or suspended (Indiana University, 2020; Tian & Noel, 2020; Pfeiffer, Baker & Mascorro, 2021; Kehl, Patil, Tagorda, Nelson-Hurtiz, 2022). Other universities had to rethink and restructure how SL could be implemented remotely (Hong Kong Polytechnic, 2020; Hassett; 2021). Rather

than suspending, postponing, or cancelling SL during the COVID-19 outbreak, many lecturers challenged students to be original and creative in delivering a contactless SL or a SL that required minimal contact with other individuals (Tian & Noel, 2020). This is where this research study is positioned as the author encouraged students to implement repurposed SL projects rather than postponing or cancelling the projects during the pandemic. This is in line with the thoughts of Roy (2020) stated below.

Roy's (2020) conceptualisation of the pandemic as a portal proposes that the pandemic should be viewed as an epistemic opportunity for humans: "Pandemics have compelled humanity to break with the past and imagine their world anew." The COVID-19 pandemic allowed educators to review teaching and learning strategies and develop new techniques that can assist students in learning more effectively (Hlatshwayo et al., 2021).

Current SL Models

To understand the differences between the SL projects undertaken before and during the pandemic, an insight into current SL models is necessary. Bohat and Goodrich (2007) identify six models of SL, namely, the placement model, project model, product model, presentation model, presentation plus model, and event model. What is common to all the models is community contact as a necessity for SL projects to be executed effectively. Heffernan (2001), in the book *Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction,* identifies six different models: a "pure model", discipline-based, problem-based, capstone courses, service internships, and the undergraduate community-based action research model. The dominant theme that emerges from these models is structure.

The projects require participants to follow specific steps to execute the goals effectively. The 8-block model (Laine, 2016), basic model, and PARE (preparation, action, reflection, evaluation) (University of Maryland, 1999), bear similarities to the other models as community contact and sequential steps seem to be necessary for the successful implementation of SL projects. Consequently, a common thread that runs through all of these models is limited flexibility.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the SL projects could not adhere to all of the stages outlined in the preceding models. The models provide no alternative way of facilitating the projects than completing the various phases through physical contact. The methods necessitate collaboration with community members, group efforts, and close supervision by SL lecturers to enable the successful implementation of SL initiatives. There were limited SL opportunities as individuals established boundaries to limit interaction with others. Health and safety concerns were raised, and additional measures needed to be taken which made SL more challenging and time-consuming. Students were required to think critically about conducting initiatives that did not require integration into the community or connection with group members in close proximity. In addition, they were obliged to work on their own due to the limited involvement of group members and lecturers during remote learning. The students had to adapt to the changing educational environment manifested by the pandemic.

Defining Service-Learning

Community engagement relates to a range of activities through which the university communicates with the neighboring communities in some form. The aim is to respond to the varying needs of the communities (Matthews, 2019). Service-learning is a particular form of community engagement that combines academic learning and meeting the needs of the community. Eyler and Giles (1999)

suggest that there is a plethora of different definitions of SL as a concept.

Osman and Petersen's definition (2013:7) frames the study: "Service-learning is a way of thinking about education and learning with an accompanying teaching tool or strategy that asks students to learn and develop through active participation in service activities to meet defined issues in community organizations. There is reciprocity in the exchange between students and the community." The services provided by the students are determined in collaboration with community partners.

Service-learning is part of the student's academic curriculum and provides structured opportunities for them to write, talk, and reflect on the services they provide. This assists students in developing into caring citizens (Osman & Petersen, 2013). The growing body of literature on SL highlights that well-designed SL projects present a platform for learners to achieve positive learning outcomes (Furco,1996; Celio et al., 2011; Rutti et al., 2016). Previous studies on SL indicate that it improves students' learning and creates social awareness of local contexts as well as on the global platform (Mccarthy, 2009). Eyler (2000) and Kiely (2004) illustrate that SL contributes to personal development, social skills, the understanding of global issues, improved intercultural communication skills, as well as improved language skills. Consequently, SL is popular and continues to grow in South Africa (Osman & Castle, 2006; Osman & Attwood, 2007).

Service-learning can be described as a flexible pedagogy in the sense that it utilizes various service opportunities and can be used in more than one classroom environment (Laine, 2016). Meyer (2009) hypothesizes that students who engage in SL activities would perform better in the classroom and continues by stating that they have higher graduation rates and exhibit greater cultural sensitivity. In the same line of thought, Gredely (2015) believes that SL courses might be the setting where students develop empathy and caring. Other scholars contend that SL offers transformative potential for students (Elyer & Giles, 1999; Kiely, 2004).

Teaching Service-Learning

Communication is taught to first-year students in the Marketing Department at a university of technology. It is a one-year programme that requires students to attend three hours of weekly contact lectures. Communication is a discipline that emphasizes the development of communication skills for efficient workplace and societal communication. It aims to equip students with the knowledge and skills required to develop self-confidence, intelligence, and social skills. The Communication module teaches students the importance of reading, academic writing skills, information literacy skills, listening, oral presentations, small group communication, and intercultural communication. Critical thinking is a key part of the Communication course and is incredibly valuable for a SL project. Students with critical thinking abilities are capable of analysing, evaluating, and synthesizing information, as well as making well-informed decisions and overcoming obstacles.

However, the students' interaction with others was limited unless debates were set up outside of the syllabus to encourage students to participate. This limited the student's ability to practice the communication skills being learned in the classroom. Additionally, it was evident in discussions that students did not have a holistic view of what is happening in communities in South Africa. For students to successfully graduate from universities, a consciousness of caring must be ignited in them and one of the best ways of achieving

this is by enabling them to integrate with the various communities.

The objective of the SL learning projects in the Communication module is to provide students with significant opportunities for community service, application of academic concepts in authentic circumstances, and enrichment of their learning experiences. In addition, the purpose of the SL project is to foster students' critical thinking, leadership, and communication abilities while tackling community issues (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Holland & Ramaley, 2008). The integration of academic and social concepts was intended to enhance student learning in their Communication class (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Service-learning is seen as a transformative pedagogy as it fosters personal and social development by integrating critical thought and action in authentic environments. Integration of service and learning is essential to the transformative aspect of this approach because it allows students to apply their academic knowledge to real-world situations and challenges them to develop a deeper understanding of social concerns and their role in effecting positive change (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Students develop an awareness of themselves and their surrounding communities through personal transformation and a desire to make a meaningful impact. However, finishing SL projects during the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic proved challenging, and students were expected to continue executing their SL projects using critical thinking.

SL Projects during COVID-19

During the pandemic, students were requested to think of innovative and creative ways of implementing SL projects in their communities while maintaining social distancing and upholding COVID-19-related health and safety regulations. When constructing a SL project, participants were required to demonstrate the application of communication skills such as academic writing, listening, oral presentations, small group communication, critical thinking, and interpersonal communication to their SL projects. The facilitator adopted a hands-off approach to encourage students to be the driving forces of their projects.

Many of the students chose to assist family members who they believe are part of the community. Some students who had mothers as breadwinners of their families decided to lessen their mothers' burdens by assisting with responsibilities at home, such as being the chef when the mother returns home after work. Others chose to perform do-it-yourself chores around the house to save on paying contracted individuals to get the tasks done. Some students volunteered their time and effort at local soup kitchens that were feeding hundreds of individuals daily.

The first difference between these innovative projects and pre-COVID-19 SL projects was that students did not integrate with community members the way they did before. Students, group members, and individuals in the community did not collaborate. In this scenario, students seem to have chosen projects to help lessen the strain felt by so many during the pandemic. Secondly, pre-COVID-19 SL projects lasted for the duration of the academic year, allowing students to form relationships with community partners. However, during the pandemic, this was not the case. Relationships outside the home were not formed due to the social distancing policies.

Students chose to implement their SL projects at home, which may have been owing to its accessibility. Due to the pandemic, the country was on lockdown, making it difficult for students to leave their homes. Thus, it appears that implementing projects at home was the best option for students. In addition, the home-based

concept assisted students in surmounting the physical hurdles that were erected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though the format was modified, it was necessary to assess whether or not students' chosen home-based SL projects fulfilled the Communication subject learning outcomes. It was essential to assess if transformative learning occurred as SL, is a transformative pedagogy. The section that follows will examine these areas.

Theoretical Lens

It was vital to ascertain whether students still experienced transformative learning when implementing their home-based projects. Service-learning is a pedagogical strategy that blends academic learning with community involvement to provide students with transforming experiences. This process involves critical thinking and challenges students' viewpoints, which may result in personal development and heightened social consciousness (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996). Moreover, SL can allow collaboration and communication among group members and communities with potentially diverse backgrounds (Eyler & Giles, 1999). So, this discourse can aid students in developing empathy and respect for others, as well as intercultural competency, which are all essential components of transformative learning. Therefore, the Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) is employed as the theoretical lens to comprehend the students' learning experiences, as it closely aligns with SL, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

The Transformative Learning Theory was used as the lens to identify transformative learning. Mesirow (1990; 1994) maintains that four contexts need to be understood to make sense of learning:

> one is a frame of reference through which one uses to construe reality, a second is a process of communication-language mastery, the codes which delimit categories, constructs, and labels and how problematic assertions are validated, the third involves a line of action which brings intention, purpose and will bear on both perception and cognition and the fourth is the situation encountered by the learner (1990, p. 143).

Three key components are necessary for transformative learning to occur. According to Mezirow (1990), SL is associated with experience, critical thinking, and reasoned dialogue. The first experience students have with SL is typically one that could challenge their current perspectives. Before views of the experience are established, reflection on the experience may happen, which could lead to talks with community members or other students within the group to make sense of the experience. It is possible that transformative learning could occur through the mechanism described above. This article tries to determine whether home-based SL models led to transformative learning in the form of perceptions or personal growth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative study

The basic characteristic of qualitative research is that it investigates how individuals make meaning of their own tangible and real-life experiences in their minds and language. When individuals are asked how they comprehend certain parts of their lives, they frequently respond using everyday language and concepts. The resulting data is referred to as "narratives" (Cropley, 2021). The qualitative method was relevant to this inquiry since it was necessary to understand students' lived experiences conducting SL projects amid the COVID-19 pandemic by listening to their stories. Qualitative researchers are concerned with individuals' personal views, experiences, and meaning perspectives (Ismail et.al, 2021).

Analysis of the students' spoken words and remarks provided a true insight into their transformative learning experiences.

Sampling

All 180 students who were enrolled in the Communication module were expected to undertake SL projects**.** This was not feasible during the pandemic as students faced many challenges and could not implement SL projects effectively. Consequently, a total of 20 students completed SL projects. However, despite encouragement and gentle reminders during their online Communication classes, only four students prioritised time to participate in this study and commit to online semi-structured interviews. This highlighted the impact of the pandemic in two ways. Firstly, no contact classes diminished the opportunity to address students face-to-face about the details of the project. Secondly, students were struggling with connectivity and data issues and chose not to participate in the study. Four students eventually committed to participate in this inquiry. Three of the four students implemented different home-based SL projects. As a result, the article focuses on these home-based SL projects. The fourth student's data was irrelevant to this study because the SL project involved feeding homeless people.

Data Collection Procedures

To collect data, a semi-structured interview (SSI) guide was employed because it allowed students to speak freely and enabled the researcher to have a full understanding of students' learning while they were implementing SL projects during the pandemic. Semi-structured interviews are well-known for their ability to engage in deep conversation (Kakilla, 2021), which was the intention. This was done to have a better grasp of students' genuine feelings about working on a SL project during the pandemic. The interview questions focused on SL projects that were implemented during COVID-19 and student transformative learning experiences. To make it more convenient, the SSIs were conducted online and planned around the students' schedules. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The Microsoft Teams application was used to record all SSIs.

Data Analysis

Manual coding was used in this study. Coding can be defined as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based on visual data" (Saldana, 2013:3). According to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), for smaller projects with insufficient data, a basic solution such as colour coding with markers would suffice. In line with this thinking, the transcripts were read and re-read, and different coloured pens were used to highlight data relating to two themes of investigation in the study. The first theme was repurposed SL projects, and the second theme was student transformative learning. In this deductive coding approach, researchers usually start with a set of established themes created before the coding process begins (Saldana, 2013). The questions asked focused on the two main themes mentioned. The respondents' verbatim statements relating to these themes were analysed for insight and understanding.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics clearance for the research was obtained from the institution's Research Ethics Committee, granting permission to use the students' opinions and views on post-COVID-19 SL projects. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016), obtaining ethical clearance is crucial when dealing with human subjects as it helps to ensure that the study is designed and executed ethically. The students who volunteered to participate in this investigation were assured that all

data provided would remain confidential and would be respected. Furthermore, additional steps were taken to further guarantee the ethical standards of the research. Firstly, verbal consent was obtained from the students to respect every individual's rights (Jardine & James, 2012). Secondly, they were given consent forms to sign. Thirdly, they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were placed within Heidegger's (1982) and Husserl's (1981) descriptive interpretative approaches to understanding the key issues addressed. This technique allows for the identification of human experiences of the events as recounted by the participants and it assumes that meaning is not directly available to understand but must be interpreted. Researchers' basic contact with the phenomenon, according to Heidegger (1982) is through lived experiences, and it is predicated on the assumption that all forms of human knowledge are interpretive. The outcomes of data-gathering methodologies used in creating a more comprehensive picture of student transformative learning throughout their SL projects are reported next. Additionally, the application of their communication skills is discussed.

Theme 1: Student learning

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional SL project implementation allowed students to engage with communities and put classroom theories and principles into practice. This was impracticable during the pandemic. Consequently, students were urged to implement projects with minimal human contact to enable them to follow all health and safety procedures. They proved to be imaginative and inventive by combining ideas that needed little interaction with individuals. To determine whether students experienced transformative learning during their involvement in repurposed SL projects in the wake of COVID-19, Mesirow's TLT (1990; 1994) was used to gain insight. Transformative learning occurs in four stages, according to the TLT. Firstly, the student is confronted with a perplexing dilemma (experience), then reflects on that experience (critical reflection), then engages in rational discourse (communication), and new knowledge is produced, or existing knowledge is altered (Mezirow, 1990). According to the data collected, each of the three students claimed that transformative learning occurred and all three of the students applied different communication skills. Regarding education, the following was reported:

Participant 1: Assisted in the family home.

"I did learn from my mother and sisters." Participant 1's family reminded him that he should speak clearly and properly, rather than mumble his remarks. He heeded the advice and improved his delivery. Therefore, he realised that *"when we communicate, we must be clear"*. This corresponds to the material covered in the Communication module. Students are required to learn how to communicate properly and successfully with others in both their spoken and non-verbal interactions. This student's learning experience would have been abruptly transitioning to learning remotely, according to Mezirow's (1990) TLT. He was told to speak properly to be understood during the conversations between him and his family members (rational discourse). He became more conscious of the importance of communicating effectively with other individuals as a result of his reflection (critical reflection). The student's communication skills were altered during his home-based SL project.

This student worked as part of a team with family members to assist with chores around the house during the COVID-19 pandemic. "*My family and I worked as a team you know."* Throughout this period of teamwork, he gained the

ability to speak more clearly. It may be deduced from the fact that they were assisting one another with domestic duties that the community here was family and that all members of the team benefited. The project aligned with the learning objective of the communication module, which was for students to exhibit the capacity to work in small groups and to learn how to have clear and effective communication. Working in groups and learning to communicate effectively can support transformative learning as students are exposed to a variety of perspectives. This exposure challenged the student's current views and assumptions and prompted him to reconsider critically his viewpoint on the way he communicates and decide to enhance his communication skills. Therefore, transformative learning has occurred.

Participant 2: Tutoring at home.

"I pushed him to speak out and not be shy by teaching him about active listening and engagement because he is always so quiet in class." "I'm also teaching him patience, something I learned as well." In this scenario, the participant was practicing her listening skills which she had learned in her communication module. Personal development is also mentioned by this participant, who taught her son and herself the value of patience. The participant was forced to stay at home and work as a Tutor for her young primary school-aged son, which was a new experience for her. It gave her a fresh understanding of the value of patience. Even though one of the TLT variables, reflection, was missing, it could be said that transformative learning occurred. This student grew more self-aware of her teaching abilities and improved her listening abilities. Personal development resulted in a transformation as a consequence of her increased self-awareness. The community was her son. She attentively listened to her young son to successfully instruct him, and her tolerance for him allowed them both to learn patience and to listen attentively. *"We spent time together and I taught him actively listening skills and how to actively engage."* As a person actively listens to those they are serving, they come to comprehend their viewpoints and challenges. Listening may be a strong tool for altering service work because it increases comprehension of the issues being addressed and facilitates the development of more meaningful relationships with the individuals being served.

Participant 3: Home Nail Bar Salon

"I learned how to interact with others; for example, if someone asks for a specific shape from me, I must first figure out what form she wants." To provide ladies with a break during the day, a student started a Nail Bar Salon as her SL project. Husbands and children were home from work and school during the pandemic, which made demands on women in households onerous. Consequently, this student thought that giving them a break by painting their nails, without charging them for the service, would help them cope. The student needed to speak clearly and effectively with the ladies for this to be successful. She drew on what she had learned in her communication module on effective communication skills. This student also mentioned personal growth: *"I learned to be independent."* Transformative learning occurred when examined within Mesirow's (1990; 1994) TLT paradigm. The nail bar was a new experience (disorienting dilemma), involving interaction with the community's females (logical discourse), a new awareness (reflection), and a new perspective of being more autonomous as well as being able to communicate well. This student experienced transformative pedagogy in more than one area of her life.

This student displayed the good communication skills she acquired in the

Communication module by attentively listening to the ladies' (community) requests for different sorts of nails. Additionally, this student exhibited critical thinking skills. She witnessed the angst of the women who had to work longer hours at home because their husbands and children were also at home. In response, she considered creating a home nail bar salon where she would do the nails of one lady at a time to adhere to safety and health regulations. Her service to the ladies was beneficial as it gave them a break from their long days and an opportunity to do something for themselves. Critical thinking and transformative learning are closely related since both require challenging assumptions, examining diverse viewpoints, and acquiring new insights and comprehension. These procedures are crucial for personal and intellectual progress, which appears to be the case with this student. It has helped her develop as a person and become more knowledgeable about the world's constant transformation.

Transformative learning achieved by participants.

The development of a critical self, one that investigates what is known to provide solutions based on formal knowledge and abilities, is at the heart of SL (Caspersz & Olaru, 2017). Transformative learning or learning that transforms the self by developing an alternative way of thinking about what is currently known, is characterised by the operationalisation of this dynamic (Mezirow, 1997). Reflection is a key element in the transformation process. In Mezirow's (1990) TLT, reflection is an essential phase for transformative learning to take place. While the students did not specifically claim that transformative learning occurred through reflection, they did infer it. All students mentioned self-knowledge and how they needed to work towards improving developing areas, implying that reflection possibly occurred. For example, until she started giving her son tutorial lessons at home, Participant 2 had no idea how impatient she was. She did, however, remark on becoming conscious of her impatience and the need to teach patience to both her and her child. It may be argued that she arrived at this decision after reflecting on her tutoring abilities.

Another crucial aspect of SL is reciprocity, which is defined as an engagement between two or more parties that is mutually beneficial (Barton, 2020). Reciprocity was evident in all three home-based SL experiments. *"I loved spending time with him (son) and also creating a close relationship with him"*, said Participant 2. She not only formed a stronger relationship with her son by taking on the duty of tutoring him for her SL project, but they both learned from each other as well. In the case of Participant 3, she offered a free service to the community's ladies from her home. She was able to put her communication abilities to good use by opening a nail bar, where the ladies could learn about nails while having them done.

"*I enjoyed helping around the house, I got to spend more time with family and do things like you know, as a team"*, said Participant 1. The student not only learned the value of teamwork, which is encouraged in SL, but it is evident from his statement that everyone in the household cooperated in doing tasks. Everyone benefited from the experience in this way. Another key aspect of the home-based SL projects was that they met the Communication subject's learning outcomes. Students are taught to think critically and to take responsibility for their education. Students demonstrated this by implementing SL projects following all health and safety requirements enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the SL initiatives provided an opportunity for the students to practice oral communication by facilitating interactions with others nearby. The second part of this

investigation was to gain insight into the SL frameworks used as the traditional frameworks posed many challenges during the pandemic (Tian & Noel, 2020).

Theme 2: SL framework

Traditional SL frameworks worked well before the COVID-19 pandemic, as stated earlier. Current models of SL were called into question during the pandemic because they require students to interact with communities and community members and apply their learning in the real world. For health and safety considerations, this was not possible during the pandemic.

Students in the first-year Communication class were challenged to think imaginatively and innovatively about their projects. They needed to use the abilities they were acquiring in their communication module to undertake community service while adhering to the health and safety protocols. The students faced a difficult situation because they were terrified of contracting the COVID-19 virus but still wanted to complete a project. All three students implemented home-based projects. These home-based projects were the best solutions for the students as they were not allowed to socialise or interact with large groups during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Three of the participants chose to see their families as the "community." This was not only minimising contact with other people but adhering to the health protocols that were instituted.

Osman and Petersen's (2013) definition of SL includes four key points: active participation by students in meeting community needs; mutual understanding between students and the community; service that is aligned with the academic curriculum of the students and provides a framework in which students can apply what they have learned; and development of students as caring citizens. All four pivotal elements were met through the students' SL efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, all three participants identified a problem and provided a solution. Secondly, the three participants and their chosen "community" shared a common concept as they were all experiencing the pandemic together. Thirdly, the service that the students offered allowed them to put their communication skills learned in the classroom to use. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they learned to care about what they were doing and for the individuals for whom they were doing it. All these factors aided the students in becoming community-minded citizens. Essentially, it met the requirements for SL to be a transformative pedagogy. Therefore, it could be argued that home-based SL is a type of SL**.**

Roy's (2020) clarion appeal regarding the pandemic as a portal can assist in not just reflecting on the pandemic teaching and learning experiences and practices, but also in being open to re-imagine and re-look at teaching delivery. In light of this, it is essential to acknowledge that the education landscape is one of perpetual change and creativity. The COVID-19 pandemic could be used as a springboard to new and inventive teaching methods to appropriately align with the current education climate.

CONCLUSION

The article documents student transformative learning through SL projects that were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two significant themes emerged from the SSI data: student transformative learning and SL frameworks. The analysis also reveals that other types of SL, such as home-based SL, should be considered. Amid the pandemic, traditional SL models could not continue. As a result, the students effectively implemented alternative home-based SL models. Despite the reconfiguration of SL projects to fit the COVID-19 environment, student transformative learning persisted, and the communities benefited.

It may be argued that in a time when movement is restricted by a pandemic, adapting instructional approaches is a necessity. It is critical to assess and decide whether a reinvented teaching tool is effective. As educators, it is important to be receptive to alternative forms of teaching when they prove to be effective. In this inquiry, students took the initiative to implement their SL projects differently from conventional SL projects, and they were successful. However, this may not always be the case. Therefore, effective planning and communication between SL lecturers and students are essential. Despite various restrictions, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a wide-ranging change in education (Mafenya, 2021). Adaptations made to SL as pedagogy to meet the COVID-19 climate are outlined in this article. A larger sample size could have made a stronger case for home-based SL, but it is suggested that home-based SL be considered as a form of SL in the future.

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The Burden of Cyberbullying on Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the challenges teachers face in dealing with cyberbullying from the perspective of behavior management theory. We argue that dealing with cyberbullying places an additional burden on teachers. The research is based on narrative inquiry and focuses on the experiences of a participant named Amanda who works in a primary school. Amanda embodies the complexity of everyday life for teachers in a South African school. The analysis shows that teachers like Amanda are exposed to high levels of stress and burnout due to the administrative demands of dealing with bullying on social media, which distracts them from their actual pedagogical tasks. The inadequate institutional support has a negative impact on both their professional efficiency and their personal lives. The findings show that a holistic approach, including policy reforms, psychological support, and specialized training is needed to mitigate these effects.

Keywords: Behaviour Management Theory, Cyberbullying, Narrative Enquiry, Social Media, Teacher Workload.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of modern technological innovations has impacted various aspects of our daily lives, including the educational landscape. These advances have enriched both teaching and learning experiences through revolutionary changes in communication and knowledge sharing (Khan, Ashraf, Seinen et al., 2021; Hero, 2019; Zheng, 2013; Davies, 2013). However, the benefits of such technological advances are somewhat diminished by the negative consequences of their misuse, particularly by social media platforms (Pomytkina, Podkopaieva & Hordiienko, 2021; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). While these platforms enable seamless connectivity, they have also become breeding grounds for problematic behaviours such as cyberbullying, online harassment and excessive internet use (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). This article aims to explore the complicated relationship between the evolving educational environment and the rise of cyberbullying. The focus is on the impact of these phenomena on teachers, particularly in terms of their emotional well-being, the need for professional development, and the challenges they face in institutional interventions.

Cyberbullying and its effects

Cyberbullying, described as digital violence (Tozzo, Cuman, Moratto & Caenazzo, 2022) and a social menace (Karthikeyan, 2022), disrupts education and shifts the role of teachers from teaching to counselling and destabilises the emotional well-being of its victims in a variety of ways, such as posting embarrassing pictures, spreading untruths and sending threats (Pyżalski, Plichta, Szuster & Barlińska, 2022). The cloak of anonymity offered by social media platforms encourages cyberbullies, making their actions ubiquitous and leaving their

victims increasingly vulnerable (Dennehy, et al., 2020; Nwofo & Nwoke, 2018; Barlett et al., 2017; Baldry et al., 2015; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Furthermore, the phenomenon of cyberbullying has serious implications on a broader level, particularly within the educational community. Teachers, in particular, are facing new challenges as they have to deal with growing online hostility from students (Ayas, 2016) and are expected to take care of not only the educational aspects but also the mental health and psychological well-being of their students.

The impairment of the mental health of victims of online bullying in educational settings also affects teachers who are stressed by dealing with the negative impact of cyberbullying on their students (Sheikh, Chaudry & Ghogare, 2020) and the impact on their workload. For example, an Australian study shows that the lack of legal guidelines has led to an increased workload for teachers as they grapple with the challenges of modern technology and its new forms of bullying (Pennell, Campbell, Tangen & Knott, 2022). This burden is compounded by a lack of adequate training and resources, which affects teachers' ability to effectively manage these incidents. In the next section, we look at the changes affecting teachers' roles and functions.

Dealing with cyberbullying: Roles and responsibilities of teachers

In the post-apartheid context of South Africa, the Department of Education's Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) describes the multiple roles and responsibilities teachers are expected to fulfil. These roles range from being mediators and designers of learning to administrators, students, and community leaders. Despite the scope of these roles, the digital age has brought with it an additional responsibility—combatting the negative effects of cyberbullying in education.

The prevalence of cyberbullying poses a significant challenge to an educational system already struggling with numerous problems, such as dysfunctional infrastructure (Equal Education Law Centre, 2022), substandard leadership (Spaull, 2013b), an increased need for emotional labour (Martin & Amin, 2021), and constant curriculum revisions (Meeran & Amin, 2021). The emergence of cyberbullying not only compounds these existing burdens but also shifts the role of teachers toward counselling, for which many are not formally trained (Cilliers & Chinyamurindi, 2020).

Teachers are generally aware of the covert nature and destructive consequences of cyberbullying (Baldry et al., 2015) and favor proactive strategies that involve parental engagement and education about the consequences, rather than punitive actions (Lester et al., 2018; Stauffer et al., 2012). However, this awareness does not appear to be sufficient for effective intervention, as pointed out by Radebe and Kyobe (2021), who note that law enforcement and educational professionals often have difficulty identifying perpetrators.

Despite limitations in identifying perpetrators and guidelines for dealing with cyberbullying, Ryan et al. (2011) argue for comprehensive institutional interventions to ensure a safe learning environment, as the emotional trauma experienced by victims can affect both self-esteem and academic performance. This call for a holistic approach highlights the important role that schools, families, and wider societal structures should play in educating responsible digital behavior. It turns out that cyberbullying is a collective burden that teachers should not bear alone.

Cyberbullying in schools

It is not surprising that cyberbullying is prevalent in schools. Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2015) offer a reasonable explanation by postulating that

cyberbullying is an evolution of traditional forms of bullying, with considerable overlap between the two. However, its proliferation, as observed by Shin and Choi (2021), Singh et al. (2017) and Zhu et al. (2021), indicates an alarming trend. While some attribute the rise to easy access to video and visual content aided by technological advances, others argue that societal changes, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, are responsible. A major concern about the increasing prevalence of cyberbullying is its complex nature and the difficulty in resolving it (Myers & Cowie, 2019; Broll, 2016; Duncan, 2016). The problem is viewed with trepidation in South African schools because of its unique challenges. Here, teachers often work in resource-poor settings burdened by high teacher-pupil ratios, unqualified staff and inadequate leadership support (Amin & Mahabeer, 2021; Shalem & de Clercq, 2019; Morrow, 2013; Spaull, 2013a). The lack of social work and counselling services adds to the stress and forces teachers to take responsibility for the socio-emotional, nutritional and psychological support of their students (Morrow & Downey, 2013: Morrow, 2007).

Despite contextual differences, teachers are aware of the dynamic nature of bullying and the seriousness of the problem (Cilliers & Chinyamurindi, 2020; Linderholm, 2019; Monks et al., 2016). However, their intervention approaches vary. Some teachers actively seek help and take preventive measures, while others choose to report incidents to higher authorities or school administrators for action (Mahabeer, 2020).

When it comes to intervention techniques, the results are mixed. Although interventions are reasonably effective in curbing bullying behaviour, they are neither ideal nor successful, as several meta-studies show (Torgal et al., 2023; Tozzo et al., 2022; Al Nuaimi, 2021; Gaffney et al., 2019). Some teachers and institutions lean towards proactive management techniques without sanctions, focusing on building students' capacity to change (Lester et al., 2018). At the same time, several schools have begun to implement preventive programmes (Thompson, 2021; Sebola, 2015; Osman et al., 2013) and promote parental involvement and education on the topic (Stauffer et al., 2012).

The above-mentioned contexts set the stage for problems with teacher self-efficacy. Many teachers express insecurities about how to deal effectively with cyberbullying, highlighting deficits in their training (DeSmet et al., 2018; Ortega Barón et al., 2016; Ryan & Kariuki, 2011). However, resilience and adaptability can also be observed in some teachers. Despite the multiple challenges they face, these teachers persist, sustained by a strong conviction about their role in their profession (Meeran & Amin, 2021; Gu & Day, 2013).

We conclude that the problem of cyberbullying is not only multi-faceted, but also heavily influenced by the specific challenges and pressures in the South African educational landscape. Therefore, addressing this form of bullying requires a comprehensive and nuanced strategy that includes developing teachers' skills, strengthening their support networks and promoting resilience. The focus should be on the larger context, which includes not only the immediate challenges of cyberbullying, but also the broader responsibilities and environment-specific pressures teachers face.

Understanding human behaviour and social dynamics

Elton Mayo's (1933) theory of behavioural management serves as the theoretical basis for this study. Although the theory was developed nine decades ago in the pre-digital age, its strength lies in its relevance to teachers' management of cyberbullying and the additional work involved, so its key concepts remain

relevant. The theory is appropriate because cyberbullying is about controlling behaviour, not technology, which is ubiquitous and beyond the control of teachers. This theory is relevant to the situation of cyberbullying in schools because behaviour management theory encompasses the science of human relationships and human behaviour.

Mayo's human relations theory emphasises the value of the organisation as a social system and places a strong emphasis on employee morale. The six basic propositions of the theory are that in human relationships it is crucial to inspire the individual and that people come before and matter more than business and technology. This perspective underscores that the work environment is not just a social environment, but an interconnected system in which motivation depends on cooperation, coordination and teamwork. This view assumes that human relationships achieve both organisational and individual goals by maximising impact with the least amount of effort. This aspect of Mayo's theory recognises the ability of individuals to perform better when they receive additional support and consider the demands and behaviours of the individual, which increases job satisfaction and motivation.

In contrast, the science of human behaviour which combines aspects of psychology, sociology, and anthropology, offers a scientific explanation of employee motivation. By examining conflict, social needs and self-actualisation, this component of the theory explores what motivates workers while highlighting the importance of individuality and friendly managers. In a sense, schools are also organisations and the staff are teachers and the managers are principals and heads of departments. Therefore, the science of human behaviour is applicable for explaining the data analysed in this article.

Mayo's behavioural management theory offers a sophisticated knowledge of social dynamics in educational settings when applied to the context of cyberbullying. In order to understand the additional demands teachers' face as a result of cyberbullying, there needs to be a strong focus on interpersonal relationships, individual needs and behaviours. Social dynamics refers to the behavioural patterns, interactions, and relationships that emerge in social settings, while interpersonal needs involve the psychological requirements one has for emotional, social, or physical interaction with others. Indeed, social dynamics are influenced by and, in turn, influence interpersonal needs, forming a complex interplay that shapes human behaviour and relationships. Therefore, teachers shaping the school environment need to be aware of and responsive to students' interpersonal needs. This, in turn, promotes a cooperative environment that could reduce the impact of cyberbullying. Integrating psychological, sociological and anthropological concepts into the science of behaviour allows teachers to explore in more detail the underlying tensions and motivations that may trigger cyberbullying. As a result, this understanding allows for more targeted interventions and highlights the value of managers' personalities in motivating them to be approachable and sympathetic.

In addition, Mayo's support for promoting teamwork is particularly relevant to the fight against cyberbullying. From this theoretical perspective, teachers can reduce tension and promote harmony in the classroom by fostering a sense of cooperation and unity among students.

With its dual emphasis on human relations and behavioural science, Mayo's behavioural management theory, provides an essential and useful framework for understanding and addressing the problems caused by cyberbullying in schools. Focusing on the human aspects of organisation, motivation and interpersonal

relationships, this theory offers insightful reflections and practical suggestions for fostering a receptive and resilient learning environment. It may be easier to understand and deal with the additional demands cyberbullying places on teachers through the prism of these nuanced human interactions.

Narrative inquiry: Exploring the burden of social media bullying on teachers.

Bullying behaviour on social media has emerged as a pressing concern, placing an extra burden on teachers. To comprehensively understand this complex issue, our study adopted a qualitative research approach, specifically narrative inquiry. This approach, aligned with the views of McMillian and Schumacher (2010), emphasises personal engagement with participants in their natural settings, facilitating an intimate connection to the subject matter. Qualitative research, rooted in social realities, allows for in-depth exploration within localized contexts and reflects diverse perspectives (Johnson & Christensen, 2010). Employing this methodological choice laid a foundation to assess the management of social media bullying behaviour in a school environment.

Narrative inquiry, as described by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), centres on examining individual interpretations and experiences of the world. This approach illuminates participants' subjective viewpoints, providing a platform for personal experiences to be voiced (Yin, 2013). Thus, employing this methodological approach not only amplifies personal perspectives but also sheds light on the nuanced challenges teachers face in the digital era of bullying.

The research was conducted within a public co-educational primary school in South Africa. This specific institution, with its unique characteristics and structural composition, mirrors broader societal dynamics, enhancing the relevance and resonance of findings within the realm of education. The school, catering to grades 1-7, had 102 students in grade seven during the study period. The school, consisting of a principal, deputy principal, two heads of department, 27 first-level teachers, and four support staff members, is equipped with interactive smartboards and Wi-Fi access, promoting dynamic educational practices. The student body encompasses diverse socio-economic backgrounds, reflecting the community's diversity.

Selecting participants plays a pivotal role in grasping the topic's complexity, particularly in understanding social media usage among upper secondary school students. This article, based on a larger study (Singh, 2023), involved six participants ranging in age from 27 to 59 years. The use of a random sampling method based on the principles of availability and accessibility (Yin, 2013; Given, 2008) ensured that the selection of participants was purposive to the research focus.

The selected participants represent a diverse array of attributes, including race, gender, age, and teaching experience. Comprising five female and one male teacher, these individuals engaged extensively with seventh graders. To uphold ethical research practices and confidentiality, pseudonyms were employed in lieu of actual names.

In this article, data from a single participant allowed for a comprehensive analysis of a particular set of experiences, which narrowed the focus, and increased the depth of the analysis. The participant, whom we have named Amanda, is a 44-year-old seventh-grade life orientation teacher. She has a range of qualifications including Bachelor's and Honours Degrees and 21 years of teaching experience. She has spent most of her teaching career in upper primary schools, including 15 years at her current school.

DATA GENERATION INSTRUMENTS

The research design, as described by Pandey and Pandey (2015), serves as a blueprint to help researchers organise their thoughts and allow for possible adjustments to the study (Naicker, 2013). In this study, two primary tools were used to generate data: semi-structured interviews and observations. The data generation process was comprehensive and included the selection of the sample size and location, the actual data collection, and the subsequent recording and storage of the data. Only interview data is used in this article, as semi-structured interviews provide a robust framework for understanding participants' lived experiences and allow for in-depth exploration of their perspectives on particular phenomena (Walliman, 2016). This methodological choice proved particularly beneficial as it offered flexibility during the interviews (Wilson, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Consequently, we were able to delve deeper into participants' responses and explain elements raised by the participants. Open-ended questions made it easier for participants to describe their experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) and elucidate on the additional stress they face when dealing with cyberbullying.

The interviews, which lasted approximately 60 minutes each, were scheduled after school hours to minimise disruption to the school environment. Such timing was also in line with suggestions from a previous study (Mthiyane, 2013). After transcription, the data was subjected to thematic analysis. The information obtained from these interviews forms the core material presented and analysed in this article. After the transcriptions, participants had the opportunity to review the data and suggest adjustments, which increased the validity of the research. Ethical considerations were strictly observed: Informed consent was obtained from each participant before fieldwork began, and university policies were strictly followed. Care was also taken to ensure the confidentiality of the research by using pseudonyms for both the participants and the educational institution. The results are discussed in the next section.

The multiple effects of social media bullying on stress and burnout in teachers

Amanda's story is a compelling one that aligns with behaviour management theory, especially as it relates to stress and burnout in the teaching profession. Amanda's ordeal with social media bullying highlights the stressors teachers face due to a perceived imbalance between increasing administrative demands and their primary role as teachers. This situation embodies the concept of role conflict within behaviour management theory, where a lack of clarity or mismatch between expectations and resources can lead to stress and ultimately burnout (Rankin, 2017; Maslach & Leiter, 2005).

Amanda describes a stressful aspect of administrative tasks that leads to her being "emotionally drained". She expressed her deep dissatisfaction with her school's protocols for dealing with bullying incidents. She feels that the administrative procedures — documenting, interviewing students, consulting with parents, and then following up — place a huge burden on teachers. Her statement, "It takes up too much of a teacher's time", sums up the predicament teachers find themselves in when administrative compliance distracts them from their real tasks (Patchin & Hinduja, 2018).

Their observations are consistent with the tenets of behaviour management theory, which views such administrative demands as a form of work overload. This overload, compounded by the emotional strain of dealing with bullying incidents, leads to a cycle of stress and burnout that negatively impacts their mental health and family dynamics. Her predicament is

confirmed by academic research highlighting the impact of stress and burnout on teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction (Rankin, 2017; Maslach & Leiter, 2005).

In addition, Amanda sheds light on the costs associated with an administrative focus on discipline: the sacrifice of effective curriculum implementation. Her comments suggest an alarming trade-off – "I do feel, however, that too much learning and teaching time has to be sacrificed to eradicate bullying in schools" - and point to compromised educational quality, a consequence of an overemphasis on disciplinary measures (Patchin & Hinduja, 2018). This aligns with the concept of role ambiguity in behaviour management theory, where teachers are uncertain about the expectations of their role, leading to stress and ineffectiveness (Maslach & Leiter, 2005). Amanda's lament that "too much learning and teaching time must be sacrificed to eradicate bullying in schools" echoes this notion and suggests that systemic inefficiencies have undermined teachers' ability to focus on curriculum implementation (Patchin & Hinduja, 2018).

Amanda's situation requires acquired resilience, as she explains: "To survive in this profession, the teacher has to learn to solve the bullying problem." Such statements reflect the scholarly discourse that indicates that burnout and stress in the teaching profession is a major challenge and affects teachers' effectiveness and job satisfaction (Rankin, 2017; Maslach & Leiter, 2005). This dilemma is not limited to the professional sphere but also affects teachers' personal lives. Amanda highlights this when she says: "We are emotionally drained when we are at home because we know we can't teach in a conducive environment." Inadequate parental supervision and family structures contribute to a recurring pattern of indiscipline among students, suggesting a cycle of systemic failure.

The recurring patterns of indiscipline that Amanda describes could be analysed through the lens of systems theory in the context of behaviour management. The school, families and community are interconnected systems that impact on behaviour, and the failure of one system (e.g. the family structure) can lead to a cascade of challenges in other systems (e.g. school discipline). Thus, we can conclude that dealing with cyberbullying requires a holistic understanding of these intertwined systems for effective behaviour management.

The evidence gleaned from Amanda's statements underscores the harmful effects of social media bullying on teachers. This observation is consistent with previous research on the psychological and physiological effects of such phenomena (Kircaburun et al., 2018; Fan et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2014; Campbell et al., 2013). Amanda's experiences therefore reinforce the broader academic consensus on the significant toll that social media bullying takes on teachers (English, 2023; Rajbhandari & Rana, 2023; Flôres, Visentini, Faraj & Siqueira, 2022).

Amanda's narrative highlights the damaging consequences of social media bullying on classroom dynamics, teacher well-being and pedagogical work. The cumulative stress and sense of hopelessness experienced by teachers like Amanda underscore the need for more effective institutional support structures, both at the school and community levels.

Amanda's experience is a real-world example that validates academic theories of teacher stress and burnout, particularly those based on behaviour management theory. Her narrative underscores the urgent need for systemic change to readjust the balance between administrative tasks and educational performance. The presence of stressors, as described in behaviour management theory, manifests itself in teachers like Amanda not

only in professional dissatisfaction, but also in broader systemic problems that impact on the quality of education and teachers' psychological well-being.

Perspectives on support teachers need.

In examining teachers' perspectives on the support required to mitigate the effects of bullying on social media, Amanda's narrative is an example that is clearly consistent with behaviour management theory. Her plea for greater government involvement and her comment about the administrative stress teachers face are clear indications of what are theoretically understood as role stressors. These stressors include role conflict and role ambiguity, concepts that are well understood in behaviour management theory (Maslach & Leiter, 2005).

Amanda's call for support from specialised areas such as psychological services to alleviate teachers' stress mirrors the concept of workplace resources in behaviour management theory. Work resources refer to physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects that are important for achieving work goals, reducing work demands and promoting personal development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In calling for external support mechanisms, Amanda acknowledges that existing institutional resources are not sufficient to cope with the high levels of role stress she and her colleagues face. Her words are a clear cry for help: "Help teachers so that they don't have the burden of teaching and resolving bullying issues. It becomes too much administration for teachers as reports have to be written, students interviewed, and parents informed. It takes too much time from a teacher."

Amanda is not alone in her opinion. Other teachers who participated in the study also expressed their need for support, especially in dealing with behavioural problems, which take up a significant amount of their teaching time. Their experiences and recommendations align well with the broader academic discourse on this topic. For example, Ttofi and Farrington (2009) believe that anti-bullying interventions are ineffective without ongoing assessment and intervention. This argument is supported by evidence that schools generally do not contribute to a culture of cyber safety among students (Menesini et al., 2011). In particular, Kritzinger (2020) emphasises the need for schools to be proactive in creating a cyber-safe environment.

The collective experience of teachers is consistent with the concept of psychological distress postulated in behaviour management theory as a consequence of high professional demands and low professional resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The inability to effectively manage behavioural stress shared by Amanda's colleagues suggests that teachers are psychologically stressed. Therefore, the need for continuous assessment and intervention highlighted in the academic literature (Menesini et al., 2011; Ttofi & Farrington, 2010;) is not only necessary but also consistent with the principle of continuous performance management, a key component of behaviour management theory.

Amanda's insistence on cross-sectoral support extends the discussion into the realm of policy and adds to the complexity of what is referred to in behaviour management theory as the organisational environment. She argues that "teachers and schools need to be supported by the Ministry of Health and SA mental health services". Her position reflects the growing consensus that addressing this problem is not the sole responsibility of educational institutions. These concerns are also reflected in the existing literature. Kritzinger (2017), for example, criticises the South African Department of Basic Education for its lack of support and guidance in introducing a culture of cybersecurity in schools. A similar situation

of policy absence exists in Italy (Menesini and Salmivalli, 2017). The lack of a clear policy framework could be referred to as an organisational stressor in behaviour management theory. This absence creates a vacuum that exacerbates role stressors and makes it difficult for teachers to navigate the murky waters of social media bullying.

For teachers like Amanda, the stakes are high, both emotionally and mentally. They face the daunting challenge of dealing with bullying on social media on top of their regular teaching duties. Their call for support from specialised organisations such as mental health services underscore the urgent concern for teachers' own mental health and, by extension, their effectiveness in dealing with challenges in the classroom.

The findings suggest that there is an urgent need for a holistic strategy that includes a sound policy framework, psychological support and specialised training. This is closely related to the concept of workplace design in behaviour management theory, which calls for the restructuring of work elements to increase work resources and reduce stressors (Parker, 2014). In essence, teachers' ability to manage the complicated challenges of social media bullying remains compromised without systemic support, a reality underscored by Amanda and confirmed by the broader education community.

The data underscore the central role of systemic and organizational support in mitigating the debilitating effects of social media bullying on teachers.

CONCLUSION

This article offers a nuanced understanding of the predicament teachers face in addressing bullying on social media, framed by behaviour management theory. This theoretical perspective highlights the importance of role stressors, psychological distress and professional resources in shaping teachers' experiences and thus serves as a compass for analysing the difficulties faced by teachers like Amanda.

The selection of study participants is crucial here. Amanda's narrative was selected because it reflects well the complexities teachers face on a daily basis and reflects important constructs of behaviour management theory. Her voice embodies the urgent call for systemic change, making her experience a valuable narrative that deepens our understanding of the consequences of teachers being ill-equipped and too overburdened to deal with cyberbullying.

The choice of narrative enquiry as a methodological approach allows for the interpretation of experiences and provides space to explore complex human phenomena such as stress, job dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion in an understandable, real-world context. This narrative approach fits seamlessly with the constructs of behaviour management theory to illuminate the everyday struggles and aspirations of teachers who are at the forefront of this crisis.

The findings are consistent with the broader academic discourse on teacher burnout, role stressors and the need for institutional support. They highlight the urgent need for multi-pronged strategies that include revised education policies, psychological support, and specialised training for teachers. The absence of these elements is a clear call for immediate systemic reforms so that the education system does not continue to falter in its efforts to create a conducive learning environment.

Furthermore, the study takes the discussion beyond the confines of educational institutions by highlighting the ethical implications of social media platforms whose business models inadvertently promote bullying. These observations underscore the need for a societal lens

involving multiple stakeholders, including parents, teachers and businesses.

While teacher education focuses primarily on curriculum and pedagogy, this study highlights the gaping hole that exists in preparing teachers for the unique challenges posed by bullying on social media. The need for immediate, holistic solutions is not only an educational imperative, but also a societal one given the impact that bullying has on broader social structures. Inaction not only endangers the well-being of students and teachers, but also threatens the very fabric of society and warrants urgent intervention by all stakeholders.

Failure to address these pressing issues with a systemic approach based on behaviour management theory could have serious long-term consequences that affect not only educational institutions but also society. Therefore, the need for collaborative solutions has never been more urgent and the challenges for dealing with cyberbullying in schools have never been greater.

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Exploring the Challenges and Possibilities of Using Learner-Centered Approach to Teach in Nigeria Public Secondary Schools.

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is a universal human experience, a process of passing down information from generation to generation. Teaching is a deliberate activity done in a professional manner to bring a positive change in the learner; in order to teach well. The 21st-century student, as a digital native, has access to a mobile phone and can surf the internet, they do not want a teacher that will come to the class and still write what they have in their textbook and online, they want to be engaged academically, yet the Nigeria education, most especially secondary level are still rooted in using the traditional method of teaching in the classroom despite the outcry to shift the paradigm from teacher-centered approach to learner-centered approach, Therefore, this study aims to explore the challenges and possibilities of using the learner-centered approach to teach in Nigeria public secondary schools. The research is based on a qualitative research approach while a case study research design was used to explore the phenomenon under consideration, and constructivism theory was used as the theoretical foundation. Three research questions were raised to guide the conduct of this study, thematic coding was used to analyze the interviews where themes such as challenges (class size, attention problem, lack of teaching aids, financial constraints, student attitude, lack of teaching aids, time learner differences, unavailability of instructional material, environmental factors) and possibilities (class size reduction, government intervention, student positive attitude to learn, provision of infrastructure, teaching in area of specialization, teacher professional development) that emerged. The findings of the research show there are numerous possibilities indicating learner-centered approach can be put into practice in Nigeria despite all the challenges that teachers who have and are willing to use this approach encounter.

Keywords: Challenges, Possibilities, Teaching Methods, Learner-Centered, Teacher-Centered

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a universal human experience, a process of passing down information from generation to generation. Teaching is a deliberate activity done in a professional manner to bring positive change to the learner (Dorgu, 2015). The learner-centered approach in education has a long history of development. Two of the first educators to put emphasis on the learner were Confucius and Socrates (5th to 4th centuries B.C.). The 21st century students, as a digital native, have access to mobile phones and can surf the internet, they do not want a teacher that will come to the class and still write what they have in their textbook and online, they want to

be engaged mentally. The paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered pedagogy has a worldwide advocacy for its practice at all levels of education (Mascolo, 2009; Vikas, 2022). Nigeria, the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa, is in the process of making a transition from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered mode of education. It, therefore, becomes pertinent to focus attention on its secondary education as it is the level where critical thinking is been developed.

Learner-centered pedagogy is a branch of constructivism, a belief which centered on the fact that learners build their understanding through their actions and experiences of the world. Constructivism according to Anyanwu and Iwuamadi (2015) is a theory of learning which explains the nature of knowledge and how human beings acquire learning. As Narayan et. al. (2013) explained, it maintains that individuals create, construct or create their own new understandings or knowledge through the interaction of what they already know and believe with events, ideas, or activities with which they come into contact. This means that knowledge is acquired through getting involved with the content and not just by imitating and repeating things. Learner-centered approach to teaching is conceived as an instructional philosophy and modern pedagogical approach, which is opposite to teacher centered approach, i.e., the Conventional teaching methodology in which the teacher remains at the center of instruction in the teaching learning process (Shah, 2020). Wills and Lake (2020) express that Dewey in 1938 opined that traditional way of teaching has the limitation to focus on active learning and explains that "there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active co-operation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying" (p. 67). However, teaching-focused theories like Bloom's Taxonomy of 1954 and Kolb Experiential Learning of 1984) based on John Dewey's, Kurt Lewin's and Jean Piaget's concepts of learning and a flexible approach to teaching revealed that a learner-centered approach to teaching is a paradigm shift from teacher to learner-centered, a deliberative effort to facilitate learner to achieve learning objectives by creating conducive learning environment using a variety of activities like activity based teaching with effective interactive relations between learners and teachers (Gredler, 2009; Serin, 2018). In light of the perceptions of quality education, it is like one size does not fit all paradigms because of its transition and dynamic nature. Its definition changes from person to person, community to community, and country to country from time to time, and who defines it under specific circumstances depending upon the influence of cultural, historical, local, national, international, and global perspectives (Dost, 2021; UNICEF, 2000). However, the concepts of quality education to the community are; children are given access to modern facilities like computer education according to their grade level; individual attention is given to overcome learning difficulties through learner focused teaching; teachers are given opportunities to learn through training, workshops, seminars, co-teaching with expert teachers to improve teaching learning practices; providing students with opportunities to participate in local, regional and national level competitions to show their talents; monitoring and evaluation of every teaching and learning activity is ensured through internal and external institutional

support; learning achievements are shared with parents, community and supporting institutions to encourage children to excel in curricular and co-curricular activities; high achievers, competition winners and runners-up are appreciated in the community programs to boost their morale; every event or activity is organized around learners' development and is well justified (Blumberg, n.d.). These perceptions of the school stakeholders are considered as quality standards.

To this end the researcher intends to explore the challenges and possibilities of using the learner-centered approach to teach in Nigeria public secondary schools.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Learner-centered teaching methodology has been a recurrent theme in many national education policies in the global South and has had wide donor support (Schweisfurth,2011; Brenner et. al,2022). For years there has been a call worldwide for a shift in pedagogical practice in schools. However, it can be a challenging task to implement learner-centered education in the current education system which was designed for sorting rather than learning (An et al. 2020). Many developed and developing countries have engaged in using the learner-centered approach, yet Nigeria's secondary education is still rooted in using the traditional method of teaching in the classroom even though there are outcry to shift the paradigm from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach, where the student assumes the role of teacher and the teacher serving as guide. Despite the efforts, there is no positive outcome (Onwe, 2018; Malisa, 2022). Also, the researchers' experiences as a secondary school teacher in various part of Kwara state, Nigeria it was noted that to adopt this new paradigm that is been advocated by parents and government possess some challenges. Much as awareness has been created about student-centered teaching and learning, in Nigeria education, there is still a gap in the transition from the pedagogical theory into practice as a result of some challenges encountered at that level of education (Anyanwu, 2015). To this end this research therefore wants to explore the challenges and possibilities in using a learner-centered approach as a method of teaching in Nigeria secondary schools.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the challenges experienced by teachers in using the learner-centered approach to teaching in Nigeria's public secondary schools?
2. In what ways can these challenges be overcome?
3. Are there any possibilities of putting this approach to practice?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature was done under the two teaching methods.

Teaching Methods

The teaching style was described by Ahmed (2013) as those enduring personal qualities and behaviors that appear in how educators conduct their classes. Yoshida et al. (2014) define the term teaching style as the distinct qualities exhibited by a teacher that are consistent from situation to situation regardless of the content being taught. Similarly, Dupin-Bryant (2004). Defines learner-centered teaching style as "a style of instruction that is responsive, collaborative, problem-centered, and

democratic in which both students and the instructor decide how, what, and when learning occurs" (p.42). On the other hand, a teacher-centered teaching style is considered "a style of instruction that is formal, controlled, and autocratic in which the instructor directs how, what, and when students learn" (p.42). Teaching style is made up of a range of behaviors that a teacher comfortably uses consistently over time, situation, and content (Lak et.al., 2017). International trends in education show a shift from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach. This model focuses on what the students are expected to be able to do at the end of the course. This approach is commonly referred to as an outcome-based approach. Statements called learning outcomes are used to express what it is expected that students should be able to do at the end of the learning period.

Teacher-centered approach.

Gill (2017), noted that teacher-centered approaches are more traditional in nature, focusing on the teacher as instructor. They are sometimes referred to as direct instruction, deductive teaching, or expository teaching, and are typified by the lecture type presentation. In these methods of teaching, the teacher controls what is to be taught and how students are presented with the information that they are to learn. Singh (2011) described teacher-centered learning as students passively receiving information, emphasis is on the acquisition of knowledge, and the teacher's role is to be the primary information giver and primary evaluator. There is no room for student's personal growth. Talbert et al. (2019) report that while learner-centered language teaching has been advocated in higher education in recent years, teacher-centered teaching styles may be still dominant in actual practice. Results of their study show that most instructors still use traditional, teacher-centered styles in university settings despite the call for a paradigm shift to learner-centered ones. The traditional way of designing courses called the teacher-centered approach is to start from the content of the course. Teachers decided on the content that they intended to teach, planned how to teach this content, and then assessed the content. This approach is based on the teacher's input and on assessment in terms of how well the students learned/reproduced the material taught. In a traditional classroom, students become passive learners, or rather just recipients of teachers' knowledge and wisdom. They have no control over their own learning. Teachers make all the decisions concerning the curriculum, teaching methods, and the different forms of assessment. Duckworth (2009) asserts that teacher-centered learning actually prevents students' educational growth. According to Lynch (2010), he noted that traditional teacher-led or administer-centered learning is used more frequently than student-led learning.

Learner-centered approach

Student-centered approaches (sometimes referred to as discovery learning, inductive learning, or inquiry learning) place a much stronger emphasis on the learner's role in the learning process. When you are using student-centered approaches to teaching, you still set the learning agenda, but you have much less direct control over what and how students learn. Lele (2020) claimed that the student-centered learning approach gives students ownership over their learning and helps them make necessary decisions and value judgments

about the relevance of the content and the methods of teaching to their own lives and interests. Wolk (2010) also reports that in student-centered learning, Students play a significant role in designing their own curriculums. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator or guide who helps students achieve their goals. In their article Ng and Lai (2012) presented an exploratory study that examined whether a wiki-based project could foster student-centered learning. Wagner (2008) concluded in their study that learner-centered approach contributed to the construction of educational activities and provided for greater student learning and a more authentic student assessment. Learner centered" is the perspective which focuses on the learners' experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs. It creates a learning environment conducive to learning and promotes the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners (Ahmed, 2013; Larson, 2018). Weimer (2002) proposed five areas that needed to change in order to achieve learner-centered teaching. These areas are the choice of content, the instructor's role, responsibility for learning, the process of assessment, and the power relationship between teacher and learners. Students needed to have ownership of their own learning, contribute to the design of curriculum, and the responsibility for some levels for instruction. Similarly, Bain (2004) identified several traits of instructors who employ learner-centered instruction. Among these characteristics are that instructors touch the lives of their students, they place a strong emphasis on student learning and outcomes by using varied forms of assessment, and the effect on career goals.

Aslan & Reigeluth (2015), in their of study which also explore the challenges of using learner-centered, identified this four challenges: Student mindsets Making (the switch from passive, teacher-directed learning to active, self-directed learning); Adviser time (Juggling multiple demands from managing many student projects); Math(Excluding math from project-based learning because of the unique character of math learning); Consistency across advisories Ensuring consistent grading practices and achievement of mastery by students. Learner-centered teaching is an approach in which students have control over the learning process. With the learner-centered approach, instructors function as facilitators of learning rather than lecturers. In this way, ''teachers do less telling; students do more discovering.'' The roles of the teacher in the learner-centered approach are to design the course such that it creates a climate for optimal learning; model the appropriate expected behavior for the students; encourage students to learn from and with each other; and provide more feedback throughout the process. Usually, a menu of optional activities or assignments is presented to the students. In this way, the learner-centered method also gives students more options that allow them to serve their own learning needs. Course content is still introduced and utilized but in a more individualized way. Application of the content is also emphasized and used to develop critical-thinking skills. Learner-centered teaching forces students to play an active role in their education, as opposed to the more passive role traditionally used. In other disciplines, the learner-centered approach promoted more in-depth learning and facilitated students' development into independent

learners (Aslan & Reigeluth,2015). Dewey (1938) he asserts that traditional way of teaching has the limitation to focus on active learning and explains that "...there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active co-operation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying" (p. 67).

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE AND METHODS

The research focused on secondary school teachers in Nigeria who have used a learner-centered approach to teach in a classroom setting. This study used a qualitative case study design to explore the study, the researcher used a semi-structured interview with five (5) teachers from different secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis, Nigeria. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select the participants for this study because not all teachers are using the techniques under exploration. The participants (male and female) were assured that the information they shared would be kept confidential and they provided permission to have the interview recorded. Interviews were conducted face-to-face.

Teacher's profile: description of the interviewee

School (Pseudonym)	Teacher (Pseudonym)	Highest Education Level	Years of Teaching
Adeola Sec. School	Mrs. Ologo	BSc	15
Bishop Smith High School	Mrs. Mary	MEd	12
St. Anthony Sec. School	Mr. Abraham	MEd	5
C&S Sec. School	Mr. Ajala	BSc	10
Trailblazer Sec. School	Mrs. Ade	BSc	8

Informed by many qualitative studies, data analysis was primarily inductive while guided by the research questions and literature Each of the five interviews was transcribed manually by the researcher to promote insight into and understanding of participants' responses which promoted accuracy, analysis, and participant anonymity. A follow-up member check was conducted with each of the five teachers so that the participants could review and edit, if necessary, their interview transcript to promote accuracy. The researcher analyzed the five transcripts manually and themes and sub-themes emerged during the process Resch et al. (2010) defines a theme as "a statement of meaning that runs through all or most of the pertinent data, or one in the minority that carries heavy emotional or factual impact" (p. 150). These categories in order of coded transcripts were the participant challenges experience and the possibilities of using the approach in the future.

Theoretical framework

The theory that guides this research is the constructivism learning theory. This is a learning theory that places significant emphasis on the active engagement of learners in the process of constructing their own understanding. Instead of being passive recipients of information,

learners engage in reflective processes, construct cognitive representations, and integrate novel knowledge into their existing schemas. This facilitates the cultivation of enhanced levels of learning and comprehension. According to Elliott et al. (2000), constructivism is an educational perspective that posits individuals as active participants in the process of constructing their own knowledge. It further asserts that the perception of reality is shaped by the learner's experiences. This implies that educators must possess the conviction that students possess the capacity for critical thinking and generating original ideas. The foundation of constructivist learning theory supports a range of instructional approaches and strategies that prioritize student-centered learning, in contrast to the conventional model of education where teachers primarily impart knowledge to students in a passive manner. A constructivist classroom places emphasis on active learning, collaborative activities, the examination of concepts or problems from several viewpoints, reflective practices, student-centered approaches, and genuine assessment methods. This theory is perfect for this research because it focuses on learner-centered approach and how it is constructed which is the main focus of this article.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section deals with the result generated from the participant's interview. The research generated several themes, this was presented below based on research questions.

Research question one: what are the challenges experienced by teachers in using learner learner-centered approach in Nigeria public secondary schools?

These are the difficulties the teachers pass through during the process of using the learner-centered approach to teaching in the class. When asked about the challenges that the respondents undergo in using the learner-centered approach to teaching, themes such as class size, attention problems, lack of teaching aids, financial constraints, student attitude, lack of teaching aids, time learner differences, unavailability of instructional material, environmental factors emerged from the data.

Class size

This refers to the number of students in a classroom. The respondents expressed that most of the Nigeria secondary schools are over-populated and using this approach in such condition was difficult to them. They noted that while they were teaching some students are learning while others are using it as an avenue to carry out other activities while some other students will hide under the cover of high achievers in the class. Another participant expressed that the class size is so large that cannot even walk among the students.

This is what a participant says……

> "… the large population that we have caused a lot of problems because some will learn while others will hide under those that know what they are doing, and others will be playing…." Mrs. Ologo

Another participant said…

> "…… the normal population in a class is supposed to be 30 to 35 but in a situation where we have 80, 120 or 170 students in a class it will not work…." Mrs. Mary

> "……in my own class, I have 110 students and another class they are 91 (there are two arms), you cannot even work among the students talk less of arranging the class in a way that will make learner centered easy.so over-populated class is one of the problems…." Mr. Ajala

This is in line with Ajayi (2002) and Omoregie (2005) reported that Nigeria secondary schools are riddled with crises of various dimensions and magnitude such as large class size, inadequate fund, among others.

Attention problem.

This refers to the difficulty of maintaining students' focus and engagement during the learning process. In a learner-centered approach, the emphasis is on active participation, collaboration, and personalized learning experiences. However, the participants expressed that varying student backgrounds contribute to distractions and reduced attention spans. They further expressed that using this method to capture their attention and maintain it is still a problem for them. This theme highlights the difficulty educators face in maintaining students' focus and engagement in a classroom environment, which is essential for effective learning centered teaching.

In a learning-centered approach, where active participation and critical thinking are encouraged, attention problems can hinder the effectiveness of the method. Engaging students in discussions, group activities, or hands-on experiments becomes difficult if they are not fully attentive or if their environment is not conducive to learning. Here is what a participant said….

> "……. when you focus on some group others may continue doing another thing that they will not listen to you…." Mr. Abraham

another participant asserted that,

> "……. most times when you are using this approach, to manage and get the attention of each student is always very difficult unlike when you are using the lecture method, so this is a serious challenge that I face as a person…." Mr. Ade

This is in line with Dewey (1938) he asserts that traditional way of teaching has the limitation to focus on active learning and explains that "...there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active co-operation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying" (p. 67).

Lack of teaching aids

Teaching aids encompasses a diverse array of tools and resources. These include textbooks, visual aids, digital technology, laboratory equipment, and manipulative materials. These elements are essential in facilitating interactive and captivating learning experiences. The absence of these tools in most public secondary schools in Nigeria is a hindrance to teachers' capacity to use learner-centered approach that fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and active student engagement. All the participants expressed that lack of instructional materials poses difficulty on their ability to enhance the dynamism and practicality of class activities, resulting in a dependence on the traditional method that prioritize memorization through repetition. This phenomenon poses a hindrance to the cultivation of students'

abilities in critical thinking, creativity, and the practical application of knowledge, all of which are pivotal for their prospective achievements.

> "……another thing is the materials t that we are supposed to use in this method because if we give them the topic and the teaching aid they are supposed to use, some are expensive and difficult to lay their hand on it so when this occurs, they will not be able to handle the topic properly**……"** Mrs. Ologo

Another participant shares a similar view, he expressed that the student doesn't have access to the laboratory, so many times he wants to use the approach but what will facilitate it is not available. Here is what he said,

> "….. even basic laboratory equipment is in short supply. Our students miss out on hands-on science experiments that are crucial for their understanding. It's frustrating when you want to teach using a learning-centered approach but lack the tools to do so……" Mr. Ade

The findings are in line with the work of Agun (1992) who defined instructional materials as those materials that are helpful to the teachers and students, and which maximize learning in various areas. Lack of teaching aid is the challenge that this approach is facing.

Financial Constraints

This means that there is not enough money to provide the best learning experience. This can lead to problems like crowded classrooms, old teaching materials, and teachers not getting enough training among others. The participants expressed that the lack of money is a major challenge to use the learner-centered approach, A participant noted sometimes the school principal doesn't give them money to get some materials for practical work. Another participant said to make things better, schools need more money from the government or help from private groups to improve classrooms, give teachers better tools, and train them properly. This way, students can have a more engaging and effective way of learning.

one of the participants has this to say ….

> "…… a financial constraint is one of them because they need money to get the materials that they need because most time the principal of the school might not disburse money as at when due, and government is not helping matter…." (Mr. Ade**)**

Mrs. Ajala expressed that the money the government is allocating to education is so small, yet they don't allow schools to task the students due to the free education policy. Here is what she said.

> "….one of the most pressing challenges we face is resource shortages. Our school lacks the financial resources to get some of the things we need, government is not helping either, the money they are allocating to education is small and they don't allow individual schools to collect money from the student Acquiring these resources can be quite costly, and it's a hurdle we need to overcome…." Mr. Abraham

This is supported by a survey conducted on primary education cost, financing, and management in Federal Capital Territory, Kogi, Kwara, and Niger states, it was

discovered that only 9.57% of the schools in Kwara and 27.08% of the schools in FCT had school libraries while none of the schools in both Kogi and Niger States had any school library. It was also found that 24% of schools in Kogi state, 21% of schools in Kwara state, 40.3% of schools in Niger state, and 16.75% of schools in FCT did not use any form of wall chart teaching aids (Adulkareem & Umar, 1997).

Student attitude

The attitude of students towards a particular method or approach is very important. The participants expressed that the way the students behaved when they were using the method was not encouraging, initially, they didn't have an interest in doing anything and then asking them to do things by themselves became a bigger problem. Another participant expressed that most students in public schools are used to being spoon-fed asking them to do things in groups or doing some activities alone doesn't sit well with them.

Mr. Ajala has this to say….

> "……The attitude of the students is not encouraging they did not want to do anything talk more of asking them to do the learning by themselves. ……." Mrs. Mary

> "…… our students are used to being spoon-fed, they don't even want to use their brain for thinking now asking them to do things on their own or in the group is a big problem for them, they are not ready for any work…." Mr. Ajala

This is against the work of Cheang, Kai I. (2009), which focuses on the effect of learner-centered teaching on motivation and learning strategies in a third-year pharmacotherapy course, the findings show that learner-centered approach was effective in a third-year pharmacotherapy course in promoting certain domains of students' motivation and learning strategies. Specifically, the approach seems to improve students' attitudes and intrinsic motivation, as well as critical-thinking strategy.

Time constraint

Time Constraint is a term that defines various factors that limit projects in terms of time. This includes deadlines, workload management, and resource allocation and time allocation in class. One of the participants expressed that the time allotted for each class does not seem enough to organize the students to talk less of using the approach effectively.

> One of the participants has this to say….
>
> > "…..the challenge that I encounter while using the approach is that it consumes time, for example, the time stipulated for any period is 40 minutes, so when I started the lesson before I could finish so those that I called the slow learner couldn't get anything from what we are doing, they will be looking at you as though you are performing a miracle and they will looking their colleague as though they are performing magic so as time goes on I have to stop it. Because of time constraint…." Mrs. Ajala

Another participant expressed that she had used the approach one or two times but it was time consuming

> "……this approach is always time consuming and that is why most schools in Nigeria do not adopt this method**…."** Mrs. Mary

> **"……**Time consuming, from my field (chemistry) most of the work is experimental and the topic need experiment and the time allocated for the subject for subject or topic is very slim and cannot be enough, before organizing equipment and other things by the teacher time has gone. **……."** Mr. Abraham

Learner differences

Individual differences mean personal characteristics that distinguish learners from each other in the teaching and learning processes.one of the participants expressed that the students that are slow learner are finding it difficult to catch up with others in the class.

Here is what a teacher said…

> "…. the difference between our students because those that are slow learners or let me say those that their IQ is very low are lagging behind, because they will not contribute anything, they will be waiting for their colleague to do it all…." Mrs. Mary

This is in line with the work of Kuzgun and Deryakulu 2004, who noted that learners are unique individuals who bring a critical set of variables to each learning situation, including delicate traits as indicators of their potential and the history of achievement as signs of previous accomplishments and predictors of future performance.

Environmental factors

This involves the environment situation that learners in Nigeria find themselves in, most times this is not conducive for proper teaching and learning. A participant expressed that the school and classroom environment is not conducive for learning, there is no provision for cool system when the temperature rises, because of over-crowding, managing the class to control noise takes most of the teaching and learning time, here is what she said,

> **"……**the environment in the school is not conducive is not conducive enough for this method. At times if you want to use the electricity, there will be power outage and when this happened there is nothing you can do, no fan nothing the place will be stuffy so this use to affect the method**……"** Mrs. Ologo

This is in line with the work of Gilavand (2016) who asserts that the learning environment dramatically affects the learning outcomes of students. Schools' open space and noise, inappropriate temperature, insufficient light, overcrowded classes, misplaced boards, and inappropriate classroom layout all make factors that could be confounding variables distracting students in class ().

Research question two (2): Are there any possibilities of putting this approach into practice?

These are various activities that can make the use of a learner-centered approach to teaching in Nigeria secondary schools possible or become a reality. These are strategies the teacher employs to assist student learning through the use of learner-centered approach. The teacher must consider the age of the learners, their level, the setting

of the class, the length of the class, and the curriculum. The teacher might use different teaching aids to reach all pupils with different learning styles and abilities (Heinrich, 2017; Oduolowu, 2011; Reinen, 2019). The entire participant has one or two things to say on this. However, class size reduction, government intervention, student positive attitude to learning, provision of infrastructure, teaching in the area of specialization, teacher professional development, teacher motivation, and improvising of instructional material) are the sub-theme that emerged from it. Here is what the participants said.

Class size reduction,

Reducing class size is an approach to managing the ratio between pupils and teachers, as it is suggested that the range of approaches a teacher can employ and the amount of attention each student will receive will increase as the number of pupils per teacher becomes smaller. A participant expressed that if the number of students per class can be reduced by constructing more classrooms, then the class can be divided, then the possibility of using the approach effectively will be high.

Here is what a participant said:

> "…….it can be used if our government will help, if they can give us more structure, more classroom and if they reduce the over-populated schools, they can reduce it by building more classroom, they can also help by providing instructional materials…." Mr. Abraham

International research evidence suggests that reducing class size can have positive impacts on pupil outcomes when implemented with socioeconomically disadvantaged pupil populations. This finding is similar to Ding and Lehrer (2010) who also found that smaller class sizes had a positive effect on student achievement in their analysis of the Project STAR data that statistically accounted for student attrition and transitions of students between test and control groups from Grades K–3.

Government intervention and provision of infrastructure

These are the various ways in which government can interfere to make the approach work. Government intervention as the term signifies refers to the involvement of the government when it comes to designing and implementing policies that will be of immerse benefit to the school. One of the participants expressed that if the number of period they are taking in a day is more, then the teachers will have enough time to use this approach. Here is what she said,

> "……if the government can make a law to reduce the number of periods we are doing in school per day, each subject will have enough time for the teacher to see round, monitor the student and allow the student to do what they are expected to do on their own……." Mrs. Ologo

Other participants share different opinion on this, he expressed that if the government intervene by giving school the infrastructure needed, the possibility of using it more becomes high, here is what he said,

> "……if they can give us more structure, more classrooms and if they reduce the over-populated schools, they can reduce it by

> building more classrooms……" Mr. Ade

This is in line with the work Aregbeyen (2017) studied a panel of 40 African countries including Nigeria and found out that government funding and investment on education especially secondary schools are significantly and positively associated with high standard performance and economic growth

Student positive attitude to learn

This is the attitude showed by the student during the use of various methods under learner-centered approach, participants expressed that if the student shows positive attitude to learning in general, then teacher will be motivated to go extra mile to use this approach.

> Here is what **Mrs**. Mary said……
>
> "……also, if students change their attitude if they have positive attitude to learning in the future this method will work, and we as teachers will be motivated to use this approach more. ….."

Another participant has this to say expressed from the perspective of the teacher, he expressed that if the school motivate teachers by giving them incentives, and making policies to mandate it usage especially for new teachers, then more teachers will be forces to use this method……

> "……We need encouragement from the administrative office by giving incentives to the teacher that goes the extra miles to ensure student learn well and also make it compulsory for a new teacher to use the student-centered approach in teaching ……." Mr. Ajala

This is in line with (Syukur, 2016) which assert that, students who have positive attitudes toward their learning activity usually have rapid progress in the classroom.

Teaching in area of specialization

This is when teacher is teaching in the area where they studied in the university. One the participants expressed that there is possibilities of using this approach when more teachers should be should be employed and they should let them teach what they are expert in not assigning random subject to them.

> "……another possibility is that more teachers should be employed as in more experienced teachers, those that are relevant in the field for example if they employ a teacher to teach chemistry such teacher should not be made to teach physics, when such people are employed, they should let them teach what they are employed for……." Mrs. Ologo
>
> "……assigning random subjects to teachers will not let this work, this is not their area of expertise, so if teachers were allowed to teach what they study in higher education, then the ease at which they will be able to use this learner-centered will surprise them."

This is in line with Koledoye (2011) in his study observes that English language teachers that have master's degree in English language or/and literature with teaching qualification perform better than

their counterparts who are without a formal English language qualification or experts but teach English language in secondary schools. He opines that teacher's knowledge about the subject affect their teaching attitude and eventually the performance of the students.

Teacher professional development

Teacher professional development is an integral part of successfully implementing a learner-centered approach in Nigerian secondary schools. It involves equipping educators with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to create an environment where students actively engage in their learning, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes. The participants expressed that appropriate training that is tailored to the use and implementation of this approach should be organized by the government, curriculum should be changed to accommodate this the usage, he further expressed that it is doable though it will take time, another participant noted that professional development that focuses on teaching strategies associated with specific curriculum content to supports teacher learning within their classroom should be done.

Here is what a participant said….

> "……to apply that method effectively will not be easy because changing the curriculum that we are already use to it involve many things we have to employ some professional, go on training put other things on ground so to change the curriculum takes a lot of time but if we can tackle all the challenges that I mention, I think it will work well in the future……." Mr. Abraham

> "……They can also organize seminar for teachers because some are not aware of the approach and how to implement it in teaching ……" Mrs. Mary

This is in line with Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner, (2017), he noted that teacher professional learning is a way to support the increasingly complex skills students need to learn in order to succeed in the 21st century, Sophisticated forms of teaching are needed to develop student competencies such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction.

CONCLUSION

Incorporating constructivism into the learner-centered approach offers a promising avenue for addressing the challenges facing Nigeria's secondary education system. It places students at the center of the learning process, empowering them to construct their knowledge actively. However, this transformation will require a concerted effort from educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to provide the necessary support, resources, and infrastructure to make learner-centered, constructivist education a reality in Nigeria's secondary schools. Ultimately, the benefits of such an approach can contribute significantly to the country's educational quality and the future success of its students. The findings of the research show there are numerous possibilities indicating learner-centered approach can be put to practice in Nigeria despite all the challenges that teachers that have and are willing to use this approach encountered.

In the line with the findings the following recommendations were made

- Government should provide adequate infrastructure and teaching aid to schools in Nigeria, review the curriculum to accommodate the method and time allocation for each period should be review as this will boost the usability of this approach.
- incentives to teachers should be giving top priority, serving as motivating factor for hardworking and innovative teachers if teaching are learning are to be effective.
- Orientation should be conducted on the learners on the importance of this method as it will boost their morale and make them to be active in class.
- More classrooms should be constructed as this will reduce and solve the over-population and class size problem
- Parent should encourage to enroll their wards in school that is near their place of residence, this will go a long way to solve overpopulation in some schools.
- Teachers should be made to undergo professional development, so that they can be conversant with the latest methodology and information on education around the world.

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In search of lasting peace in schools: Learner's perceptions of peace education in Western Cape Province, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decade, peace education programmes have been implemented in many European and African countries. Peace education is essential to reduce the scourge of violence affecting schools and for developing positive thinking. It is a tool to create consciousness among individuals to better comprehend the threat of conflict and violence. However, research and media reports indicate that violence continues to affect learners in schools. This poses the question of whether learners fully understand peace education as a strategy to combat school violence. The study was undertaken to determine secondary school learners 'perceptions of peace education, using the integrative theory of peace as theoretical lens. The research employed a qualitative approach in three case studies at secondary schools in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. Three focus group interviews with a purposefully selected group of five learners in each school were conducted. The data collected were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that most participants had a poor understanding of peace education. It is recommended that schools should promote peace education and increase awareness among all learners by organizing public campaigns for peace education; integrating peace education into the curriculum; and providing learners and teachers with training in peace education.

Keywords: culture of peace; learners; peace buddies; peace education; school violence; South Africa

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Violence in schools – particularly secondary schools – is a global phenomenon and South Africa is no exception (Le Mottee & Kelly, 2017; Qwabe, Maluleke & Olutola, 2022). Annually, it is estimated that about 246 million children and adolescents globally experience some form of violence while at school (UNESCO, 2017). According to the latest crime and safety report in the United States (US), schools will record one or more serious violent incidents at some time every year, and minorities of students will be involved in physical fights while at school. In addition, the report states that a small number of students is likely to bring lethal weapons to school or become victims of sexual assault or robbery while at school (Wang, Cheu, Zhang & Oudeker, 2020).

Violence in schools has a detrimental effect on children's development, as it deprives them of their fundamental right to education. Smit (2003, p.27) explains that violence hampers the mission of the school as an educational institution and creates a climate of insecurity and fear among learners. In the same vein, Burton and Leoschut (2013, p.12) assert that school violence often leads to poor academic achievement, as victims often struggle to pay attention in class and find it difficult to grasp the content and to cope with their schooling. For example,

bullying as one form of violence has devastating consequences, as victims often develop low self-esteem, poor concentration in class and a lower desire to attend school (Musariwa, 2017, p.12). In addition, in terms of social consequences of bullying, Mewhort-Buist (2017) states that victims of bullying are always quiet, shy, lonely, isolated, and often report being sick; sometimes they even ask their teachers to contact their parents to fetch them from school as they feel miserable.

The rising number of reported cases of incidents of violence in schools and their detrimental effects calls for the need for violence prevention strategies as a matter of urgency. This idea challenges the whole schooling system to be overhauled to include peace programmes that teach constructive attitudes, skills and behaviours that aim to curb the rise of conflict (UNESCO, 2013). In the past, the South African government has tried to implement various interventions to curb the scourge of violence. Although the country is praised as having one of the best constitutions in the world which aims to guarantee every right of its citizens, including the rights to human dignity, freedom and tolerance, violence continues to be endemic in schools. Davids and Waghid (2016) state that government policies and programmes have regrettably not been successful in achieving the desired outcome. Although subjects such as Life Orientation have been introduced to schools to conscientise learners about their constitutional rights and how to exercise tolerance towards other people from different cultures and backgrounds, research indicates that the problem is on the increase, and it continues to hamper the goals of schools; South Africa is not winning the battle against violence (Dube & Hlalele, 2018).

Several scholars such as Maxwell, Ensin and Maxwell (2004) and John (2013 and 2018) attest that there are very few studies that have been conducted on other approaches to combat violence, such as peace education. Although in South Africa peace education is not yet part of the formal curriculum (John, 2016), research indicates that it is beginning to be introduced into South African schools due to ever-increasing numbers of school violence incidents (Ndwandwe, 2021). One initiative is the work done by a particular non-governmental Organisation (NGO) based in Cape Town, Western Cape: the Non-Violent Schools Campaign (NVSC) programme provided by the Quaker for Peace Centre (QPC) which strives to increase the number of individuals in schools who are willing to act against all types of violence to promote constructive teaching and learning. Teachers are learning how to teach the curriculum in innovative and engaging ways, as well as how to include the message of non-violence in every class. Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) sessions are attended by teachers, and AVP facilitators are trained. As a result, they may teach learners an alternative to turning to violence as a means of resolving disagreements. They also help and support learners in establishing and maintaining Peace Clubs at their schools, as well as invite learners to join the clubs so that they, together with the school administration and teachers, take responsibility for eliminating school violence. Peace Buddies are learners who join the clubs and engage in the QPC's camps, *indaba's* (Strategic gatherings) *and* workshops. The activities are enjoyable and thrilling and try to counter the belief that violence is permissible, amusing, and appealing. Peace Buddies also take part in AVP, which teaches them how to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence (QPC, 2011; 2015).

However, as far as can be determined, no previous research has investigated or captured the voices of learners and their perceptions of peace education as receivers

and beneficiaries of the programme provided by the QPC. Moreover, the voices of young people involved in programmes such as peace education have rarely been taken into consideration. Therefore, it was important to determine the perspective and perceptions of the Peace Buddies (learners in the NVSC) who have been exposed to peace education.

The aim of the study

The study was undertaken primarily to determine secondary school learners' (Peace Buddies) perceptions of peace education in selected secondary schools in the Western Cape, South Africa. The study was guided by the following research question:

- What are the secondary school learners' (Peace Buddies) perceptions of peace education in the selected Western Cape schools?

THEORETICAL GROUNDING AND OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE ON PEACE EDUCATION

The Integrative Theory of Peace

According to the integrative theory of peace (ITP), the existence and assurance of peace is dependent on interaction between and among ethical, political, psychological, and spiritual states which are expressed through intra and interpersonal interaction within a geographical location of groups of people (Danesh, 2006; Mishra, 2021)

All human states of being, including peace, according to the ITP, are the result of the primary human cognitive (knowing), emotional (loving) and conative (choosing) skills, which together shape our worldview. ITP is based on current research on psychosocial development and peace education, as well as lessons learned, and observations collected during the seven-year implementation of the Education for Peace Program in 112 schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Danesh, 2006).

Peace, according to the theory, is the best fruit of human individual and societal growth. It is the culmination of our journey from self-centered and anxiety-ridden survival instincts, as well as the quarrelsome, dichotomous tensions of identity formation processes, to a universal and all-encompassing state of awareness of our fundamental oneness and connectedness with all humanity and, indeed, all life (Danesh, 2006). For the purposes of this study, it can be argued that learner perception of peace education can be influenced by the kind of worldviews people possess. Therefore, it is important that the learners' worldviews be evaluated and transformed to one of peace and non-violence by developing their cognitive abilities, choices, and their willingness to pursue peace. According to Danesh, (2011, p. 131), the theory of integrative theory of peace education plays an important role in formulating and developing worldviews at all spheres of the society. An examination of this worldview is pertinent in this study as it helps identify predominant worldview of learners and how they can be addressed through peace. Therefore, their perceptions give hope to continue dreaming of a better future that is free of violence.

Understanding Peace Education

Today it is necessary to mobilise people so that they are not spectators who believe in everything the media presents to them, without being thoughtful and critical, and without assuming their responsibility in improving the future of humanity and participating in the construction of peace (Ahmed & Shahzad, 2021). This calls for schools and teachers to impart non-violent and peaceful skills to learners. Shaban (2012) maintains that effective combating of school violence requires youth to be taught how to

become peace lovers and be empowered to make non-violent choices. When learners are taught and become immersed in the language of non-violence at an early stage, they will be able to articulate their feelings and thoughts, which creates a conducive space to resolve conflict peacefully. Prinsloo (2007) emphasizes that it is important for the peace idea to be embedded within human conscientiousness early in life since children will strive to achieve it and support the establishment of new social platforms that are determined to eliminate all risks of violence. Furthermore, according to Paul (2010), establishing a peaceful society starts by every individual having peace efficacy. Schools remain one of the most suitable sites or settings in which society can formally invest to teach learners the competencies and attitudes required to attain the goals of establishing peaceful schools and lasting peace (Bar-Tal, 2002; Johnson & Johnson, 2006). For example, in Rwanda to address the scourge of violence, peace education was implemented as a strategy to promote peace, reconciliation, mutual respect, and social cohesion. Themes of peace education, such as conflict resolution, critical thinking, and national healing, were incorporated into and addressed in the Rwandan curriculum (Ndwandwe, 2021). Nigeria is another example of an African state that suffers from a problem of violence. Olowo (2016) affirms that the country continues to be plagued by deadly political, religious, and ethnic conflicts. Falade (2014) states that Nigeria has been faced with the absence of enduring harmony and peaceful relationships. Aggressive and violent acts such as kidnapping, suicide, bombing, and assassination have become a daily occurrence. As a result, many people feel insecure and fear for their lives and damage to property.

To live in peace, people must have a passion for peace and understand that it is not imposed by a few but is built by all and that human beings have the capacity to transform their conflicts peacefully and make the world more peaceful and safer (Behr, Megoran & Carnaffan, 2018). A security that is achieved through the efforts of all to fight against violence that threatens international, national, and local stability uses what Velez et al. (2021, p.2) define as "*the force of the word"* since violence is not a viable and sustainable solution to humanity's current challenges. Therefore, to put an end to the idea that violence is normal and inevitable, and that it is the only alternative to conflict, the role of education is important, as it is an instrument for the peaceful transformation of human conflict (Ahmed & Shahzad, 2021). It is peace education that allows people to improve the world and enjoy experiences with the different others, without prejudice or discrimination. Likewise, it teaches people to listen to their hearts, saving them from violence, because "if violence is born in the minds of people, it is in their hearts that peace must be established" (Behr et al., 2018, p.78). In fact, peace education has a huge role to play in achieving peace. According to Wahyudin (2018), education is essential to train people to seek what unites them, instead of what separates them.

This shows that some prejudices and conflicts have their origin in education, and specifically in some textbooks, which, instead of highlighting the moments of peace enjoyed in human history, highlight more wars and the triumphs of armies, which are often celebrated and feted (Mishra, 2021). It is essential that all various stakeholders improve education since the culture of peace programmes will not achieve their objectives without education that transmits knowledge instead of ignorance; that educates people to listen to the voice of all and not only ours; that teaches us to live with those who are different; that looks to the future with optimism (Ahmed & Shahzad, 2021). It is

important that the culture of peace be present in educational systems and that it reaches children through peace education projects and programmes (Ahmed & Shahzad, 2021). Teachers do not have to wait for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) or other international Organisations to arrive in their classrooms; they can also take the initiative and contact those responsible for education in their countries to contribute their ideas and initiatives to plans for national and international cultures of peace (Ahmed & Shahzad, 2021). Likewise, peace education should not be exclusive to classrooms, but should also become the core element of homes, families, sports, and leisure centers for children and young people (Mishra, 2021).

Peace education is everyone's responsibility – in formal, informal, and non-formal respects – and it must be permanent, encompassing all ages, from the youngest to the oldest, teaching citizens coexistence, respect, and reciprocal enrichment (Wahyudin, 2018). Peace education allows citizens to be masters of themselves and their future, and to participate directly in the construction of peace, democracy, and stability both locally and globally. Likewise, it develops the critical capacity of citizens so that they become actors who can say 'no' to everything that humiliates human beings and damages the environment, and to everything that favors violence and the use of force. Consequently, it is an education that Wahyudin (2018) describes as facilitating the transition from a culture of violence, imposition, and force to a culture of understanding, dialogue, and peace.

It is, therefore, an education that puts in the hands of the new generation the necessary behaviors and values so that they develop and choose a culture of peace instead of one of violence and so that they work in favor of disarmament, dignity, justice, peace, and human development in all its dimensions (Zembylas, Bekerman & Gallagher, 2009). It is an education that considers the reality in which we live, knowing that in many countries children do not have access to formal education and that our teaching, in general, is focused more on the technical and material – often forgetting the human and the teaching of the culture of peace (Mishra, 2021).

Globally, the subject of philosophy, which is the essence and tool of individual and collective thought, and which forms free, critical, and therefore creative and peaceful thoughts, is being alarmingly lost (Davies, 2016). It would be important to include philosophy, in particular, to make peace at different levels and in all countries since it favours peace education (Wahyudin, 2018).

It is interesting to point out that it is not a matter of values, but of a transversal education, included at all levels, that must involve everyone: politicians, family members, the media, and especially civil society (Mishra, 2021). Therefore, it is a cosmopolitan education that is enriched by all the cultures of the world. Previously, where the universal right to education was advocated, now we must speak of the right to universal peace education so that cosmopolitan citizens are free, equal and enjoy respect, dignity, and hospitality wherever they are, without anyone judging them on gender, colour, religion, or geographical location (Wahyudin, 2018).

The greatest wealth humanity has is our diversity, and we must strengthen it with peace education, which teaches us to live together and practise human solidarity (Khairuddin et al., 2019). In fact, in a global world, an education is necessary that provides tools for citizens to understand the complex world in which they live, so that they can participate with their knowledge and imagination in the peaceful transformation of

the conflicts that threaten humanity, as well as in the protection of natural resources for their balanced use among all of them (Davies, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative evaluation research design was adopted in this study. As the aim of the study was primarily to determine secondary learners' (peace buddies) perceptions of peace education, three groups sets of five learners from three different schools with an identify known as Peace buddies in the NVSC provided by the QPC (N =15 learners) were purposively sampled. Most of these learners were in Grades 10 and 11, and they were chosen because they were members of peace clubs and functions as peace buddies, and it is assumed they had rich experience and exposure to the programme of peace education from their previous grade. It is important to note that majority of the participants were females. To be specific, out of 15 participants, 10 were female or girls. The interest shown by girls in the programme shows that girls are more inclined and interested in peace efforts. Adejei, (2019) support the view that girls and women may show more interests to programme that aims to promote peace, since they are mostly and disproportionately affected negatively by conflict. Focus group interviews were conducted with each assembled group. Participants in the focus group discussions aired their perceptions based on questions prepared by the researcher and the researcher audio recorded all the discussions. The recorded data was_later transcribed before thematic analysis was conducted. Six themes emerged from the interview responses and were analysed against reviewed literature and theory on peace education. The researcher gave the participants information about the study, and its goal during the field visit. In addition, in accordance with the concept of informed consent in ethical research, the participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The study's results are framed in such a way that the participants human dignity, integrity, rights and confidentiality were protected, and any reporting that stigmatises, demeans, damages, or disintegrates the community under inquiry was avoided. Data collected during this study is deemed confidential_and will not be disclosed in any way that might identify any person or organisation without their permission. For participants below the age of eighteen, parental consent was obtained. Additional verbal consent was pursued in all cases in which interview sessions were recorded.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After the analysis of all the focus group transcription, six identifiable themes relating to learners' perceptions of peace education in some selected secondary schools were identified, namely, (a) Peace education is perceived as education for developing a culture of peace (b) Peace education as education for peaceful living (c) Peace education as non -violence education *(*d) Peace education as a human rights issue (e) Peace education as conflict resolution education (f). Peace education as education on harmony and instilling values of social cohesion (ubuntu*).* The findings emerging from the study are discussed thematically and verbatim excerpts from written reflections of learners who identify as peace buddies elucidate themes. These themes are discussed.

Peace education is perceived as developing a culture of peace.

The findings indicated that most participants had a moderate understanding of the concept of peace education. They saw peace education as a kind of education that aims to provide people with the skills they need to cope with or react to violence in a proactive and peaceful manner. L4:S1 said:

Individuals are taught how to deal with a violent scenario and how to promote peace to our communities and schools via peace education.

Learner L5:S3 agreed:

> Peace education teaches individuals how to cope with a variety of scenarios while still maintaining peace in the classroom and at school.

Another learner characterised peace education as the promotion and development of a peaceful lifestyle. Peace should be a daily habit. The learner (L3:S3) said:

> Peace education, in my opinion, means that you must always behave peacefully and that there must always be peace. There must be peace in the church, and there must be peace in the school We all need peace in our lives. We can't enjoy life if there isn't serenity.

The above submissions by learners are in line with the submission by Mishra (2021) who aver that a peaceable classroom can be made possible through teaching learners to appreciate each other regardless of their differences. These responses by learners are also in line with Kreidler, (1991:51) an elementary school teacher and conflict expert, who first coined the term "peaceable classroom" to describe how conflict in the classroom can take place due to various factors such as miscommunication, lack of care and respect of another, failure to communicate feelings appropriately and exclusion. A peaceful classroom is characterized by the affirmation of other human rights, and existence of cooperation, communication, diversity appreciation, proper expression of emotions and peaceful conflict resolution (Ndwandwe,2021). A peaceful classroom is one in which students feel like they belong and are accepted.

Peace education as education for peaceful living.

The second findings that developed from the participants' responses is that peace education tries to teach peace-making abilities such as communication, respect for others and conflict resolution. A learner (L3:S3) made the following statement:

> To begin with, school-based peace education entails studying what makes [schools] peaceful, as well as learning how to behave [peacefully] oneself. In terms of [developing] communication skills, treating others with respect, and so forth... It ultimately has an impact on bullying as well.

The proposition made by Kwon, Walker, and Kristjánsson (2018) – that peace education furnishes learners with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that empower them to either prevent conflict, resolve conflicts peacefully, or create social conditions conducive to peace – is supported by participant L3:S3's responses. Non-violence and social fairness are important ideals in peace education. Non-violence is exemplified through ideals such as human rights, respect, freedom, and trust. The ideals of equality, accountability, and solidarity are used to achieve social justice.

Peace education as non-violence education.

Peace education is perceived as education for non-violence. Non-violence education is defined as education that tries to provide people with the skills to settle problems without resorting to violence and to urge them to avoid using physical force to do so. Non-violence education, sometimes known as peace education, is based on the idea of "do no harm". The following participants agreed on the definition of peace education as being education that educates individuals to reject the use of violence and instead utilise discourse (communication) to

bring about peaceful conflict resolution. L3:S1, for example, said:

> I believe it is when you are being taught not to use violence to solve issues, but rather to sit down and speak through them.

Another learner, L1:S1, said:

> When individuals are trained to be nonviolent, they must engage in dialogues, [communicate] rather than using their fists or power, and when they are met with problems, they must use words [dialogue] instead of their fists or strength.

The findings confirm that peace education is critical for reducing violence and promoting a culture of tolerance and peace among youths in the study area. This supports assertions by Pinzon-Salcedo and Torres-Cuello (2018) that peace education programmes should be implemented in schools, colleges, and institutions. Peace education for young people would imply that components of everyday life that are profoundly tied to one's identity become part of the daily school-level curriculum. Education is a gateway to empowerment, but when it includes material on peace, it becomes a pathway to long-term peace, understanding, coexistence, and progress in the country and beyond. Thus, the introduction of peace education at all levels, particularly at pre-school and school levels, is necessary to change the traditional stereotypes of developing minds and to enable them to become responsible citizens over time, thereby preventing future conflicts, overcoming communal riots within national borders, and combating so-called terrorism beyond national borders (Pinzon-Salcedo & Torres-Cuello, 2018). As a result, peace education will address the fundamental issues that young people face. Most young people have become victims of ignorance, violence, wrath, hate, despair and terrorism, and peace education is now their only hope of escaping this bleak condition. As a result, if we wish to protect future generations from the scourge of war, we must instil peace through education. Meaning the use of corporal punishment or use of force to resolve problems should be avoided.

Peace education as a human rights issue.

Peace education is considered as education on respect for human rights, according to the fourth theme that emerged from the participants' comments. Instructors see peace education as a means of instilling a culture of respect among people. Individuals are taught to abstain from harming others via peace education. According to one learner (L1:S2),

> For me, peace education is educating kids to respect one another, to respect one another's space, to give each person a voice, and to accept our differences.

Learner L3:S2 said,

> My concept of peace education is that it is [education] that teaches individuals to respect others, their viewpoints, and their human rights.

Peace education, according to learners, encourages individuals to live in harmony, respect the rights and views of others, and build a peaceful society. The results of this research are consistent with Deveci, Yilmaz, and Karadag's definition of peace (2008), which includes the absence of disputes and violence, a harmonious society, safety and agreement, tolerance, empathy, respect for diversity and collaboration. Similarly, the conclusions of this research are in line with those of Wong et al. (2021), who conclude that peace is achieved via tolerance, respect for human rights, the establishment of social fairness and the teaching of problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies. Human rights are those fundamental

principles without which humans cannot live in dignity as human beings. Freedom, justice, and peace are all built based on human rights. Their regard permits both the person and the community to grow to their greatest potential. The battle for freedom and equality is at the heart of the evolution of human rights across the globe.

Peace education as conflict resolution education.

The fifth theme that emerged from the participants' perspectives on peace education is conflict resolution education. The goal of conflict resolution is to prepare people to minimize the disruption and damage that might occur when disagreements erupt. The learners' (L4:S3) statements supporting the aforesaid finding are as follows:

> Peace education is the capacity to educate people about peace and to teach them that not everything can be handled via conflict, but rather by working together and reaching a tee.

The participants also characterized peace education as non-violence education that teaches people mediation skills as a method of resolving conflict without violence. L1:S4 stated:

> If two learners are arguing... we speak about the situation.

One learner L2:S2 mentioned the importance of spreading love and giving love to others.

> This was a crucial ingredient in attaining peace. We are compelled to treat others with justice and fairness because we love them.

According to L4:S4, love is an essential virtue that informs peace education.

> Basically, the notion of peace education to me is dissolving the stigma that [violence] produces towards one another and bringing and simply spreading peace, just by teaching love through education. Love is what you promote. What you're talking about is love. So essentially, education is used to educate and enlighten learners about love.

Based on the participating learners' perceptions of peace education, it would be reasonable to conclude that peace and peace education are critical for humanity.

Peace education is education on harmony and instilling values of social cohesion (ubuntu)

The sixth theme reveals that peace education was perceived as education that tries to build harmony and inculcate ubuntu principles. Peace education, according to the definition of harmony, attempts to help people cope with their differences, as well as promote good values and the notion of living in harmony.

Learner L1:S3 said:

> Peace education is built on teaching people how-to live-in harmony with one another, which we call ubuntu (Humanity).

According to the findings, the majority of learners identified peace with tranquility, love, respect, friendship, tolerance, solidarity and equality. A joyful existence, a setting devoid of threats of violence, and respect for other beliefs are all concepts associated with peace. Learners thought that peace education should involve developing public knowledge about peace, educating learners how to accept interpersonal diversity and objectively instilling ideals such as solidarity, fairness, respect, and tolerance in learners. The findings are supported by Msila, (2009) indicates that some African-based models such as Ubuntu combined with other universal philosophies can help is combating or lessen violence in schools.

CONCLUSION

The study was undertaken primarily to determine secondary school learners' perceptions of peace education in some selected secondary schools in the Western Cape, South Africa. We conclude, based on the research findings, that most participants had a moderate understanding of the concept of peace education and its aims. Their views of peace education coincided with literature. The study established that participants perceived peace education as education for developing a culture of peace*;* peaceful living; non -non-violence education, human rights issues, conflict resolution education, and education on harmony and instilling values of social cohesion (ubuntu). It is therefore recommended that the school curriculum be scrutinized to ascertain whether it prepares learners who are equipped with peaceful resolution skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the above discourse, the following recommendations are made:

Schools should endeavor to promote peace education in schools to achieve peaceful coexistence by organizing public campaigns for peace education.

Learners should constantly be exposed to the culture of peace through discussion forums, workshops, seminars, and through the provision of guidance/counseling services. In addition, there is a greater need for a deeper inquiry into the disposition of learners towards peace education.

Enough training should be provided to both teachers and learners to be conversant with peace education.

Peace education should develop based on the country's needs and should be integrated into the curriculum.

Various stakeholders (teachers, parents, and every member of society) should each play their role in supporting peace education. Parents needs to enlighten themselves on non-violent parenting and must serve as good role models for their children.

Social media and digital technology should be used to promote peace education.

Future research should assess the strategies that can be employed for ideal school profiles, with a democratic school atmosphere, learners participating in decision-making processes, and teachers, managers, and school personnel serving as positive role models in terms of peace education. Workshops, information exchange, and the development of family centers should all be used to improve school and family collaboration. Other research relating to peace education for teacher education programmes and primary school learners might make a significant contribution to this topic.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares no conflicts of interest in relation to this article.

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Exclusion of Ethnic and Other Minority Language Nationals in Education: A Case of Lesotho's Language in Education Policy

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ABSTRACT

The exclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals within the Lesotho educational system is a cause for concern. In the case of Lesotho, even though language policy as articulated in Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) stipulates that mother tongue shall be used as a medium of instruction from Grade 1-3, it does not clarify as to which and whose mother tongue language. It is against this backdrop that the exclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals in Lesotho education context is explored in this article. Qualitative research methodology was adopted for this study. This study unpacks the policy and how its implementation is difficult due to its exclusion of minority languages. The researchers used a case study research design to critically analyse the contents of Lesotho's language policy. The theoretical framework for this research predominantly draws on social constructionism, inclusive education and translanguaging. The study purposely selected four documents being CAP, Education Sector Strategic Plans of 2005-2015 and 2016-2026 and UNICEF 2016 document for analysis. A content analysis approach was used to analyse the data. The study reveals that in the context of Lesotho, ethnic and other minority language nationals are excluded in education. The education system of Lesotho is, therefore, exclusionist. It is recommended that there should be an ideal language policy to bridge the gap between home and school language(s).

KEY WORDS: Curriculum and Assessment Policy, ethnicity, Language policy, minority group, translanguaging, inclusive education

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Language is a vehicle for access to information and knowledge. It, therefore, has a crucial role in education in that, command of it translated to teaching and learning is not only key to classroom communication but also to pupils' acquisition of knowledge. It has shown that types of education based on mother tongue significantly increase the chances of educational success and give better results (Charamba, 2020).

It is essential to indicate that each nation is expected to have its own language policy. This is significant because in language policy, governments can either include or exclude ethnic and other minority language nationals. It is through the language policy that the government of a certain state is at liberty to give one or more languages

power over the others. In Slovenia for instance, about the integration of immigrants and their descendants, society's attention, and often that of the immigrants themselves, is directed mainly towards mastering the language of the host country (Beŝter & Medveŝek, 2015). This, however, shows that regardless of how paramount language is in a society, little attention is paid to the learning and development of ethnic and other minority group languages.

In the study conducted in Nigeria, Ndimele (2012) discovered that there is no robust and well-articulated language planning framework in the country but only a language provision of the National Policy on Education. This reinforces the operation of language in education planning process, which unfortunately does not guarantee or strengthen literacy in the indigenous languages especially the so-called minority languages of Nigeria. Similarly, Viriri (2003) maintains that every language represents a special way of viewing human experience and the world itself. Where minority languages are overwhelmed by "big" languages, it is only through well-articulated language policy and planning that can arrest eminent crisis of extinction of the minority languages. Homogeneously, Mensah and Offiong (2004) uphold that the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around is best done and realised in the languages in which the students are more familiar. These then, show that there is a need for inclusion of ethnic and other minority group languages in education through well-pronounced language policies.

Lesotho is not an exception in that the 1993 Constitution of Lesotho shows that there are only two official languages mainly English and Sesotho. The Constitution of Lesotho, however, is silent about other languages present in the country such as Ndebele, isiXhosa and Phuthi to mention but a few. Apart from this, MoET (2009) stipulates that mother tongue shall be used as a medium of instruction in primary education from Grade 1 to 3, but it does not specify as to which and whose mother tongue. Correspondingly, MoET (2005) in its document of Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2005-2015 shows position of the state on language and education. It is mentioned in the plan that a baseline assessment of Grade 3 and Grade 6 students in 2003 was carried out and the Grade 6 levels of achievement for Sesotho and English were 58 per cent and 45 per cent respectively.

As articulated in the plan, children from minority language communities indicated that the Ministry promised to produce and procure materials for children of minorities such as Xhosa, Ndebele, Baphuthi and Batlokoa to enable them better access to existing knowledge using their main language of communication (UNICEF, 2016). It is against this backdrop that we acknowledge in this article that the inclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals in Lesotho education is a cause for concern.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marginalization of ethnic minority languages is universal. This concern forced vast nations to address it. Van Dyken's (1990) study advocates that for decades in many African countries, pragmatism and politics have dictated that the choice of languages for literacy and primary education should be the colonial languages being French, English or Portuguese. In some settings, certain African languages of wider communication have been selected, including Swahili in Kenya and Tanzania and Hausa in Nigeria. However, for most African languages, educational materials have never been developed in terms of which languages take priority in educational system.

Ndimele's (2012) study conducted in Nigeria discovered that there is no robust and well-articulated language planning framework in the country but only a language provision of the National Policy on Education. This reinforces the operation of language in education planning process, which unfortunately does not guarantee or strengthen literacy in the indigenous languages especially the so-called minority languages of Nigeria.

A similar observation is that Lesotho is one of the countries with different minority groups. In Lesotho, research shows that education is exclusionist (Matlosa, 2009; Kometsi, 2014). For instance, Matlosa (2009) shows that 10% of citizens in Lesotho being Batlokoa, Basia, Bataung, Matebele, Bathepu and Baphuthi demonstrates the presence of minority languages such as Setlokoa, Setebele, Sephuthi and Sethepu in the country. Matlosa (2009) further points out that the Lesotho constitution of 1993 is silent about the minority languages in Lesotho. Additionally, Matsoso (2002) in Matlosa (2009) portrays that minority languages in Lesotho are continually being neglected resulting in depriving their speakers of the linguistic rights, hence the present situation confined the use of these minority languages only at home. Kometsi (2014) observes that Lesotho has four indigenous languages, even though it is known as a homogeneous country. These languages are Sesotho, siPhuthi, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and Sign Language. Apart from Sesotho, these other indigenous languages are not "taught or used as a medium of instruction in schools anywhere whatsoever" (Kometsi, 2014, p. 120).

In the same manner, MoET (2009) specifies that "Sign Language and its use in the teaching and learning shall form an integral part of the new language policy in order to ensure access to information and effective communication." (p. 8).

Based on the foregoing, it can reasonably be assumed that the actual teaching and learning and curriculum content in Lesotho's education system will include the learning needs of ethnic minority languages backgrounds. However, it is still not clear as to which and whose mother tongue to be used, although as early as 2009, the Ministry of Education and Training had already pronounced the use of mother tongue. It is, therefore, not surprising that almost ten years later UNICEF (2016) still questions the use of mother tongue from Grade 1 to 3. The question that emerges and seemingly remains unanswered is, could it be because they did not specify which and whose mother tongue? An understanding of which and whose mother tongue to use in the early years of primary education is the chief focus of this article.

In the light of the above-mentioned gaps, it is pertinent for this article to draw on literature concerning the inclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals in education system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews literature on ethnic minority language situation in education system of different countries, the inclusion of sign language in education as well as the theoretical framework upon which the problem is addressed.

Ethnic minority language situation in education systems of different countries

Ethnic minority languages are a cause for concern worldwide. UN (1992), in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, stipulates that states shall protect the existence and the

national or ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity of minorities within the respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity. In Slovenia, Čok (2001) indicates that the constitution and legislation of the Republic of Slovenia guarantee to every citizen of the country fundamental human rights including the rights to use his or her mother tongue, to maintain and develop his or her culture and national particularities, while special protection is provided for the members of the autochthonous Italian and Hungarian national minorities. The constitution guarantees them special common rights such as free use of their mother tongue in private and public life, use of their national symbols, establishment of their own organisations, development of their own cultural activities and information and education in their own language, participation in matters of public concern through their representatives in parliament and local government as well as free communication with their parent nation. Contrary to this, in Lesotho, MoET (2009) designates that mother tongue shall be used as a medium of instruction from Grade 1-3 but it does not specify which or whose mother tongue unlike in Slovenia where special protection is provided for indigenous languages.

The marginalisation of other languages within a given society is trending globally. This, Pinnock (2009) strengthens by stating that most of the countries across the globe have different linguistic and cultural groups. Yet, systems in those countries deem other languages more important over other languages which are spoken by smaller groups of people. This results in cutting many children off from their culture and being forced to spend their time in school trying to grasp the language used instead of building new knowledge. This struggle by learners from minority language groups compels most learners to eventually drop out of school.

On the same note, this is fortified by Van Dyken (1990) who alludes that millions of African children find their first days at school incomprehensible as they adjust to not only strange environment of school but also to a teacher who cannot speak their language. Ndlovu (2011) observes that most of the learners from the minority languages end up dropping out of school as early as before completing their primary education. This, according to Ndlovu (2011), emanates from the challenge of the transition from the home to the school environment and the inability to cope with the medium of instruction. Therefore, "until the official minority languages have a place in the classroom, high illiteracy rates, low enrolment and retention rates, and high failure and dropout rates will continue unabated among learners who speak the official minority languages" (Ndlovu, 2011, p. 232).

Matlosa (2010) observes that many African countries ignore minority languages and signed languages are usually omitted from the constitutions and hardly considered in language policies. Grounded on this, we contend that it is important to include the minority groups in the education system of each country. For, this can be very helpful not only to the children who struggle at schools to understand the concepts taught there but also to the countries as well since children who go to school will be mainly building new knowledge, as a result minimising the high dropout rate.

Interestingly, children from ethnic and other minority language backgrounds are expected to know the school language in their early years of primary education. Studies show that mothers take cautions to raise their children in the “school” language, rather than their own native tongue. This is to ensure that their children will have a head start as they enter primary or even pre-school (UN, 2010). Smith (2003) asserts that in Malaysia, the

national language policy established Bahasa as the official language but also includes provision for the use of the nation's numerous other languages, including those of the indigenous minorities, if parents request it and that there are at least fifteen students to make up a mother-tongue class. The author continues to demonstrate that for years only two language communities (Tamil and Mandarin) were acting on the provision. However, lately, several indigenous people groups concerned about the decline of their ethnic language among younger generation, have begun language development and/or mother tongue education programmes. To add to this, World Bank (2005) in Dooly, Vallejo and Unamuno (2009), announced that 50% of the world's out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever used at home. This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving Education for All (EFA) which is a legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of drop out and repetition. Reflecting on this, it is important to include ethnic minority languages in education policy to avoid high levels of drop-out-of-school children. Again, the inclusion of ethnic minority languages in education addresses one of the EFA goals as stipulated in MoET (2005) that by 2015, all children in different circumferences and those belonging to ethnic minorities should have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Each nation is expected to take appropriate measures to include ethnic minority languages in their education systems. This is supported by UN (1992), which portrays that states should take suitable measures so that wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have satisfactory opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue. Even though Baubock (2002) contends that sometimes in public discourse immigrant languages are seen as a source of problems and barriers to the integration process, but the knowledge of the majority language is considered a source of enrichment and a pre- requisite for integration (Extra & Yagmur, 2004). Echoing the same sentiments, Marupi, Tshotsho and Nhongo (2021) eloquently argue that language in education policies is political. In Zimbabwe, there are 16 languages of which only English, Ndebele and Shona enjoy the supremacy, especially in education. Therefore, "because Sotho, Venda, Kalanga, Nambya, Tonga and Xhosa are found in Matebele land, they were deliberately excluded because they were considered to be dialects of Ndebele, yet they differ linguistically, culturally and historically" (Marupi et al., 2021, p.141). According to Ndlovu (2011), Ndebele and Shona are used as medium of instruction in the foundation phase, and they are also taught as subjects. In the same vein, Marupi et al. (2021) argue that English, Shona and Ndebele still remain the major languages and continue to obscure other local languages even in areas where the original inhabitants of the area do not speak these languages as their L1.

In the context of Nigeria, Ndimele (2012) discovered that there is no robust and well-articulated language planning framework in the country but only a language provision of the National Policy on Education. This reinforces the operation of language in education planning process, which unfortunately does not guarantee or strengthen literacy in the indigenous languages especially the so-called minority languages of Nigeria. Viriri (2003) reiterates the same point by maintaining that every language represents a special way of viewing human experience and the world itself. Where minority languages are overwhelmed by "big" languages, it is only through well-articulated language policy and planning that

can arrest eminent crisis of extinction of the minority languages. Following this, in Lesotho, MoET (2009) seems to address the importance of language by stipulating in the CAP under National Goals of Education that language policy shall be accessible in relation to medium of instruction as well as effective communication, but it is silent pertaining to which and whose mother tongue. Hence one of the interests of this article is to find out which and whose use of mother tongue is referred to in the policy. At this point, it is noteworthy to look at the inclusion of sign language in education in the section which follows.

The Inclusion of Sign Language in Education

Minority languages around the world including sign language are under threat. As put by Jones (2014), all languages, spoken or signed are at imminent risk if there is no intergenerational transmission from parent to child, as stated by Fishman, a renowned linguist and instigator of a scale to measure at what level of endangerment languages are fixed and how to address the problem. The author further points out that since approximately 5% of parents of deaf children are themselves deaf, this means that sign language is automatically at risk unless steps are taken to ensure transmission from one generation to the next. The study conducted by Jones (2014) displays that British sign language, for example, has only around 1000 deaf children who use it "to some extent" from a potential of approximately 42000 deaf children in Britain. It can be understood from this that there are gaps which need to be filled by both the society and classroom practices. Hence the implication is that sign language is at risk of fading if it is not taught or passed on to the younger generation leading to little attention being paid to it in the education system. This article seeks to find out how inclusive the language policy is in Lesotho education system given that MoET (2009) seems not to be specific about the use of sign language in the current policy rather expressing the use of sign language forming an integral part of teaching and learning processes in the new language policy.

It is worth noting that the Republic of Zambia and of South Africa are examples of few countries which have saluted ethnic minority groups in their education systems. Mulondo (2013) pronounces that in Zambia, the government through the Ministry of Education recognises the rights of persons with disabilities, the deaf inclusive, to have access to good and quality education. Through the 1996 policy document, the Ministry of Education stresses the need to ensure that there is equality of educational opportunities for children with special needs. The policy further emphasises the need to provide education of particular good quality to pupils with special educational needs (Ministry of Education, 1996). The Ministry speaks of the principle of integrating the special needs children to the greatest extent possible in the mainstream schools. Yet, they have made no special provisions to cater for the special communication needs of the deaf which is sign language in mainstream classes. Mulondo (2013) states that there are still challenges for learners with hearing impairment when it comes to the language of teaching and learning. In Munali secondary school in Zambia, for instance, deaf children were put in mainstream classes without teachers being given proper training to handle such classes. This says that the Ministry has not fully prepared for such learners in terms of their competence in education even though the 2011 Education Act provides for the fact that educational institutions shall use sign language as a medium of instruction to any learner who uses sign language as the learner's first language or who has special need for sign language. It is, however, unfortunate that

even at teacher training level, the main institutions of learning in Zambia which provide training programs for the teachers of the deaf, sign language is not given the prominence it deserves in the curriculum. It has been dropped as a core course for Certificate students who progress to Diploma level. They do not see the need for it.

A study conducted by Matlosa (2009) highlights that after their independence, the new South African Constitution of 1996 elevated nine African languages to official status in addition to the three which were the only official languages. Kamwangamalu, 2004 in UNICEF (2016) posits that the new language policy spelled out in the 1996 Constitution, "accords official status to 11 languages: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu… All official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and be treated equitably". The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996b), the White Article 6 (DoE, 2001) and the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) have elevated the status of South African Sign Language (SASL) as it was declared the medium of instruction and a home language for deaf learners. In Chapter 2, the Constitution declares that "Everyone has a right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where the education is reasonably practicable" (29(2)). The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) also points out that "A recognised Sign Language has the status of an official language for purposes of learning at a public school" (Chapter 2, 6(4)). Mokala and Sefotho (2022) view this as an inclusive approach which advocates for social justice, where deaf learners are empowered and accommodated in education. As Glaser and Pletzen (2012) put it, SASL is the mediator as it bridges the gap between the hearing and the deaf, more especially in a multilingual South African educational context. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Lesotho. Since her independence in 1966, English and Sesotho remained the only two official languages in the country, hence the niche for inclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals in Lesotho education system seems to be of concern.

Significantly, mother tongue language of every group must be taken into consideration for ethnic and other minority language nationals to be placed in any education system. Kioko et al. (2014) observe that many children in African countries enter school to face foreign language as a medium of instruction, ignoring the body of research which has proven the benefits of the use of home languages in education. However, many recent report materials point out that the use of mother tongue bridges the gap between school and community (UNESCO, 2011; Awasthi, 2004). This highlights the importance of mother tongue language in any education system, hence MoET (2009) displays that mother tongue shall be used from Grade 1 to 3 in lower primary schools. Likewise, many others view mother tongue as a way to redefine education systems with broader efforts to democratise, pluralise, and reconstruct public lives. In doing so, it addresses the needs of those who traditionally have been excluded from the dominant education discourse and counters the effects of language "unplanning" (Giri, 2011). Based on this, it is of essence to find a place of ethnic and other minority language nationals in education because learners, especially from the ethnic minority groups will have the opportunity to freely decide on the language that best meets their learning needs. Hence the chief focus for this article is on which and whose mother tongue to use from Grade 1-3 in the lower primary education in Lesotho.

Despite all these, it is evident from literature that for the ethnic minority languages to be catered for in the education system, they can be presented as optional subjects which learners can be at liberty to learn using them. Tumbahang (2010) fortifies this by signifying that indigenous languages should be introduced in schools at least as elective subjects. Other authors like Rai (2009) also add that the concept of regional languages should be developed. These then would indicate the importance of all the languages spoken in an education system of a particular society not stamping power on one or few languages in that society. Again, the idea of raising the regional languages can be valuable in that no language would be marginalized and that would lead to the inclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals in Lesotho education which is worrisome currently. The next section analyses the theoretical framework that is used in this article to examine the inclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals in education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purposes of this article, social constructionist, inclusive education and translanguaging frameworks are used to understand how ethnic and other minority language nationals can be included in Lesotho's language policy. Galbin (2014) explains that social constructionism theory deals with subjects such as culture and society; in this case, ethnic and minority language nationals. This theory as Galbin (2014, p. 82) puts it, "…sees the language, the communication and the speech as having the central role of the interactive process through which we understand the world and ourselves." We find this framework to be relevant since ethnic and other minority language nationals are excluded in the education system of Lesotho. We argue that learners' mother tongue language as stipulated in CAP (MoET, 2009) should be used as a medium of instruction from Grade 1-3. This because we are of the opinion that, for learners to be able to interact through the language which they understand in order to follow what is being taught at school, their mother tongue should be used.

For inclusive education, the theory denotes a change in attitudes, school ethos change to address all learners' needs, teaching approaches to be diverse, assessments reformed and inclusive policies (Mosia, 2014). More, Mokala (2021, p. 19) explains inclusive education as "…an effort to structure a school environment in a way that accommodates and addresses learners' needs. It also strives for the removal of all barriers that may prevent the learner to participate fully in learning." Language can become a barrier when it excludes the minority, therefore, making use of learners' languages reduces that. As Mokala (2021) notes, the inclusion of minority languages in language policy is a move towards the country's language policy to strengthen the capacity to respond to the diverse nature of the learner population effectively.

Translanguaging advocates for the use of learners' Languages as mediums of instruction. Mokala, Matee, Khetoa and Ntseli (2022) define translanguaging as an innovative pedagogy that is employed to address diversity in multilingual classrooms. In this article we find translanguaging framework relevant as we advocate for the inclusion of minority languages in teaching and learning. Makalela (2015) concurs that translaguaging is an inclusive alternative teaching strategy that maximises teaching and learning. Moreover, Khetoa, Mokala and Matee (2023, p. 156) reiterate, "Language is an important tool that facilitates the project of teaching and learning." Hence, we argue for inclusion of minority languages in the Lesotho education system.

These frameworks were employed to investigate how the current language policy in CAP affects the education of students from ethnic and other minority language nationals in Lesotho.

METHODOLOGY

The inclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals in Lesotho education context is explored in this article through qualitative design method adopting documented content analysis. Qualitative studies characteristically call for the need to understand the research phenomenon in the voices of the people most directly affected by the status quo (Leedy & Ormrod, 2009 in Matsoso, 2020). Qualitative design as expressed by Wyse (2011) is a primarily exploratory research design used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations hence document analysis was employed as a method of qualitative data analysis. In this study qualitative data were analysed using content analysis method (Kariyana, Maphosa & Mapuranga, 2017). Hamad, et al. (2016) in Sengai and Mokhele (2021) refer to content analysis as a research method which allows the qualitative data collected in research to be analysed systematically and reliably so that generations can be made in relation to the categories of interest to the researcher. Adding to this assertion is Leedy and Ormrod (2005), who state that document analysis is a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases. This method was considered appropriate and as "…the main mechanism by which data was analysed" (Machingambi, Nkomo & Gwandure, 2021, p. 70) in this article because official documents from MoET have been dealt with. These documents were explored with the aim of analysing language policy as laid in CAP and they as well form the population of the study. This population of the study was selected depending on the nature of the article. The population and analysis of the study were based on language policy as placed in CAP, Education Sector Strategic Plans of 2005-2015 and 2016-2026 and UNICEF 2016 document.

Sample

Purposive sampling was utilised for identification and selection of information rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest in this article. The sample was drawn from different sections of four documents being CAP, Education Sector Strategic Plans of 2005-2015 and 2016-2026 and UNICEF 2016 document. According to Brown and Saunders (2008), a sample is a group of cases selected from the complete set or population with the purpose of revealing things about the population. In line with Brown and Saunders (2008), Cohen et al. (2007) describe sample as a subset of a population which occurs because of a researcher's inability to test all the individuals in each population. Therefore, we selected those sections of the chosen documents which are related to the phenomenon of interest in this study. Research questions and the purpose of the study guided us in choosing the sections to analyse for the current study as Lodico et al.'s (2006) advice. We used purposive sampling because we selected the sections which served the purpose of the study being language policy from the four selected documents (Teddie & Yu, 2007 in Chabaya et al., 2014). Adopting Maree's (2016) view, there were predetermined criteria relevant for the purpose of the study in selecting the documents. Having established the sample chosen for the current study, in the next section we discuss the analysis of the generated data.

Analysis

Table 1: Analysis of different documents

The following table illustrates a summary of different sections of four documents being CAP, Education Sector Strategic Plans of 2005-2015 and 2016-2026 and UNICEF 2016 document.

CAP 2009	EDUCATION SECTOR STRATEGIC PLAN (2005-2015 AND 2016-2026)	UNICEF 2016
Language policy: mother tongue will be used as a medium of instruction up to class 3 while English will be taught as a subject at this and other levels. From Grade 4 English shall begin to be used as a medium of instruction and to be taught as a subject as well.	**2005-2015:** Under mission, Goals and Objectives: Goal (ii), Ensuring that by 2015, all children particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.	**Language Policy in Education:** Sesotho features in the education system as the medium of instruction from Grade 1-3 but switches to English in Grade 4 even though approximately 75% of the population of Lesotho do not speak English.
National Goals of Education: Goal 7: accessible language policy in relation to medium of instruction as well as effective communication.	**2016-2026 SDG4:** ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.	
Curriculum Aims of Basic Education: Aim 1: have acquired communication skills of listening, speaking and writing in Sesotho and English and apply them in everyday life.	**Mission Statement (2016-2026):** To enhance the system that will deliver relevant and inclusive quality education to all Basotho effectively, efficiently and equitably.	
Organisation of School Curriculum: under learning area of linguistic and literary, compulsory subjects are Sesotho and English.		

Source: MoET; 2009, 2005; 2016 and UNICEF 2016

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

This article is designed to analyze different sections of four documents: CAP, Education Sector Strategic Plans of 2005-2015 and 2016-2026, and UNICEF 2016 document. Table 1 indicates that the first column represents selected sections under CAP 2009; language policy, national goals of education aim, curriculum aims of basic education, and organisation of school curriculum. The second column embodies designated sections under Education Sector Strategic Plans for 2005-2015 and 2016-2026 while the last column presents a selection of

a particular section under the UNICEF 2016 document.

The information displayed in the table above shows that under language policy CAP portrays that mother tongue shall be used as a medium of instruction from Grade 1-3 but it is not specific about which and whose mother tongue to use (MoET, 2009). Kolobe and Matsoso (2020) affirm the foregoing statement that "English is used as a language of business and administration. It is further used as a medium of instruction in schools from Grade 4 to tertiary. Sesotho, on the other hand, is used as a medium of instruction from Grade 1 to 3 because it is mistakenly regarded as the only mother tongue in Lesotho". Yet, there are other languages for the minority in Lesotho. Again, although the government of Lesotho's commitment under National Goals of Education is to promote and support accessible language policy in relation to medium of instruction as well as effective communication, the policy is silent about which and whose mother tongue to use.

Under Curriculum Aims of Basic Education (MoET, 2009), ethnic and other minority languages are excluded since learners are expected to have acquired communication skills in Sesotho and English and apply them in everyday life. Also, under Organisation of School Curriculum, ethnic and other minority languages are left out since for Linguistic and Literary learning area, only English and Sesotho have been selected as compulsory languages (MoET, 2009).

With respect to Education Sector and Strategic Plan 2005-2015, children belonging to ethnic minorities are incorporated in the Mission, Goals and Objectives in that it was mentioned that as put by MoET (2005), by 2015, all children particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities would have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality. However, it is not specific in terms of what medium of instruction is to be used. We argue that the exclusion of minority languages in education brings the gap to the advocation for inclusive education practices.

It is worth noting that the Ministry of Education and Training evens up with SDG 4 in that it reinforces the commitment to improving the quality of education and the important role that education can play in supporting the development of more just and inclusive societies (MoET, 2005). Lastly, UNICEF (2016) under Language Policy in Education maintains that Sesotho, which is the national language in Lesotho, features in the education system as the medium of instruction from Grade 1-3 but switches to English in Grade 4 even though approximately 75% of the population of Lesotho do not speak English. This document, however, is silent about ethnic and other minority languages. Therefore, our contention is that the exclusion of minority languages does not promote and protect the languages as advocated by translanguaging pedagogy and social constructionism.

DISCUSSION

Implications of the analysis are discussed for the inclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals in education. Based on the findings, the inclusion of language policy in CAP 2009 which states that mother tongue shall be used in primary level from Grade 1-3 portrays that CAP in MoET (2009), on one hand, seems to be aligned with SDG 4 whose mandate is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." On the other hand, the education system seems to be exclusionist, hence clarity is sought pertaining to whose mother tongue, whether for the learner or the

teacher. According to Matlosa and Matobo (2007), this has been a problem since time immemorial. "For a long time, the education system in Lesotho has socially excluded persons with disabilities since it was heavily skewed in favour of those who were socially considered to be abled" (Matlosa & Matobo, 2007, p.191).

On a lighter note, sign language has received some attention as sign language dictionary was produced recently. Kometsi (2014, p.120) further affirms that "The Lesotho sign language is luckier as an emerging language to have attracted the attention of the authorities for just recently a dictionary of Lesotho sign language was produced." Lesotho language policy points to the use of sign language being included and elevated to the status of official languages. Many research studies conducted in Lesotho give contradictory reports (Matlosa & Matobo, 2007; Matlosa, 2009, 2010). Matlosa (2010) explains that the language policy considers English and Sesotho as official languages, assuming that Basotho learner population is bilingual and makes use of oral methods of communication. Kometsi (2014, p.120) shares the same sentiments that "The Constitution of Lesotho recognises Sesotho and English as the only official languages in the country." Therefore, other languages and the method of communication are excluded. Thus, we adopt Cenoz and Gorter's (2017) contention that that "these languages are vulnerable, and their future is not always secure" (p. 904).

Matlosa's (2009) study found out that deaf learners drop out of school very early because teachers lack language skills to include them in their classrooms. In addition, schools that cater for their needs are expensive and many people are not even aware of their existence. This is a contradiction of what the language policy and the strategic plan stipulate. Therefore, this study argues that there are differences between policy and implementation. The Education Sector Strategic Plan of 2016-2026 SDG4 articulates that it will "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." The feasibility of this goal is questionable when the education system does not consider learners' home languages. Another area of concern is that the constitution itself ignores learners' home languages by not including them as official languages to be used to acquire scientific knowledge.

The exclusion of some learners in successfully participating in education is further strengthened by MoET (2009) since for organisation of school curriculum, under learning area of linguistic and literary, compulsory subjects are Sesotho and English. Choosing these two languages as compulsory subjects has an implication that learners from minority languages are not considered and are mostly disadvantaged in the classroom (Charamba, 2021). The language policy also stipulates that Sesotho will be used as a medium of instruction up to class 3. This is contradictory to the National Goals of Education: Goal 7 which indicates that there is a need for "accessible language policy in relation to medium of instruction as well as effective communication". We therefore see this as a threat to inclusive education's mandate to respond and address diversity in education. The question remains, how do we expect effective communication in a classroom where learners are taught in the medium of instruction which is not their mother tongue? Adopting Charamba's (2021) view, education planners and curriculum designers impose norms which are not appropriate for all the learner population. English as a medium of instruction among black learners is largely responsible for their inadequate educational performance, particularly since most of these learners do

not have the required skills in the language (Webb, Lafon & Pare, 2010). In view of this, there is a need therefore, "for the development and implementation of language-in-education policies which address the basic educational and sociolinguistic realities" (Webb et al., 2010, p. 275).

Research has shown that language is also an important causal factor of poor performance (Webb et al., 2010; Charamba, 2020). When the language of teaching and learning is foreign, it distorts knowledge acquisition, "the general acquisition of knowledge and skills is restricted; the resources learners bring to school (not only experiences, views, beliefs, but also linguistic resources) are ignored and not utilized; and meaningful co-operation between the school and the parents is constrained" (Webb et al., 2010, p. 280). The use of learners' home languages in education is an inclusive pedagogic practice that provides opportunities for enriching learning environments (Mokala, 2021). As such, the exclusion of minority languages in education is unjust and undemocratic. The study argues that using learners' home languages in classrooms promotes high-quality classroom practice which enhances their development and learning (Soukakoua, Evangeloub & Holbrookeb, 2018, p. 1124).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having scrutinised the language situation in Lesotho for the inclusion of ethnic and other minority language nationals, the discovery is, the Lesotho education system is exclusionist in that the language policy in CAP 2009 is uncommunicative pertaining to which and whose mother tongue to use as a medium of instruction in lower primary levels. To this end, we hope that the article has hatched insights for further exploration on the inclusion of ethnic minority languages in Lesotho education system.

Regarding the findings, it is recommended that:

There should be an inclusive national language policy whereby indigenous languages in the country are all promoted to a national level to be used in all public functions, including education, administration, judiciary, politics and media.

The government of Lesotho should therefore recognise and standardise ethnic minority languages as a sign of acknowledging their speakers as human beings and legitimate citizens of Lesotho.

Institutions of higher learning especially teacher training institutions, should also offer programmes that are inclusive of ethnic and other minority languages.

Further investigation on other aspects of ethnic minority language nationals is recommended.

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An Autoethnography of the Feminist Pedagogical Strategies Used in Teaching and Learning to Promote Inclusive Classrooms.

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ABSTRACT

Although institutions of higher learning in South Africa have made progress in policies and programming that curb the ideological hegemonic positions inflicted by the Apartheid education system, higher education is still grappling with gender inequalities and inequities in the classroom context. This article reflects on my journey and pedagogical experiences as a student and later a feminist lecturer. Feminist pedagogues are promising approaches for social transformation in institutions of higher learning. I focused on my experiences, exploring the tensions that have shaped my praxis. I employed an auto-ethnographic research approach through an autobiography research method to illustrate my experiences as I transitioned from being a student to a tutor and a feminist lecturer within institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Findings from this paper show that to disrupt normative classrooms, lecturers need to harness classroom strategies that can enhance inclusion, equity, social justice, and equality. These might include but are not limited to reflexive journaling, negotiating, and listening, dialogue, mutual vulnerability to challenge conventional power relations in institutions of higher learning. The article recommends that feminist pedagogy can work towards solving potentially unequal relations and discriminatory learning environments. This can be done by disrupting normative power hierarchies in the classroom by allowing both lecturers and learners to negotiate the process of 'being listened to and 'being heard in the teaching and learning environments and thus creating room for plural voices and more inclusive learning spaces.

Keywords: Feminist Pedagogy, Gender, Auto- Ethnography, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

In 2011 the Department of Basic Education in South Africa mentioned the need to infuse social justice and human rights in their teaching and learning by developing an awareness of diversity and challenging the remaining patriarchal power relations in the curriculum and pedagogical practices (Department of Basic Education, 2015). Institutions of higher learning are still grappling with gender equity and disparities therefore, promoting diversity and challenging the dominant curriculum and pedagogical practices are imperative. Furthermore, there are many challenges that are experienced in institutions of higher learning including a high student-lecturer ratio, high workloads, and unpreparedness of first-year students. Akala and Divala (2016) argue that women suffered from triple marginalization (class, race, and sexism) due to hegemonic and ideological positions that were marred in the apartheid context. Although the South African higher education terrain has been progressive towards policy and programming, there have been silences on gender issues in the transformation agenda (Fraser, 2005). Hill and St. Rose (2010) advance the argument that gender skewing in institutions of higher education has led to gender inequality and

inequity that comes through the classroom interactions and curriculum which further subjugate women. Informal and formal curricula reinforce stereotypical femininity and masculinity roles that are anchored in the patriarchal ideology. The fees must fall movement from April 2015 represented resistance in the university spaces. It zoomed on sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence which existed in the university context (Matebeni, 2017).

Although the South African government has made progress in increasing enrolment to 1 085 568 in 2018 from approximately 500 000 in 1994 (DHET, 2020;15) black students particularly still experience barriers that inhibit them from accessing education, and those who manage to access education are deterred to perform well. Furthermore, although the country has enacted some progressive policies like the Education White Paper 3 of 1997, some scholars argue that it fails to adequately address hidden gender inequities. Consequently, all disadvantaged students are lumped into one group, and policy and programming fail to not clearly spell out the varying vulnerable groups (Taylor & Yu, 2009). This is exacerbated by minimal or no academic readiness to cope with the university classrooms when first-year students transition from high school to institutions of higher learning (Taylor & Yu, 2009).

Akin to previous citations of Eurocentric traditions, the classroom spaces including the syllabi, instructional strategies, and curricula, privilege and empower hegemonic narratives of dominant groups whilst excluding and oppressing marginalised students (Madden et al., 2016). Hooks (1994) is of the view that classroom spaces operate in what she terms "supremacist capitalists' patriarchy", where realities present claims of epistemic authority rather than a pedagogy that builds on transformational and participatory curricula. In the same way, a report by the South African Department of Education advances the viewpoint that subordinated positions existing in educational discourses and practices are derived from the current group of teachers, teaching the same way they were taught (Department of Basic Education, 2015). There is, therefore, a need for classrooms to progress beyond traditional patriarchal systems by disrupting status quo knowledge constructs (hooks, 1994).

Literature also points to hidden forms of gender equality and discrimination against female students as this is also shown through the underrepresentation of female students in science, technology, and engineering programs (DHET, 2019). Discrimination against female students is further experiences by cyber shaming, sexual harassment, and gendered norms which are not seriously considered, and this leads to the lack of gender awareness that consequently affects their classroom experiences (David, 2019). The above-raised issues reflect how unequal the classroom and university contexts are, therefore, the need to consider utilising feminist pedagogy tenets to promote more inclusive, socially just university classrooms. Based on the above, I intend to share my experiences anchored on feminist pedagogical tenets in my attempt to create inclusive classrooms in institutions of higher learning. I consider myself a feminist teacher despite my gender. My teaching practices are committed to creating a supportive classroom that fosters empowerment and critical consciousness adopting a feminist perspective in my teaching (Hooks, 1994). I aim to contribute to the feminist pedagogical research by clearly articulating how tenets of this philosophical underpinning can promote supportive, socially just learning spaces even in contexts where classrooms are dominated by patriarchal systems and curricula. I highlight through my autoethnographic experience how I draw from feminist principles, and teaching

practices that assist me in fostering a democratic learning environment.

My argument for this paper is that due to the patriarchal stereotypes reinforced in university classrooms, there is an urgent need for the adoption of feminist pedagogical strategies to foster inclusive classrooms by adopting the tenets of this philosophical grounding. Drawing from my experiences, I use the autoethnography research method and combine it with the critical feminist theory which both aim to challenge normative university practices (research and teaching) silencing alternative perspectives. This proposed framework allowed me to present a compelling argument advocating for inclusive practices that foster equitable and inclusive learning environments. I shed light through feminist pedagogical tenets including challenging normative practices, negotiating and listening, reducing power relations between me and my students, reflexivity and mutual vulnerability to challenge oppressive structures, and sharing the benefits of the feminist pedagogy in my teaching.

I agree with Yoon (2021) who advances the notion that feminist pedagogy is a philosophy of teaching and a critical praxis focusing on inclusive, affirmative, and student-centered pedagogy. It further provides organizing principles based on feminist thinking values and motivation. This study aligns with its basic tenets borrowed from Allen, Walker, and Webb (2002). The feminist pedagogy,

- Reform the relationship between the student and the lecturer.
- Promotes Empowerment.
- Build a community of learning.
- Privilege voice (especially marginalized)
- Respect the diversity of experience.
- Challenge traditional pedagogical notions

In this paper, I dissect my experiences as a student and a lecturer showing how I use the feminist pedagogical tenets to challenge conventional power relations that characterize teaching and learning in institutions of higher learning. I briefly give a background orientation of the roots of this teaching philosophy. Feminist pedagogies increasingly became popular due to the failure of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy to integrate feminist values in teaching and learning. I agree with Kiguwa (2017) who advanced the notion that Freire's critical pedagogy mainly focuses on class analysis and does not specifically pay attention to gender thereby warranting liberation. Other identity axes such as race, gender, and sexuality were not captured by Freire's critical pedagogy. Feminist pedagogues have extended his framework by acknowledging that oppressed or oppressor subjects can also be gendered. Though not a toolbox, they provide a basis to question what we teach, how we teach it, what students learn, and how they learn it. Distinctly, feminist pedagogues have received considerable attention due to challenging socio-structural systems that are male-dominated, male-centered, and male-identified in institutions of higher learning (Johnson, 2016).

THEORETICAL GROUNDING

I utilize the Critical Feminist Theory (CFT) that advances the notion that through action, inclusive classrooms, oppressive systems can be disrupted to attain a socially just learning environment (Weir, 2021). It recognizes systems of inequality are interconnected and impact individual experiences and opportunities within educational contexts. It seeks to challenge dominant ideologies, and power structures that do not challenge oppressive norms. The CFT advocates for a democratic classroom and cultivates environments that prioritize equity and social justice (Collins, 2000). The theoretical grounding has shared objectives and principles with Feminist Pedagogy tenets in terms of

addressing hierarchical power structures, providing platforms for student-centred learning, promoting inclusivity, and empowerment, and challenging canonical ways of knowledge construction. Like Egbert and Sanden (2019), my teaching practices aim to build awareness of these oppressive systems and thus, consequently create emancipatory learning platforms where learners can appreciate diversity, and dialogue, and reflect upon their learning and my teaching. In other words, all learners should be made to understand complexities that exist but not subscribe to the gendered differences that favor only female learners but give all students a voice to contribute to their learning environment. This paper rethinks the hierarchical structure by redistributing power. This is achieved by the continued reflective process that I, through this autoethnography as a research methodology, explore and acknowledge that my learners are active co-constructers of knowledge through reflective inquiry and engage actively with the material, they study to enhance their knowledge. This article subscribes to the goals of critical feminist theory that learning should support all voices in the classroom thereby creating a safe, supportive, and engaged environment. The goal is to change the normative patriarchal classroom settings and invest in pedagogies that are more transformative through the content we teach, and ways that we teach, and how the students learn in the democratic classes.

The purpose of this paper is not to add absolute answers, but I aim to discuss potential ways and challenges of utilizing feminist pedagogues using epistemological humility (Barone, 2008). In other words, my aim is to describe and analyse my experiences, realities, and interpretations of my pedagogical journey whilst simultaneously analysing my positionality and praxis within the feminist pedagogies tenets.

METHODOLOGY

As Sparkes (1996,p. 467) alludes, "I attempt to take you too as the reader into the intimacies of my world". Using autoethnography allowed me to reflect and illuminate areas of feminist pedagogies that may well have remained hidden in my teaching. The autobiography is closely related to autoethnography autobiography are narratives by researchers focusing on their own memories, life experiences, and personal history whilst autoethnography allows the researcher to combine autobiography with ethnography zooming into the social context whilst self-reflecting on their own experiences (Sparkes, 2000). The autoethnography follows my experiences as both a student and lecturer from 2009 to date and is written in the style of an "auto-ethnographic narrative" (Tillman, 2009, p.95; Fassett & Warren, 2007). Such an approach allowed me to reflect on how I (often unknowingly) promote or inhibit reproducing power structures in classrooms.

I utilized an autoethnographic method because I had the desire to produce accessible and meaningful research grounded in my personal experiences. Applying autoethnographic writing pragmatically assisted me in fostering pedagogical change, as well as considering transformative practices that can be utilized to constitute social action in my classrooms (Holman-Jones, 2005). I reflect on my own experience so that it can have an impact on other educators in institutions of higher learning. This approach challenges canonical research methods by representing the self in politically and socially just ways. I reflected on my teaching practices to sensitize readers on strategies that can inform inclusive classrooms. This methodological approach fills a gap in traditional research where the researcher's voice is not overly included as part of the research. My integration of autoethnography and feminist pedagogy stems from what Ellis (2011) proposes as

challenging canonical ways of knowledge construction consequently amplifying my voice as the researcher and challenging canonical ways of teaching and learning. By combining the transformative and reflective practices of autoethnography and inclusive and empowering principles of feminist pedagogy, I attempt to create research on teaching and learning that facilitates a more socially just classroom context. This can inspire empathy, and provoke reflection, dialogue, and participation to promote strategies for forging inclusive classrooms.

Whilst acknowledging my position as both the subject and object of this autoethnography, I need to acknowledge that there might be biases in relation to the account of my experiences in the pedagogical journey. To reduce the possibility of bias, I followed up the reflective practice with critical consciousness, action, and transformation as part of the social construction of knowledge as alluded to by Noble and Mcllveen (2012). Furthermore, I make use of peer reviews to ensure a nuanced and balanced representation of my pedagogical journey.

For data collection, I used self-observation data, self-reflective data from journaling practices, and incidences in my teaching that promote inclusive classrooms. I chronologically listed major events that took place in the 10-year period. This assisted me in describing the circumstances and explaining why they were pertinent to strategies that I used to promote inclusive classrooms. I organized the data in chronological order for further analysis. I used descriptive coding to describe my experience in my own words and descriptions and data were presented in themes.

RESULTS

In the following section, I show how I align my teaching practices with the Feminist pedagogies.

Challenging normative educational practices

Educational systems reinforce hierarchical structures and systems through curricula, teaching, and learning practices (Bursuc, 2013). My journey in teaching and learning officially started about a decade ago as a tutor (undergraduate facilitator) at a South African university. As a lecturer, I facilitated my sessions the same way my mentors taught me. In a way, the assessment and curriculum structure were hierarchical, characterized by oppressive ideological norms that held me back thus, making me fail to empower both the tutees and me. Most of the tests and assignments placed significant weight on the student's performance on standardized tests. The tests and examinations I used reduced the complexity of students' critical understanding of the content to numerical scores only, thus framing power relations between me and the students. This fostered the students' reliance on my knowledge as the tutor, robbing them of the opportunity and responsibility to benefit from their personal experience. I must acknowledge the difficulty of the current university systems where grades are evaluated and ranked therefore promoting competition instead of a community of learning. I am acutely aware of the contestations of challenging normative classes, In line with feminist pedagogy and autoethnography. By incorporating feminist pedagogy and autoethnography, I utilise reflexivity to acknowledge my biases I find myself in "liminality" a social construct created by Turner (2017) transitioning from a place of not knowing and getting to know. One of the feminist pedagogy tenets also gives me the opportunity to challenge my previous traditional canon classrooms and aim to promote inclusive classes.

Historically, classroom instruction was designed to retain traditional constructions of the academy (Leithwood & Hed, 2009, p. 436). My classroom instruction has evolved from direct instruction which promotes information processing and is teacher-centered to a combination of social interaction and independent instruction which promotes student-centered teaching and learning strategies. The latter promotes teaching and learning methods like critical thinking, peer learning, dialogues, and reflexivity amongst many inclusive practices.

Challenging Sociological normative in the module I teach

My teaching style is more aligned with Feminist pedagogy as I incorporate an approach that takes into cognisance the scrutiny of content (what is taught), how it is taught (teaching practices), and relationships within the learning environment. In the Gender studies module I teach, the content challenges the Western and patriarchal ideologies which elevate the position that men have been given in classical sociology. Of importance, the material advances the argument that writings on women, sex, and gender in the classical era were only accredited to the "fathers" of sociology (Comte, Marx, Durkheim & Weber). Women were either almost completely ignored or briefly discussed and dismissed despite their contributions. In the early 20th Century, several writers such as Hamilton, Gilman, and Mill challenged the confinement of women in the domestic sphere, but their ideas did not find their way into mainstream sociology. Furthermore, one of the strongest academic criticisms of 'Western' feminism has been that its application to African contexts does not consider some of the gender relations characteristic of African matrilineal contexts. If women in such traditional cultures had a measure of power, then any (early) version of feminism that sees men as always dominant, as in patriarchy, cannot be appropriate for all contexts. At the heart of this Gender studies module, is a political challenge to notions and structures of knowledge and power (Barr,1999 p.113, 115, 123).

Promoting student participation and dialogue in teaching and learning

As a student in 2009, I was invited to an *"incoko"* an IsiXhosa word meaning dialogue to discuss curriculum transformation. This team comprised academics, community members, and representatives of public and private sectors in a South African university I was enrolled. The roundtable discussions were centered on creating a socially just curriculum in a proposed compulsory first-year module. This was the first experience for me as a learner to be involved in a platform where traditional practices were being disrupted giving way to a transformative curriculum. At this point in my academic journey, there was a destabilization of traditional norms of teaching and learning, a process of unlearning dominant hegemonic spaces in education. Prior to this invitation, I was never afforded the opportunity and the platform to be seen or heard in my own learning process. That moment illuminated a stage in my academic journey, the point where pedagogy, power, and politics of knowledge were deconstructed. This is in line with one of the feminist pedagogy tenets advanced by Hooks (1994) on empowerment and agency. Students are given a platform to acknowledge their own voices, knowledge, and skills in acting for social justice. The act of being listened to and hearing others was achieved through several techniques that included problem-solving, collective brainstorming, and critical engagements in transforming curricula. The *incoko* (dialogue) gave me the platform with other selected students, community, and staff members to co-create multidisciplinary knowledge offered through the proposed compulsory module.

In this process of decolonizing the curriculum, I was part of a group that contributed ideas on material and assessments on module content including but not limited to indigenous knowledge systems, poverty and inequality, and HIV/AIDS. This fostered in me and other students critical thinking skills, dialogue, and a platform for meaningful participation in higher education.

I have realised a pattern whereby during the first few weeks, most female students enrolled in the module participate in class. The low enrolment of male students showed how the Gender studies module is an exclusively female terrain therefore, contributing to the reluctance of male students to take gender studies and thus, creating polarised learning spaces by gender in higher education. The male students slowly take part in the engagements from a point of defensiveness on the premise of normative cultural aspects of domination within the private and public institutions that they were socialized in. This indicates ways in which systems an individual is embodied into (sex, race, gender, sexual orientation) affect the way they (both lecturers and students) view phenomena and the meanings that they attach to gender studies.

There is a need to listen to what students say and how they say it because the learning environment needs to facilitate the process of what works, what is beneficial, and what needs to be addressed to improve the learning process (Author, 2014). Put differently, reflection group journaling has the potential to harness student experiences as an entry point for inquiry and to engage students as active participants in the learning process. With such an experience, I concur with Schoeman (2015) who shows that when challenging hegemonic paradigms, learners become epistemic agents with power shared between themselves and instructors as well as amongst learners themselves. These notions become fundamentals to create a forum of democratic education.

Utilising my personal experiences in the classroom contexts

My position as a young black woman is premised on transformation and inclusivity. I am teaching a predominantly black African group with more female than male students. I utilize my personal experiences to explain theories, and the praxis of gender, race as well as sexuality, thus my students know more about me, and this enables a relational teaching and learning context. I concur with Stern (2018, p. 108) who suggests that there is a need to "co-create space with our students to reframe dominant narratives". I further encourage learners to use examples, which premise on their personal experiences and positionalities, thereby promoting critical consciousness. This process decentres the power in classrooms by acknowledging various voices in a socially just manner.

How I use Reflexive Journaling in my classrooms to promote Inclusivity.

For the modules I facilitate as a lecturer, students need to join reflective journaling groups at the beginning of the semester. These groups should be of mixed sex, gender, age, and race to allow the students to negotiate and renegotiate their positionality of oppression and privilege through the celebration of difference. Journaling defies traditional academic ways of writing due to its personal rather than scientific nature and its expressive rather than analytical form (Barnhardt et al., 2003, p.10). It assists both lecturers and learners to reflect and explore meaning through a non-threatening environment that promotes critical thinking skills and builds communities of learning if done in groups.

Each member must get a chance to coordinate the weekly task; thereby, group members share the roles of knowledge experts and decision-makers. The journal reflection entries count as part of their

semester grades, and they are not based on the content but merely on submission. I utilise reflexive journaling as a way of challenging structured classrooms. The first group journal entry is always to discuss and write down their expectations of the module in that semester. This creates module planning which takes into cognisance the students' contributions through their group reflections. Although some students complain about the difficulty of coordinating the group work process, they reported that they felt empowered to take part in the module experience. From my personal reflections on the activities meant for the journals, I give them weekly guiding activities. Upon reflection, there is a need for more autonomy that is where these activities are guided solely by the students to allow them to independently reflect on the feminist agenda. As indicated in my writing, student participation is when they have a platform to be heard and an opportunity to impact discussions and decisions during knowledge creation.

Mutual Vulnerability and discomfort

Warren (2008) and Daniels (2014) consider vulnerability as pertinent in pedagogical praxis. As a lecturer, I always struggled with the notion of vulnerability. I embody my positionality as reflexive and consider the teaching and learning context as a site of struggle. I agree with Stern (2006) who defines emotional authenticity as a state that allows educators to self-critique, acknowledge, and self-reflect in assessing their own pedagogical practices. Using the autoethnographic method allowed me to use my personal experiences to self-reflect and critique my teaching practices. Transformative and socially just pedagogy gives room for critical thought and action by disrupting dominant cultural and societal frameworks, and one such way is by creating mutual vulnerability and discomfort (Vindevoghel, 2016).

In self-reflecting on my pedagogical approach to an online assessment, I was frustrated with some flaws I picked up in my instruction that led to some students not performing well. As a lecturer, I used to give out learning activities without the rubrics or without clearly explaining my expectations from the written work. After attending a staff training session on the importance of rubrics in creating an inclusive learning environment, I went through a self-reflection process. Self-reflection typifies an element of evaluating practice and performance. It opens the courage to be vulnerable by working to ease feelings of vulnerability associated with individual teaching practices to the world. This can potentially benefit student learning (Zinn et al., 2009).

In another incident during my class where a student was applying one of the feminist approaches using their personal experience, two students were whispering and exchanging notes in my class; one was female and the other was male. As their lecturer, I politely asked them to assist us by being scribes. Unfortunately, the male student was resistant, and it dawned upon me that it was an issue of gendered power relations. I consulted my peers regarding this episode, and they advised me to critically reflect on it and engage the student, outside of class. I acknowledge that classrooms are political spaces where individual needs, desires, and interests are derived from either a source of privilege or oppression (Orr, 1997). One might argue that as a lecturer I condoned his behaviour of revealing his masculine attributes, but after engaging with him privately the student realized and acknowledged that his positionality as a male student perpetuates male privilege. Barnhardt et al. (2003) mention that mutual vulnerability requires that students be made aware that a classroom based on feminist principles should promote connection and collaboration rather than hierarchies of competition and vulnerability that often silence female voices. In other words, the

process of mutual vulnerability and discomfort in feminist classes should lead to transformative and socially just learning spaces (Zinn et. al, 2009).

When confronted with sexism or sexist ideas as a lecturer, I allow the learners to voice out their guilt and sometimes anger without losing my temper. This brings us to the most vulnerable space where privileged vulnerability fosters growth and empowerment from an apolitical, marketplace feminist pedagogy. Our positionalities of privilege and oppression as lecturers create narratives that challenge dominant hegemonic identities and institutions to shape our educational experiences. One of the strategies to ensure such a safe but critically conscious environment is to have ground rules that guide inclusive learning to be constructed by the learners themselves. These must incorporate all voices in the critical discourse, without the lecturer or any other student interrupting or dominating the discussions to ensure continued explorations. In such instances, the way I coordinate these engagements as a lecturer will also lead to the decentralization of power between the lecturer and the students or amongst the students themselves, helping to dismantle power hierarchies defined by social position and status, gender, or race within higher education.

How I reform the relationship between me and my students

Feminist pedagogy aims to create a more democratic, participatory, and empowering educational experience that challenges traditional power dynamics and promotes social justice. Although as a lecturer I sometimes regard myself as a tough grader, I allow students to negotiate and in return, I listen. I have learned to listen more and allow the negotiation process to take place. In feminist pedagogies, the voice is the currency of the academy. Students are given the platform to bring questions, comments, and contributions to the curricula, assessment, and pedagogical practices without the instructor being offended. Belenky et al., (1986,p.112) are of the viewpoint that connected knowers use empathy, collaborative and careful listening where they hear the "others" voice. I have therefore learned to create a loving, caring yet critical platform with the freedom to resolve the traditional student relationship hierarchy. This does not necessarily render equality of power in the classrooms, but it is an indication of movement towards a socially just democratic space. I concur with Bright (1993, p.130), who is of the opinion that "regardless of the extent to which a teacher tries to minimize his or her power, it cannot be given away. When institutional power of the lecturer is not acknowledged, the situation is mystified; abuse of power may be obscured rendering students' incapable of naming their experience accurately". Put differently, the instructor redefines their power as a grader to a democratic process that allows the activation of multiple perspectives. The authority, therefore, shifts when feedback is incorporated for students, and they ask questions and interact to create a democratic assessment process. In an article I co-authored with Mahlangu, we advanced the notion that students' voices challenge the dominant ways of learning and provide a critical framework and experience for building a diverse intellectual community as a basis for curriculum renewal (Author, 2014). In the same vein, Hooks also argues that "a classroom should be a place where the difference could be acknowledged, where we could finally understand, accept and affirm our ways of knowing which are forged in history and relations of power" (Hooks, 1994, p.30).

At the beginning of the semester, we (the learners and myself as their lecturer) discuss the grading of their assessments. By communicating and discussing the mark assessment plan, I reduce the power

imbalance between the students and myself. In addition, as their lecturer, I allow feedback on the marking rubrics beforehand, and this gives room for students to take part in the assessment processes. My feminist concern for sharing power and caring in the assessment process is at times compromised by the obsession students have with grades. Students put more emphasis on grades rather than fostering critical consciousness in knowledge acquisition. Quite recently, I had a student who would email me out of concern for her grades rather than learning the skills to become a more critically engaged scholar. After several emails explaining and responding to her concerns, I sent her an email requesting that we go through the submitted work and evaluate the sections that required improvement. She did not revert as most students would and I realised that it was an issue of self-imposed unrealistic high standards measured through grades. This is drawn from a system that grades and labels students with 'distinctions, pass and fails amongst other marks. It is an unfortunate context, and I must keep in mind how I can persuade and invite students into the knowledge we embody. This practice empowers students with both the knowledge and the skills, thus leading toward a more humanised engaged, critical pedagogy that places more emphasis on the process rather than the result.

On my part as a lecturer, I work towards adjusting my assessment practices that give feedback that is more detailed on the submitted assessment. This type of feedback might be time-consuming. If done properly, it allows tracking down students' performance and progress and develops democratic relationships that assist them to gain confidence. As a lecturer, I attempt to give respectful, encouraging rather than negative feedback, that undermines students. Baring my most vulnerable self as a product of the system that I have been part of, initially comes with feelings of discomfort and resistance that feminist pedagogues theorise as part of the learning process.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Findings from this study show that although the institutional contexts remain patriarchal through the context, the content offering emanates from the historical background of the South African education system, I have made efforts as indicated in the findings to create a socially just teaching and learning environment. Practices from the findings which include classroom instruction like reflexive journaling, encouraging dialogue, creating a platform where I and my learners exhibit mutual vulnerability and discomfort, inclusive assessment strategies, and peer learning acknowledge that students are not passive human beings but bring their prior knowledge to the classroom. Furthermore, a popular notion that runs through the chapter of the need to promote student engagement and inclusion be, is one of the cornerstones of feminist pedagogy. This study reveals that using a feminist pedagogical approach may bring positive educational changes through the instructors' negotiation of their own context and praxis. This process is achieved by giving students a voice without perpetuating discourses. Furthermore, creating mutually vulnerable classrooms disrupt the normative hierarchical educational systems. In addition, assessment practices should not be regarded as a one size fits all approach; just as there are varying feminist philosophies, a number of factors like positionality, the sociocultural systems and policies , might also affect the outcomes of incorporating a feminist pedagogy. As Wrigley et al. (2011, p.5) argue, *"…just because schools can't do everything doesn't mean they cannot achieve something, schools can make a difference but not all the difference"*. I consequently harness available opportunities that destabilize the

deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and values in my classrooms to promote a socially just learning environment.

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Open Distance E-Learning System in the Institutions of Higher Learning in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the application of open-distance e-learning systems in the institutions of higher learning to encounter pandemic and student population increase in South Africa. The in-class contact teaching and learning system can have very serious negative effects on students when it comes to a limitation of intake to universities and lockdowns in relation to outbreaks like Covid-19. This study applies the literature to develop a framework for using the open-distance electronic learning system (Open Distance e-learning – ODeL). The study discovered that institutions of higher learning, especially contact institutions, could face risks and disruptions that may result in the suspension of academic programmes. The study provides a framework for the possible adoption of the Open Distance e-learning (ODeL) system by institutions of higher learning. The results of this study will provide alert and guidance to institutions of higher learning about the adoption of open-distance e-learning to accommodate all interested students and ensure continuity of learning during a pandemic like COVID-19. The framework provided will assist institutions of higher learning with the how-to in terms of implementation of Open Distance e-learning in case they decide to adopt it. Learners will be able to get admitted and enjoy learning in any institution of their choice without any limitation due to space shortage and institutions may ensure continuity in teaching and learning for their educational business even during the pandemic.

KEYWORDS: ODeL, open distance education, electronic learning, e-learning system, COVID-19, higher learning institutions

INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher learning are affected by various anomalies every year when it comes to teaching and learning, especially universities that render only class contact lessons in South Africa, including but not limited to the high influx of students' applications for admission and the recent COVID-19 virus, that have recently brought the world to a standstill under lockdown, with governments instructing citizens to remain within their households. The application of virtual or online learning technologies has grown tremendously in the past three decades to transform the modus operandi in the institutions of higher learning based on many reasons including e-pedagogy (Bharuthram & Kies, 2013). "Shifts in technology-enhanced pedagogical practices and in discourses around information and communication technologies (ICTs) have had varying degrees of influence in higher education" (Ng'ambi, Brown, Bozalek, Gachago, & Wood, 2016). Research suggests that online learning has been shown to increase retention of information, take less time, is flexible and adaptable to disruptions and changes such as those imposed by the

coronavirus which might be here to stay (World economic forum, 2020). Zongozzi (2020) also support the statement attesting that "ODeL has gained popularity in the South African higher education sector in recent times". Recently, like it happened across different countries in the universe "South African universities have been forced to transit from face-to-face to online learning (e-learning) as a result of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). However, various challenges hinder disadvantaged students from realising the full potential of e-learning" (Mpungose, 2020).

Seemingly Covid-19 (Coronavirus) has come to change the modus operandi in institutions of higher learning for good. Across the universe more than 1.2 billion students are closed out of their learning institutions at different levels from primary to tertiary levels due to Covid-19, which requires more innovative strategies for continuity in teaching and learning (Krönke, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). The situation became worse to the African countries due to poor infrastructure, lack of technological operational skills and lack of fundamental resources (Krönke, 2020; Krönke and Olan'g, 2020; United Nations, 2019; UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2016). According to OECD policy responses to coronavirus (2020), as a result of the pandemic, training that were planned to be conducted in the classrooms are now shifted to take place online with people encouraged to learn at their own homes or environments. World economic forum (2020) attests that "the Covid-19 has changed education forever". This pandemic called Covid-19 has forced schools to shutdown worldwide and as a results more than 1.2 billion children had to stay at home (World economic forum 2020). World economic forum (2020) further state that as a result of covid-19 "education has changed dramatically, with the distinctive rise of e-learning, whereby teaching is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms". Since the pandemic outbreak requires the application of social distance and lockdown at some stages for citizens, electronic learning (e-learning) may be a way to deal with the situation and may also be used as a solution for other teaching and learning anomalies. World economic forum (2020) state that due to the corona virus pandemic some companies started offering free online learning platform. One may wonder whether this global sudden change from classroom lesson to online platform lessons will bring about a paradigm shift forever in the education system worldwide (World economic forum, 2020), as a permanent solution to several anomalies burdening the educational system since times in memorial. "Although it is too soon for a full assessment, early data and anecdotal evidence suggest a sizeable increase in online learning" (OECD policy responses to coronavirus, 2020).

The concept "anomalies" is defined by Business dictionary (2020) as "a deviation from the norm; something unusual". Merriam- Webster learner dictionary (2020) defines it as something that is not usual or not expected. It is also defined as "something that is unusual enough to be noticeable or seem strange. A person or thing that is different from what is usual, or not in agreement with something else and therefore not satisfactory" (Cambridge dictionary 2020). For instance, in South Africa every learner who is qualified for tertiary education admission is expected to be afforded opportunity for admission to any institution of higher learning of their choice and that is impossible due to high population growth and limited number of tertiary institutions, which result in some students remaining at home or study what is out of their dreams at the institution not preferred by students. On the other side, with or without the coronavirus outbreak students are supposed

to be proceeding with their learning process at different academic institutions of higher learning. This is especially because learners already paid fees for the current academic year of study and repeating their studies to the following year may pose a serious progress delay as their age is going up. This is unlike with the application of e-Learning system to which unlimited number of students may be admitted from different areas annually and the lessons proceedings even during the corona virus pandemic.

Generally, "the use of the term e-Learning is rapidly changing … the content and approaches to e-learning" (Hussin, Bunyarit & Hussein 2009; Queiros and de Villiers 2016). The concept eLearning was explained in the TechLearn Conference held in November 1999 by Elliott Masie as "the use of network technology to design, deliver, select, administer, and extend learning" (ISpring 2019). The introduction of smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices in the beginning of the year 2000, promoted the adoption or application of eLearning since people were able to use such devices for watching videos, e-books reading and even playing several educational games online. Nowadays, mobile devices are popularly used for eLearning, education and running business. eLearning system is always convenient because is always available for the learners with availability of their mobile devices (ISpring 2019). ELearning takes place electronically online with students acquiring knowledge or attending to their lessons using internet and electronic materials and devices (Tamm, 2019).

There are lot of benefits from eLearning, which include convenience, wider coverage, single knowledge base, faster development, easy progress tracing, flexibility, easy to adapt to learners. eLearning may take the shape of many different applications tools such as webinars, video courses, screencast, talking-head video, eBook and articles, conversation simulation, VR simulation, Podcast, Mailing list (ISpring 2019). The other benefit is that with eLearning, students are able to use their own pace and environment in learning, learning is cost effective and efficient (Tamm 2019).

The term was preceded by the use of terms such as "open distance learning, web-based training (WBT), computer-based training (CBT), technology-based learning and online learning" (Hussin, Bunyarit and Hussein 2009). E-Learning has gained extensive popularity in institutions of higher learning, mostly because of high student intakes and annual enrolment which bring about high demand for resources (Jaiyeoba & Iloanya 2019; Liaw 2008; Mutula 2002). The terms "e-Learning" and "online learning" are often used interchangeably in the field. In this regard Eke (2010) points out that they differ in that e-learning may refer to learning through technology and online learning is learning through the web. He further states that, although the two terms are similar because they are both used to refer to distance learning, the differences between them are significant. E-Learning includes many applications such as computer-based learning, web-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration (Burac, Fernandez, Cruz & Cruz 2019; Eke 2010). The learning is delivered through different electronic media such as the Internet, intranets, extranets, satellite broadcasts, audio/video tape, the telephone, interactive television and CD-ROM (Hussin, Bunyarit & Hussein 2009; Eke 2010). By contrast, online learning is rendered through a single mode of technology which effects learning by means of only the "internet, intranet, and extranet" (Eke 2010). It entails learning courses that consist of text and graphics and also include exercises and tests which are marked and scored with recordkeeping online. Advanced

online learning may also cover the application of "animations, simulations, audio and video sequences, peer and expert discussion groups, online mentoring, links to material on a corporate intranet or the web, and communications with the corporate education records" (Eke 2010; Van de Heyde & Siebrits 2019). However, there are many other terms that are used as if they mean the same in e-Learning. In this regard, Hussin, Bunyarit, and Hussein (2009) state the following:

> *The terms distance education and distance learning are often used interchangeably. The definitions for distance learning vary from a term used to describe a more student-centered approach to distance education to a synonym for distance education. Distance education is an instruction that takes place in different locations; that is, the professor and students are separated by distance and time and communicate via media. In distance education courses, the instruction is prepared and packed days, weeks, months, or a year before the act of learning by the student. This time difference creates an environment quite distinct from the typical face-to-face instruction of the college classroom where the teaching and learning take place in the same time frame and with the professor and student in the same room.*

Furthermore, e-Learning can be adopted in two different ways, known as synchronous and asynchronous (Cantoni 2004; Eke 2010). In synchronous e-learning, internet technology is used to conduct class live in order to lecture or interact with students. On this learning platform many things happen as if in a normal physical contact classroom, such as "lessons, assignments, chats, instant messaging, blogging, and forums" (Eke 2010; Hadullo, Oboko & Omwenga 2017), and students are able to ask questions and get a response from the lecturer. The challenge may be an interruption in power supply, loss of network access, or slow system response (Eke 2010), which may result in students frequently lost from class. Teaching and learning in asynchronous e-Learning is totally based on the web or computer, with lecturer and students interacting exclusively on the computer or the web in different times, using either CD-ROM or local area network (Takalani 2008; Eke 2010). The study by Queiros and de Villiers (2016) discovered that eLearning requires the following connections which are fundamentally essential to succeed.

- Strong social presence such as timely feedback, interaction with facilitators, peer-to-peer contact, discussion forums, and collaborative activities).
- Technological aspects such as technology access, online learning self-efficacy, and computer self-efficacy and
- Tools such as websites, video clips, and many more.

"In Africa, e-learning is at its infant stage, but it has some benefits which it offers as a means of increasing access to and improving the quality of education in Africa" (Eke 2010). Hadullo, Oboko, and Omwenga (2017) also attest to that as they underscore that adoption of ICT for educational system enhancement is still left far behind in developing countries. This is due to poor infrastructure relating to electricity supply, computer hardware, and network facilities for an internet connection. Africa is supposed to be dominant in e-Learning since students in countries on the continent are mostly from

marginalized backgrounds and isolated geographical areas of settlement or underprivileged citizens that are also difficult to reach (Jaiyeoba & Iloanya 2019; Teo 2011; Oladokun 2002; Mutula 2002; Queiros & de Villiers 2016; Bharuthram & Kies 2013). "Online learning is a means of reaching marginalized and disadvantaged students within South Africa" (Queiros & de Villiers 2016). Coetzer and Mapulanga (2020) stress that "information and communication technology has changed the face of higher education by facilitating e-learning". This implies that the open distance electronic learning (ODeL) system brings about solutions to many academic challenges faced by institutions of higher learning. Despite the evolution of technologies, many universities in South Africa are still not able to accommodate a large number of students because of limitations in physical space. Yet, information and communication technology (ICT) has created vast opportunities in the way learners and educators acquire and deliver information and knowledge (Eke 2010). The situation forces academic institutions to adopt the current technology to face modern challenges with ease. However, Queiros and de Villiers (2016), underscore that students' situations and perceptions need more attention in developing countries in case institutions of higher learning want to move their learning modus operandi to be rendered through online systems. The institutions should also divine some means to accommodate all students including those that are underprivileged and lacking technological skills without education and learning quality sacrifice.

Technology can assist academic institutions in mitigating the impact of health-threatening pandemic outbreaks like Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Technology will afford institutions the flexibility to offer academic services even when the country is locked down because of an unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak. Unfortunately, COVID-19 revealed the glaring inequality in the South African higher education sector because most historically advantaged institutions (HAIs) had the capability to offer alternative online teaching platforms. On the other hand, the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) with their limited resources and capabilities found it difficult to implement alternative teaching strategies. However, the sudden and unprecedented changes affected staff and students attached to both HAIs and HDIs because there was considerable uncertainty and concern over issues such as skills for virtual learning, connectivity, infrastructure, appropriate devices, and unfavorable study environments for some students.

A synopsis of the higher education sector in South Africa

Currently South Africa has 26 public universities, with the majority rendering in-class contact education. Though some render distance or virtual education partially for selected qualifications, the University of South Africa (UNISA) is the only university in the country that renders full distance learning and teaching, although it also partially provides in-class contact learning and teaching through tutorship. This regularly results in anomalies in admission aimed at accommodating all students and furthering teaching and learning during pandemic outbreaks. This is because with the e-learning system, the university may admit an unlimited number of students without turning any students away, since the limitation is not related to physical space in class, unlike in the case of its in-class contact university counterparts. With e-learning, social distance is always maintained, and this may cater to pandemic outbreaks like COVID-19 when they happen. The universities in South Africa are listed below, in no particular order:

1. University of Fort Hare
2. University of Stellenbosch
3. University of Johannesburg
4. North-West University
5. Rhodes University
6. Nelson Mandela University
7. University of Pretoria
8. Mpumalanga University
9. University of South Africa
10. University of KwaZulu-Natal
11. University of the Witwatersrand
12. University of Venda
13. University of Limpopo
14. Sol Plaatje University
15. Walter Sisulu University
16. University of Cape Town
17. Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences
18. University of Zululand
19. University of the Free State
20. University of the Western Cape
21. Durban University of Technology
22. Cape Peninsula University of Technology
23. Central University of Technology
24. Mangosuthu University of Technology
25. Tshwane University of Technology
26. Vaal University of Technology

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is guided by E-learning theory by Aparicio, Bacao and Oliveira (2016). The theory presents three major categories of system for e-learning, namely "people, technologies and services", see figure 1. The theory elaborates further to say that during teaching and learning there is a possibility of interaction between people and the e-learning system. Different people and groups of learners and teachers can interact with each other directly and/or indirectly through the e-learning system. It is through technology that learning and teaching is made possible through integration or interconnection of teaching and learning content, communication inability and collaborative tools. During e-learning all teaching and learning activities are connected to models of pedagogy and instructional strategies. The E-learning system is expected to provide service through activities as per specifications (Aparicio, Bacao and Oliveira 2016).

The theory presents people as e-learning stakeholders. The people include customers as students and employees; suppliers as teachers, content providers, accreditation bodies, education institutions, and technology providers; professional associations; SIGs as students commission; board and shareholders as education ministry and industry. The theory also presents technologies as e-learning technologies comprising of content, communication and collaboration functionalities. Content focus on documents, digital audio, and video, authoring tools, vitualisation tools, knowledge repositories, search engines, learner online journal/newsletter, learner web post area, web link manager, audio and video capturing, edutainment content, glossary, and assessment. Communication is about content discussion area, forum, chat, social network,

VOIP, synchronous communication and e-mail. Finally, collaboration is about multi-user dialog, sharing tools, ask an expert area, problem/solution area, one on one mentoring. On the other hand, Services is about e-learning activities, which include pedagogical models, and instructional strategies. Pedagogical models include open learning, distributed learning, learning communities, communities of practice, and knowledge-building communities. Instructional strategies entail contextualizing instruction, presenting and cueing content, activating learning processes, activating and assessing learner outcomes, synthesizing and sequencing processes into instructional lessons, promoting or supporting authentic learning activities, facilitating problem-solving, promoting collaboration, supporting role-playing, supporting multiple perspectives, modeling and explaining, scaffolding (Aparicio, Bacao and Oliveira 2016). Figure 1 illustrates the e-learning system theory as per the discussion

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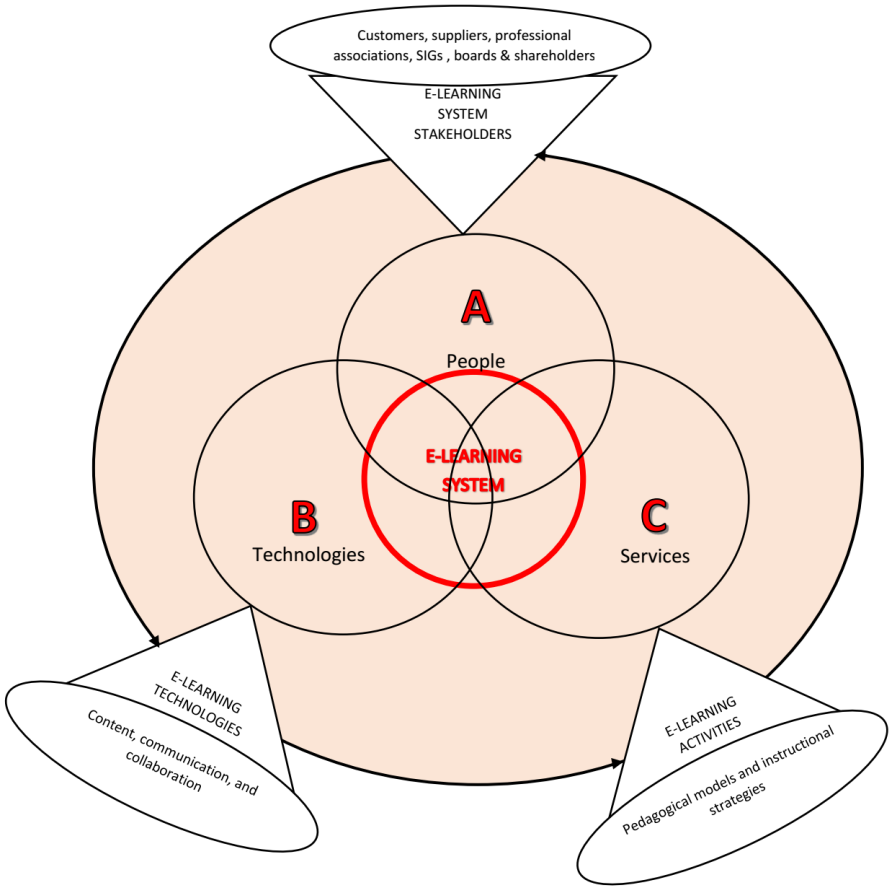

Figure 1: E-learning system theory (author 2023)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study was triggered by anomalies faced by institutions of higher learning in South Africa that disabled the rendering of teaching and learning since they use in-class face-to-face teaching and learning modus operandi. These anomalies include among others, institutions not being

able to admit all qualified people interested in studying or following a particular career in their institution and the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak that prevented institutions of higher learning to proceed with their teaching and learning activities, especially those using in-class contact mode of teaching and learning. When the president of South Africa announced a lockdown during the current Covid-19 pandemic outbreak in early 2020, all universities were shut down, except those that offer online tuition, like UNISA. The only known academic activity that UNISA was still rendering in contact situations was the writing of examinations. In response to the restrictions that came as part of the state of emergency, most universities frantically attempted to identify and apply online teaching and learning systems to continue their business. UNISA also introduced virtual summative assessment technology as a matter of urgency following the covid-19 pandemic outbreak that were followed by international lockdown to citizen in respective countries across the universe (UNISA 2020b)

RESEARCH PURPOSE, QUESTION AND OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to investigate a framework for the use of the Open distance e-learning system in the institutions of higher learning during the pandemic and student population increase in South Africa. To achieve this purpose, the authors seek to answer the following research question: Which framework for the Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL) system can help to encounter pandemic and student population increase in institutions of higher learning in South Africa? The objective of the study is to propose a framework for the application of the Open distance e-learning system in the institutions of higher learning to encounter pandemic and students' population increase in South Africa.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study applied the literature review to develop a framework for using the open distance electronic learning system (Open Distance e-learning – ODeL) as a central tool in facing anomalies in higher education institutions in South Africa. Literature relating to eLearning was consulted to learn how eLearning may be applied to support institutions of higher learning with the framework to implement full online teaching and learning lessons and assessments in both summative and formative form. In searching for appropriate sources online, researchers used the keywords from the title and purpose of the study to conduct literature searches using google search engine and institutionally subscribed databases. The search has yielded extremely high number of sources related to the study. The most suitable sources were selected since citing all the sources was always impossible. This is because some sources share same or related information and to avoid repetition of same information as well as exceeding required number of words for the journal. The study finally came up with a framework proposed for the application of Open Distance e-Learning system to address anomalies emanated from covid-19 pandemic and limited admission space for students' admission for in-class contact teaching and learning in the institutions of higher learning in South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The leading institution rendering open distance education in South Africa

The only institution of higher learning with fully fletched distance education in South Africa is the University of South Africa (UNISA). UNISA has a long history of using distance education. "With over 300,000 students, the University of South

Africa (Unisa) is Africa's largest open distance learning (ODL) institution" (Queiros & de Villiers 2016). This statement was also underscored by Letseka, Letseka and Pitsoe (2018). They further elaborate that "UNISA has been described as a mega university, and the only dedicated distance education provider in the African continent" (Letseka, Letseka & Pitsoe 2018). In the early years, the university used what it called correspondence distance study, later it moved to open distance learning (ODL), and currently teaching and learning are rendered through open distance electronic learning (ODeL). In correspondence distance study, the predominant mode of educational service delivery was through postal and courier services. In these, printed study material and teaching recordings were sent to students in cassette and compact disc containers. Students, in turn, submitted work for assessment by using similar services or by hand delivery at the branch. Lecturers were available to students for walk-in visits or by telephone, to discuss and clarify study-related issues. This means that teaching was rendered by means of print material and assignments submitted in similar formats. There were no recurring physical classroom sessions, and this was convenient for students who were scattered apart geographically. Radio and television were also used to enhance teaching and learning. Discussion forums were organised from time to time at university centres across the country to enable students to share their learning experiences (Shillinglaw 1992). The university subsequently moved to ODL, in which some of the materials were delivered online using the myUnisa website. Assignments were uploaded to the university's electronic system or sent by post for marking. During this period institutions of higher learning depended much on virtual learning collaboration over time through ODL (Jaiyeoba & Iloanya, 2019; Khor 2015). Recently the university progressed to what it calls ODeL. According to Hadullo, Oboko and Omwenga (2017), nowadays higher education institutions in the developing countries see an increase in the adoption of "Learning Management System (LMS) assisted e-learning".

According to UNISA (2020a), "ODeL is a different way of learning ... there is a physical distance between you and your university". This means that you do not have to visit the university to access learning and teaching lessons; instead, everything is covered on the online platform. Open distance e-learning (ODeL) requires students to be able to develop their own study plan and manage their time independently, since no in-class lectures are offered. Besides, students are provided with several support programmes to enable them to succeed in their studies, such as tutorship, library service and resources, the myUnisa portal, the myLife e-mail account, social media, UNISA radio, Digital Access Centres (DACs), counselling, and the Dean of Students and Student Affairs (DoSSA). Counselling support is provided in different ways to students, such as online, telephonically, by post, or even through office visits for career, academic and personal issues. The library provides information services to students in different ways, including reading space, physical internet access, and online and physical materials. The DoSSA provides support pertaining to student social and leadership development and student governance and attends to the needs of students with disabilities. The DACs are responsible for the provision of access to the Internet and computer facilities, especially in the rural areas, with administrators who attend to students' online needs. UNISA Radio provides platforms for talk shows and university-created social media platforms, such as Facebook, Linkedin, YouTube and Twitter, where students get an opportunity to

interact with each other about study-related and subject-related matters. The university also has several branches that render administration and library services globally. This means that students interact digitally with university staff online using the Internet (Teo 2011; UNISA 2020a). Study materials include prescribed and recommended books that students are expected to purchase, and study guides provided online or posted physically by the university. This means that students will need to create their own study environment wherever they are located, with appropriate information communication technology (ICT) and networks to connect to their university to access the lessons (UNISA 2020a).

> *Many assume that today's students are willing and able to design their own study programs based on their interests, talents and inclinations, and control their own study process. Some even argue that students should be at the center of university decision-making, including curriculum design and pedagogy, and should also be viewed as creators of knowledge (Guri-Rosenblit 2018).*

Open distance electronic learning system

The "Internet-based e-learning revolutionarily changed the training and education industry for its uninterrupted online service for 24/7 access anywhere" (Huang, Webster, Wood and Ishaya 2006). The fact is that "the rapid growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought about significant changes in the practice of e-learning globally" (Hadullo, Oboko & Omwenga 2017). Tyilo (2017) underscore that frequent improvement in technology result in frequent improvements in the way education is rendered in the institutions of higher learning, which emanate from digitization across the universe. In a way, government play a leading role in ensuring the adoption of technology to move the higher education institutions with eager to enhance their mode of teaching through modern technologies such as eLearning systems "The widespread adoption of learning technologies within higher education institutions (HEIs) globally has made it evident that e-learning serves is a critical need, especially in developing-world contexts in which HEIs have limited resources" (Van de Heyde & Siebrits 2019). E-Learning has been applied as a means of transformation from the olden day's manual mode to the modern mode of teaching and learning instructions in the institutions of higher learning due to innovative technology and globalization. It is a new trend in educational technology which brought a new way of delivering educational instruction (Burac, Fernandez, Cruz & Cruz 2019). The study by Sibanda & Donnelly (2014) discovered that eLearning has brought an improvement in the way of teaching, learning, and assessment as well as the students' pass rate.

> *Higher education is being rapidly transformed by the growth in online learning, with an increasing number of universities worldwide offering degree programs in online, distance modes of study. Australian education has a long history of 'distance education', primarily offered by regional universities. With the digital communication advances of the 21st century, traditional 'correspondence' study has transformed into online learning, with many more universities, both metropolitan and regional, offering undergraduate degree programs that can be completed entirely online. While this can provide a significant opportunity for further widening of participation in higher education,*

> *Australian and international research indicates that much needs to be done to improve the higher attrition rates currently associated with online learning* (Stone 2019).

According to Coetzer and Mapulanga (2020), "increased internet access has also caused e-Learning programmes to become an integral part of higher education". Technology has brought a new paradigm shift to learning and teaching in institutions of higher learning. These may now be able to reach their students online through their different kinds of technologies for different learning activities, including access to library information resources following simple steps (Rodrigues, Almeida, Figuiredo and Lopes, 2019; Hess, Greer, Lombardo & Lim 2015; Coetzer & Mapulanga 2020). Electronic learning brings about an opportunity for many citizens who are not focused on studying only or who may not have time to focus on studying only, mostly for reasons such as full-time employment or responsibility to support family while being willing to further their studies. Electronic learning is very flexible since it allows students to engage in their study activities when they are free from other responsibilities, with study materials accessible at any time through the university library website (Arkorful & Abaidoo 2015). However, they must always be required to meet assessment deadlines such as assignment submissions and preparation for and writing of examinations. Unlike the situation in contact, in-class universities, where students are guided with examples and motivated to study in class, distance learning requires students to be self-motivated and plan their time for study to avoid negative results at the end of their studies. In e-Learning, students are expected to be adult enough to know, understand and plan what to do when and how in their studies, with the lecturer becoming just one of the learning resources (Shillinglaw 1992).

This kind of learning (e-learning) system is also cost-effective to students and institutions in terms of money and time (Chawinga & Zozie 2016). It is time-bound with regard to both learning and teaching, including feedback between students and lecturers due to the nature of technology (Li & Irby 2008; Coetzer & Mapulanga 2020). It may also be of great advantage to the previously disadvantaged who are geographically isolated in different areas far apart from each other and their preferred institutions of higher learning (Chiero, Beare, Marshall & Torgerson 2015). This is because students will be able to learn together at the same institution and discuss their study-related issues using university technology online. They will, however, always need to be connected to the network to be able to reach each other and the university's online platform.

Students' connectivity is another issue that may be taken care of either by students or the institution. For instance, issues relating to bandwidth coverage to areas where students and institutions are located, as well as data, software, and hardware for students to be able to connect, maybe highlighted as some of the key challenges for this kind of learning technique (Pitsoe & Baloyi 2015; Queiros & de Villiers 2016). The university may also need to provide online training for students with regard to developing their skills and competency to use online resources, including access to library services and resources. This is because the challenges may include adapting to the system as students could find it difficult to understand the use of several applications from the start of their studies. Online training may also help to eliminate frustration and technophobia for students who have just been initiated to

tertiary education (Mawere & Kundai 2018; Delaney and Bates, 2018; Huwiler, 2015). Universities will need to prioritize supporting students to ensure the smooth operation of their online teaching and learning (Hess, Greer, Lombardo & Lim 2015). Appana (2008); Pitsoe and Baloyi (2015); Coetzer and Mapulanga (2020) agree that technical and socially related support is required to mitigate students' challenges relating to their readiness for the new technology, study funding and time, and university staff preparation for the new way of service delivery. However, some students may still need basic computer literacy to be able to adapt to and take part in this kind of educational learning stream (Eke 2010). Data in South Africa is also not that affordable or cost-effective compared to other African countries such as Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya, although this country has more internet users than any other country on the continent (Coetzer & Mapulanga 2020).

> *The growth of e-learning, where education is delivered through the internet, has presented new challenges for library services. Traditional library services need to shift to online service delivery to meet the needs of all university users, whether they are on campus or based on other satellite centers of the university* (Coetzer &Mapulanga 2020).

ODeL requires instructional design elements, which include teaching and learning content, interaction, feedback, interface design and student involvement (Hussin, Bunyarit and Hussein, 2009). Shifting from the dated ancient educational systems to ICT-driven modern educational systems enhances the learning process, especially if the system is applied effectively, even though it also comes with several challenges including lack of working resources, poor or slow network connection, poor support, and lecturers' capacity (Tyilo, 2017). The "use of e-learning systems shows a positive influence on student learning. Most instructors utilized e-learning systems as presentation and preparation tools in teaching and learning" (Burac, Fernandez, Cruz & Cruz 2019). ODeL may bring about many benefits and advantages for students through e-learning, such as receiving teaching while at work or at home at their own convenience and in their own time. It can also be of great advantage to women who choose to continue their household activities while studying, or matriculants who may not afford or gain admission to full-time university study. African citizens may benefit from studying at universities in developed countries abroad without having to deal with the stress of travel and accommodation costs involved in physically studying at an institution abroad (Eke 2010; Larocque & Latham 2003).

> *Despite the perceived benefits attached to e-learning, several studies concur that there are still many challenges facing e-learning. These include but are not limited to: course development, assessment, learner support, institutional factors, user characteristics and overall performance. The overall implication is that developing countries still lag behind in adopting ICTs in their education systems* (Hadullo, Oboko & Omwenga, 2017).

More importantly, there will be a need for a flexible framework that can guide institutions in the implementation of eLearning systems. "Although eLearning is the use of technology for teaching, learning, and assessment, there is no common approach to it across South African Higher Education Institutions" (Bagarukayo & Kalema 2015). Andriotis (n.d) introduced what they named the "flexible eLearning

framework". They further underscore that the eLearning framework need to be flexible by satisfying all facets of the learning environment. This may be achieved with appointment of a team of experts for curriculum, designing instructions, educational technology, programmer, though it all depends on the requirements for the courses for eLearning (Andriotis, n.d). There are eight dimensions that need to be considered in the framework, namely andragogy or pedagogy for the teaching and learning, technological for educational technology infrastructure, interface design for eLearning template designs, evaluation for effectiveness, management for learning environment, resources for supporting the programme, ethical for social and political influence, cultural diversity, bias, geographical diversity, learner diversity, information accessibility, etiquette, and the legal issues; and institutional for administrative and academic affairs; and learner services (Andriotis, n.d; Ramakrisnan, Yahya, Hasrol & Aziz 2012). Ramakrisnan, Yahya, Hasrol and Aziz (2012) presented eLearning framework that is made up of the 8 dimensions named "Khan Octagonal blended learning framework". The other eLearning frameworks presented by Ramakrisnan, Yahya, Hasrol and Aziz (2012) are End User Training framework addressing learning process for achievement of appropriate outcomes, covering training method, learning techniques, individual differences, learning outcomes, scaffold support and target system. Huang, Webster, Wood and Ishaya (2006) also presented what is named Intelligent semantic eLearning framework, addressing learning resources, learning objects, learning environment, worldwide web, ontologies, learning models, learning activities, users and personal agents. They further illustrated the differences between semantic and traditional eLearning.

DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The current state of affairs is very challenging to institutions of higher learning, especially public institutions such as universities. This is because these academic institutions are expected to accommodate and meet academic requirements for all citizens who are willing to pursue their studies in any period of their choice and at any age. People prefer to study for different purposes, at different geographical locations, and coming from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. "Many South African students are from disadvantaged backgrounds with poor socio-economic conditions and inferior schooling Universities, on their part, are expected to accommodate all these backgrounds and all this diversity" (Queiros & de Villiers, 2016). At some stage in their development, educational systems may be disrupted by national disasters such as the current Covid-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic as alluded to by World economic forum (2020). This pandemic has left the government with no choice but to announce a national emergency lockdown to restrict citizens' movement in order to curb the spread of the virus. Covid-19 resulted in a global standstill in which a major part of the world population was ordered into lockdown. This also affected employees and students, from first grade to tertiary level, who were expected to quarantine at home. Movement on the streets and social gathering in public venues were prohibited, except for buying food or other essentials, or visiting the pharmacy for medication or consulting a medical doctor. These restrictions have inevitably and seriously disrupted face-to-face contact education. In distance e-learning, however, teaching and learning could be continued, with lecturers still rendering their services to students under lockdown or in quarantine at home. Formative assessments were also still possible without interruption in institutions such as UNISA, where submission, marking

and feedback are also done online. However, tertiary education faced a general challenge with regard to writing final examinations, since the culture of students writing their examinations physically at venues of their choice under invigilation was still predominant. This has led to most universities making urgent efforts to put in place a virtual examination system. UNISA, for instance, has announced to students that "the May/June 2020 examinations would be completed in the form of non-venue-based online assessments" (UNISA 2020b).

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that universities move to an open-distance electronic learning platform as supported by Eke (2010); Hadullo, Oboko, and Omwenga (2017). Unlike learners at primary and secondary school levels, who are expected to attend class to receive lessons, tertiary-level students are expected to be at a level of maturity where they can study neutrally and independently and receive lessons on their own at a time and place of their own choosing. Students at this level are expected to know and understand what they want and appreciate the importance of what they are doing, that is, studying. At certain levels of their studies, they may also be able to find casual profession-related employment or internships or leadership, which may in a way enable them to acquire practical experience while in the learning process. The open distance e-Learning system may open doors for many students from previously marginalized communities, since for them studying will simply be a matter of creating time for learning activities as supported by ISpring (2019); Eke (2010); Larocque and Latham (2003). It could also give community members who have already given up on their studies a second chance at tertiary education. These are people who may not afford costs such as accommodation, extra food, and travel to the physical location of a university as Eke (2010); Larocque and Latham (2003) allude. This, in turn, may relieve government and education funders from providing large amounts of money to fund the study of a few people. Instead, they may be able to fund whoever wants to study within the country or in a company's field of specialization. Therefore, it is the recommendation of this study that tertiary education be rendered holistically online for all study activities, including formative and summative assessment as UNISA enjoys the benefits (UNISA 2020b). Besides, all universities may share responsibility or collaborate for the provision of facilities for services such as libraries for all students and laboratories for science students across different areas of the country for practical lessons and study.

Proposed ODeL system framework

The literature reviewed in the preceding sections provided the context to eLearning and anomalies that may need to be disrupted using ODeL technologies. The literature also guides on the academic activities and resources required for implementation of the virtual system. On this basis, the study was able to provides a proposed framework for an open distance e-Learning (ODeL) system to correct anomalies in institutions of higher learning in South Africa as shown in Figure 2. According to the framework as illustrated, the university needs to be an initiator as a ***service supplier,*** to develop a ***service delivery system*** that will be used to render an ODeL platform to students, and in the process to play the role of ***service recipient***. As in the business environment, the university may choose to have both students and academic staff operate or do their work from their respective homes or households through the ODeL system. Only administrative staff or support staff may operate from the university premises or offices to save office space and

avoid overcrowding by large numbers of teaching staff in the different academic departments. The academic staff may meet only when necessary for assemblies or conferences. The academic staff must be able to render academic activities including tuition and support to students by putting the ODeL system in place. The library as an academic support function must be able to support both academic staff and students through the system while they operate from their respective homes, except those who may need reading room services to visit university library centers across the country. Students must also be able to receive different kinds of support through the system while at home, whether social, academic, or technical. Academic staff may also need to be provided with various kinds of support while working from their homes, such as finance, human resources, and ICT. The university may establish a task team or committee comprising of all role players including their ICT and academic staff, to develop the system software and hardware that will best support the preferable kind of service earmarked for rendering by the institution covering the eight dimensions of the eLearning framework. Academic staff must be able to take care of all academic functionalities including setting both formative and summative assessments through the system to test the capability of students after lessons, while ICT staff take care of the technical part and design. The eight dimensions as presented by Andriotis (n.d); Ramakrisnan, Yahya, Hasrol and Aziz (2012) include technical, ethical, interface design, resources, institutional, pedagogy, management, and evaluation. After the development of the appropriate system, the university must be able to provide both staff and students with the necessary electronic hardware (laptops and Wi-Fi modems), uploaded with appropriate software and a certain amount of data per month for teaching and learning.

The system must be capable of performing all the necessary activities in accordance with the requirements of the academic staff for their modules. For instance, the system may have a functionality for the registration of modules and billing that enables students to see the amount due for payment and to access online payment through the system by linking to a bank account. Alternatively, financial support institutions must be able to make direct payments for students into the university system for the amount due for study fees. Students and staff must also be able to communicate on different issues through e-mail, social media and blogs on the system. Furthermore, there should be a platform where students are able to receive lessons from academic staff or lecturers on study-related issues, for instance discussion forums, links to share appropriate sources, and many more. Students must be able to submit their assessments on the system and lecturers or markers must be able to mark and give feedback on the same system as regards both formative and summative assessments. Study material from lecturers and the library needs to be accessible to students through the same system. It must be possible to develop and moderate study material and assessment tools online in the system. The system must be flexible in order to allow future enhancement in case new functionalities become necessary. Ultimately both staff and students must be able to access the system through the appropriate application ("app") in their laptop or smartphone or tablet to engage in the lessons and study-related issues. Details are as illustrated in figure 1. In addition, the ICT expert must consider other system requirements, such as security against hacking of information and disaster, that may affect the system and data stored in the system. Finally, the system must be capable

of keeping an audit trail of activities discharged and transactions concluded, and provide a report based on certain activities to students and staff for reporting and looking back on how the work has being done in the previous periods. The system must also be usable to auditors with a limited access for the period of audit.

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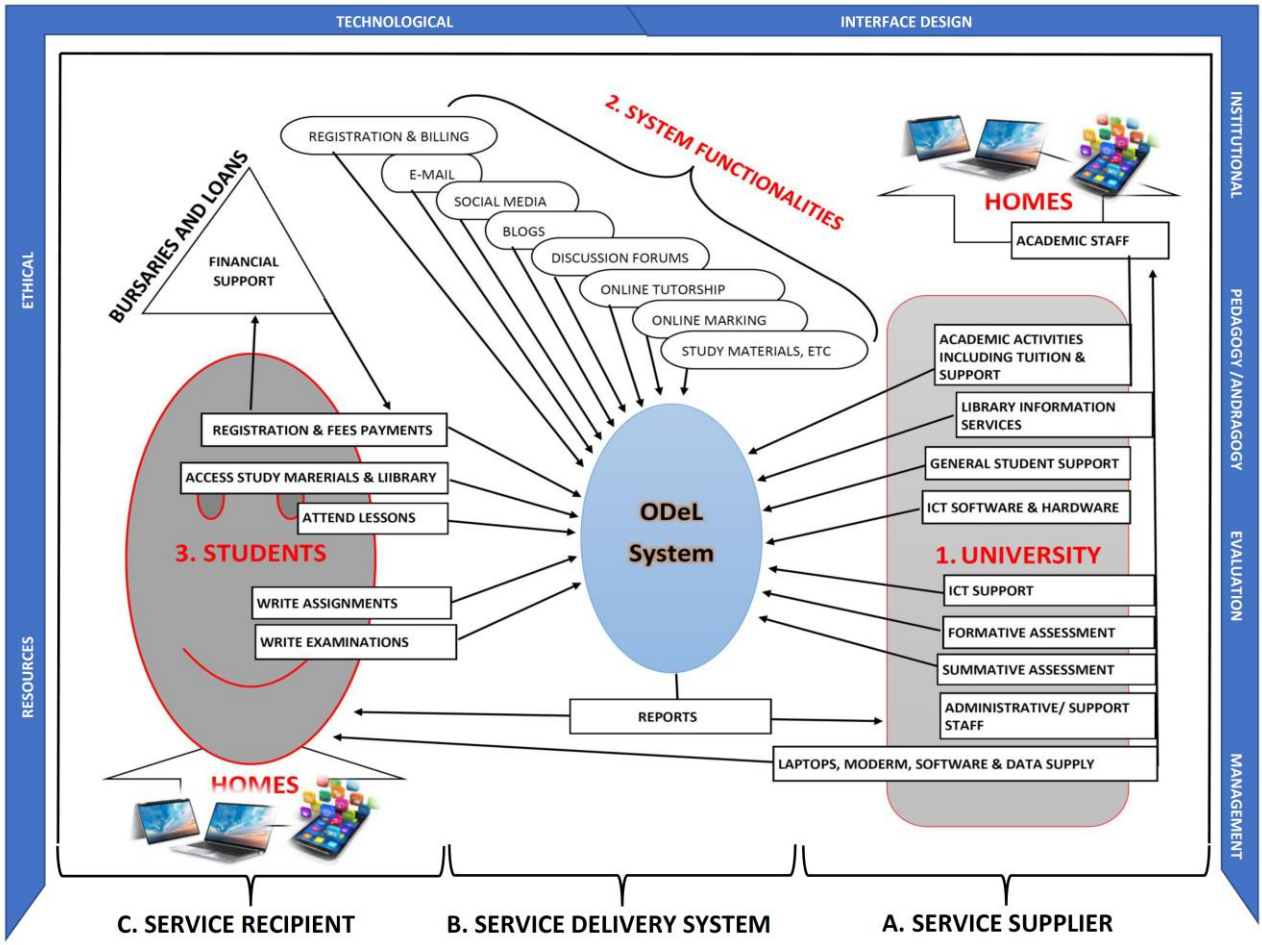

Figure 2: A framework for application of open distance e-learning system in the institutions of higher learning

Implications for research, practice, and society

It is hoped that this study may improve service delivery in the industry and the quality of life in the community. Institutions of higher learning may benefit from the information in this paper when planning to move from face-to-face to virtual teaching and learning platform. They may also use this paper as a resource for educational curriculum transformation and development. The community, especially those from marginalized rural areas may also be able to conveniently access quality education from any institution of their choice since with virtual service there may be no limit for intake. Community and staff members attached to different institutions of higher learning may be able to avoid infections from different health-threatening pandemics like coronavirus, currently and in

the future while continuing with their studies in case this framework is properly implemented. Researchers may also apply the proposed framework in their studies as a theoretical framework to guide their studies.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays, delivering any service manually is usually overwhelming, considering the current high demand from clients for various kinds of service, including academic service. Organizations regularly and frequently improve their technology in order to discharge their services with ease without disappointing their clients. This poses a challenge to every industry, including academia, to review their modus operandi from time to time with the introduction of new technology and enhancements. That is why we have witnessed technology changing several times in institutions of higher learning. It changed from in-class contact lessons to correspondence distance learning, then to open distance learning, and now we have technology that can support open distance electronic learning, which academic institutions need to consider seriously. Currently, institutions involved in teaching and learning face various challenges, such as a constantly growing student population and the consequent high annual student influx to academic institutions, putting them under pressure to admit large numbers of students during relatively short registration periods, with others turned back home. This challenge is exacerbated by health-threatening pandemics such as COVID-19, which may be followed by other pandemics that future generations will have to face. Institutions of higher learning need to move with changes in technology. It is hoped that the framework provided in this study will help institutions of higher learning to benchmark the adoption of systems appropriate for their own kinds of operations or teaching and learning systems. ODeL will assist institutions of higher learning to accommodate people with different commitments and from different backgrounds. These would predominantly be people from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds living in remote rural areas, and breadwinners who are already working and cannot quit work to study, as well as housewives and their counterparts.

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Orphaned by the Diaspora? School Experiences of Learners with Parents in the Diaspora in the Zimbabwean District of Mwenezi.

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ABSTRACT:

The study sought to explore the school experiences of primary school learners from the Mwenezi district of Zimbabwe whose parents were in the diaspora at the time the research was conducted. An interpretive paradigm that incorporated a qualitative research approach and case study design was adopted to gather data through face-to-face semi-structured interviews and through focus group discussions. The study had a total of 27 participants, comprising 2 heads, 13 teachers, 6 learners, and 6 guardians who were drawn from the two schools studied. Data were analysed using the thematic content technique and the generated narrative data were presented using verbatim transcriptions. It emerged that learners left behind got orphaned both materially and socially although their parents were alive because they got inadequate financial and moral guidance respectively due to the disruption of family systematic structures emigration caused. They were thus labelled by teachers as undisciplined and violent. Biological parents' emigration was reported to negatively influence motivation for school hence the learners left behind had negative attitudes towards education and their performance was largely poor. The left behind learners had difficulties coping with both home chores and school requirements and hence felt like dropping out of school to follow their parents. To minimize the negative educational effects on children orphaned by the diaspora, it is recommended that there should be a reorientation of communities and schools on a new type of orphaned child due to parental emigration into the diaspora.

Keywords: diaspora, orphan, emigration, learners left behind

INTRODUCTION

The concept '*Orphaned by the diaspora*' is getting increased space in migration literature (Mensah &Omigbodun, 2020; Munyoka 2020). It entails a situation whereby children are left by emigrant biological parents under self-care or under the care of other people for a relatively long period such as extending a year with little or no parental remission, return or guidance thus exposing children to experiences similar to what most children whose parents had died go through such as caring for other family members, early sexuality, school girl pregnancy, engaging in excessive household chores, prone to contracting HIV/AIDS, school dropout and poverty (Cho, 2021; Tawodzera & Themane, 2019). Of late globalisation, which is global integration of communities has precipitated movement of people from one place to the other due to ease of communication networks and vast transport systems (IOM, 2018; Mazzucato &Schans, 2011). On many accounts, the factors that propel emigration include the search for greener pastures, political asylum, better education prospects, natural disasters, among others hence high statistics of South- North migration due to the two's varying development levels (IOM, 2018; Munyoka, 2020; Wallace; Freeman; Morell & Levin, 2021). However, studies show

that a good number of school-going age children rarely out-migrate with their parents for some cultural, or other reasons or prohibitive migration laws in the destination countries (Jaure & Gregory, 2022; Sanduleasa &Matei, 2015; Tawodzera & Themane, 2019).

For Zimbabwe, the out-flax of the able-bodied people into the diaspora was induced by economic austerity measures such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs) introduced in the early 1990s and the fast track land reform programme that started in early 2000 (Machinya, 2019) which resulted in the loss of formal employment as some companies closed as well as political instability (Machinya, 2019; Tawodzera & Themane, 2017). Consequently, the number of children left under self-care or under the care of relatives has become phenomenal because the majority of the emigrants stayed and worked illegally, especially in South Africa hence deemed it safer to leave the children behind (Machinya, 2019; Munyoka, 2020).

The major challenge in Zimbabwe is that, despite the increasing numbers of learners left behind (LLB) by emigrants (Chakombera & Mubikwa, 2020; Machinya, 2019; Munyoka, 2020), the phenomenon of vulnerability among such learners is largely not understood and appreciated by most of those who implement government educational welfare programmes because despite the constitutional provisions especially sections 19, 25, 27 and 30 on child safety, protection of the family, education and welfare respectively (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20, 2013) as well as the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) manual that accord all children including LLB to access safety nets, most such learners are excluded in educational welfare programmes such as BEAM on the basis that they are believed to be self -sustaining since their parents worked in the diaspora (Dzimiri &Gumbo, 2016; Filippa, Cronje & Ferns, 2013). The belief by some Zimbabweans that emigrants were affluent is not an isolated case since Mensah and Omigbodun (2020) report of similar view from findings of studies carried out in Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Nigeria where the focus was on the mental health of such learners. We felt that considerations for inclusion of children into welfare programmes needed to be a result of evidence of vulnerability rather than on assumptions because even though some emigrants could have been well off economically, the questions that remained were, Were they all responsible? If otherwise, should children suffer on the account of their irresponsible parents? We therefore reasoned that such a line of argument was opposed to the African perspective of Ubuntu in which a child is regarded as belonging to the community and hence should have access to any form of assistance when the need arises, thus developed an interest in establishing how the LLB experienced school in the Mwenezi district of Zimbabwe where their population was high (Zirima, 2016), so as to contribute valid literature for policy improvement.

We also note that while some scholars acknowledge the growing number of LLB by emigrants in Zimbabwe, (Chakombera & Mubikwa, 2020; Kufakurinani, Pasura & McGregor, 2014), they have tended to focus more on the experiences of adolescents or learners at secondary school level and those who lived in towns and cities where they established that drug abuse and early sexuality were rampant among such learners. A study close to the current one conducted by Zirima (2016) emphasized on psycho-social effects of parental emigration on children left behind hence still leaving a gap because it did not cover the ground on the educational experiences of such learners from the perspective of guardians and the learners themselves hence this study sought to add more literature by seeking views of the

guardians of those children since they had adequate knowledge of the 'orphaned' children's daily lives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE STUDY

The current study was underpinned by the family systems theory by Bowen (1978) which expounds on the idea that a family is a system with integrated parts that include rules and members whose alterations may significantly influence the functionality of the whole family (Johnson, 2010). The family systems theory builds on four precepts namely anxiety, two basic life forces, the emotional system, and the family as an emotional unit. By anxiety, Bowen meant our responses to probable or real threats following an event (International Social Services Family Institute (ISSFI, 2015) which in our case was the probable threat or anxieties on the (LLB) brought about by the changed family structures due to emigration of biological parents. In the two basic life forces, it assumes that organisms are controlled by two opposing forces one for togetherness and the other one for individuality which helped us to assess the level of support, affection, and love as well as the respect of the children's right to opinion respectively as exhibited by the emigrants in their process of migration because we felt that such factors were key ingredients in one's schooling since they were the sign posts to parental involvement in the education of their children.

Johnson (2010) explains that the family systems' emotional system works hand in glove with the feelings and intellectual systems which in their own right influence one's ability to comprehend and communicate, key factors in successful learning hence we regard it as a key concept when analysing the way LLB by emigrants experienced schooling in the Mwenezi district of Zimbabwe.

As we delved into the school experiences of LLB in the Mwenezi district of Zimbabwe, we also drew wisdom from Bowen who opines that a family is an emotional unit where members are sometimes measured on the basis of their ability to control emotions and that has a bearing on how one performs or makes judgments relating to education. In the emotional unit, Bowen explains that socialization within the family influences one's level of differentiation that is one's ability to separate thinking from feelings, guided by rational capacity and the ability to maintain a solid sense of self regardless of social pressure to conform, while at the same time being able to maintain an intimate meaningful relationship to others (ISSFI, 2015). We became interested in establishing how learners who seemingly had inadequate strict family socialization or who were socialized by social parents faired in terms of differentiation and subsequently in their schooling.

The other proposition of the differentiation of self within the context of the current study was the aspect of roles, boundaries, and personal responsibilities that characterize family functionality (Ceka & Murti, 2016; Moreno, 2013). We took the position that after the emigration of their parents, the LLB assumed new roles and responsibilities that in one way or the other could have impacted on their school experiences and it was also on such basis that we found these guiding principles of the family systems theory enriching in terms of guiding this study on the influence of diaspora orphanhood on the education of the LLB.

We assessed interaction patterns among guardians, educators, and emigrants to establish how they impacted LLB schooling because according to Smith (2016) family systems theory attempts to shed light on the nature and patterns of interaction among family members and their effects on family functionality. One major assumption of the family systems

theory is that behaviour is family specific which means that people from different families portray behavior characteristics peculiar to their family backgrounds. Drawing from the idea that stable families are intact and structurally integrated, we postulate that the family social equilibrium (working balance) significantly change upon migration of some member hence the need to relook at the educational role of the biological parents and the guardians of the affected learners.

Also, the family systems theory postulates that changes in family structure influence family processes which encompass family function, family communication and transactional patterns, family conflict, separateness and connectedness among members, cohesion, integration, and adoption to change (Fingerman & Bermann, 2000; Morgaine, 2001; Sun, 2017). In a study related to the current one Teja and Rutger (2017) found out that some learners were affected by structural changes to their families because some functions such as visits to the school by parents, consultation with teachers, celebration parties when a learner performs well among others were not fulfilled under social parents. Since the current study drew participants from families in changed structures, the probable changes as presented by the family systems theory namely family communication, transactional patterns, and family conflict among others together with the cited literature findings became the signposts from which data relating to possible school experiences of LLB by emigrants from Mwenezi district of Zimbabwe could also be formulated.

Global trends on 'diaspora orphanhood

According to UNESCO (2018), the global population of people residing in more than one country stood at 258 million by 2017. Some destination countries have put up legislative measures to limit the entry of children of immigrants leading to exponential growth of 'diaspora orphanhood. In the case of the Philippines for instance, Rojas and Taylor (2013) established in their study that 1.1 million children have been left behind by emigrant biological parents to be cared for by other people. Similarly, studies carried out in Zimbabwe, Dube (2014) and Zirima (2016) also established that many children were left under self-care or under the care of old relatives while their biological parents emigrated to South Africa and all this further points to the widespread of the phenomenon of children orphaned by the diaspora whose school experiences this study sought to unravel.

LLB`s readiness and participation in school curricula upon biological parents' emigration

Literature reveals that when children are separated from their biological parents for a long period, there are bound to be some challenges associated with adaptation to the new family setup (Teja & Rutger, 2017). Guendell, Saab, and Taylor (2013) opine that, parental migration may expose children left behind to a new material culture which may create new aspirations that are difficult to realize. In studies in the Philippines, Ghana, Nigeria, and Angola, it was found that girls left behind experienced a very significant reduction in their time spent on school activities in response to the absence of the mother in the household and this dovetails with the family systems theorization that structural changes to the family also come with changes in roles by family members (Mazzucato, Cebotori, Veale, White, Grassi&Vivet, 2015; Portner, 2014).

Role of biological parents in the education of learners left behind.

IFFD (2017) reports that, upon migration, some emigrants tended to abandon some basic parental roles in the developmental affairs of the children such as food, health, education provisions as well as interaction and general engagement

in the child`s life. Non-involvement in the education of the LLB was viewed as a bad practice by Fagbeminiyi (2011) who found out that in Nigeria, pre-school learners whose parents were involved in their education performed fairly well academically and this cascades into the family systems theory's postulation that it is the role of the family to provide primary socialisation as well as life-long guidance to its members to maintain the emotional character of the family.

Guardians' participation in the education of 'diaspora orphans'

In a study in Thailand, Jampaklay, Vappattnawong, and Prasithina (2012) found that, guardians participated minimally in the education of the children under their care because they could not control the children. Results of the Thailand study were similar to what ACPF (2012) also found in China as well as Mensah and Omigbodun (2020) in Angola where the children were reported to disregard guardian authority and engaging in anti-social behavior that resulted in the learners performing badly in school. In Zimbabwe, Dube (2014) in his study in Plumtree and Beit-bridge found out that guardians were largely inactive in the educational affairs of the learners left behind because most of the guardians were illiterate.

Schools' responsiveness to the educational welfare of 'diaspora orphans'

Surveys carried out in several countries by OECD (2015) reveal that while there were programmes and strategies developed in affluent countries to mitigate challenges faced by LLB by migrant biological parents, little was done in the majority of the migrant-sending countries. Exceptions were however noted in countries such as Jamaica and Romania where Brown and Grinter (2014) in their studies established that educators visited the homes of the learners left behind to have the physical experience of what the learners went through as well as awarding learners' high marks to motivate them in their education which suggests that the education policy in that country had such provisions.

STUDY FOCUS

This study focussed to explore;

- The nature of orphan-hood among LLB
- The role of educators, guardians and biological parents on the education of LLB.
- The school participation of LLB

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

A descriptive collective case study entailing a design for investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Kivunja & Kiyini, 2017) was used to gather data. McCusker and Gunaydini (2015) link the case study design to qualitative research, a procedure employed when one intends to understand how a community or individuals perceive a particular issue, in our case school experiences of children orphaned by the diaspora. The design proved instrumental in the current study because it generated thick descriptions in the form of words since participants discussed extensively and shared views of the school experiences of orphans. (Creswell, 2014; Vaisimoradi, Jones, Turunem, & Snelgrove, 2016).

Sampling and research sample

A purposive sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 27 participants from two primary schools. The purposive sampling technique involves selecting participants rich in the phenomenon at hand (Gray, 2014). The sample that comprised 2 school heads, 13 teachers, 6 guardians of LLB, and 6 LLB was found to be suitable for the current study because school heads and teachers are responsible for the day-to-day planning and execution of education programs for learners so they had adequate information about how learners experienced schooling and so were the guardians of the learners

who also participated in the general school welfare of the LLB.

Research instruments

The face-to-face key participant interview protocol (leedy & Osmroid, 2016) was administered to school heads, guardians of LLB, and the LLB because it afforded the participants extensive data since it enabled probing. Also, the private and individualistic nature through which the face-to-face interviews were conducted improved rapport between the participants and the researchers thereby enhancing data reliability and research worthiness (Creswell, 2014). A focus group discussion interview protocol, a tool that allowed the teacher participants to discuss their views on school experiences of LLB was also used and it resulted in thick descriptions of data that also improved the trustworthiness of the results (Vaisimoradi, Jones, Turunem, & Snelgrove, 2016).

Ethical considerations

Prior to the execution of the study, measures to safeguard the interests and rights of the participants (ethical considerations) (Amalki, 2016) were put in place. Realizing that some participants were minors (primary school learners) and hence immature to decide on their own whether they could be involved in the study, consent of the guardians was sought first. Six learners thus made it into the sample because it was these on which assent was granted. Consent was also obtained from the guardians of the learners and from the educators who participated in the study. Pseudonyms of the participants and their schools were used in the report as a way to protect their identity.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using the thematic content analysis technique which is conceptualized by Thahn and Thahn (2015) as a process by which huge volumes of textual or pictorial data are summarised and classified into fewer categories that are easy to comprehend. Furthermore, the thematic content analysis technique is recommended for studies that seek to gather data about unfamiliar subjects (Creswell, 2014; Vaisimoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). The study generated huge volumes of narrative data about school experiences of LLB and the data that were recorded verbatim needed to be filtered systematically to produce meaningful themes hence the suitability of the thematic content analysis technique. Furthermore, the thematic content analysis technique was found helpful in this study which produced unfamiliar data about the school experiences of primary school learners from a rural setting which also was somehow divergent from earlier studies on the experiences and challenges faced by learners with absent parents in Zimbabwe who concentrated on adolescents and urbanites (Kufakurinani, McGregor & Pasura, 2014; Tawodzera, 2019).

RESULTS

Three themes emerged from this study thus, the causal factors of the diaspora orphanhood, the relationship matrix among the LLB and their significant others, and the learners' school participation and performance.

Causal factors for the development of diaspora orphanhood

Teacher Max reported that there was a growing number of LLBs by emigrant biological parents in the part of the Mwenezi district where the study was done because families needed to fork for a living since "*In this area seeking employment means going to the diaspora."* One learner Tichaona identified the actual necessities that the parents intended to accumulate upon finding employment in the diaspora; thus, "*They went out to seek money for our education, clothing and food."* Even though the learners attested that parental emigration was meant to improve family economic life, it later came out that the move bred some orphanhood to

as revealed by Chipo who could not control her emotions as she narrated that; "*they don't send money and I don't have uniforms, my friend gave me two books only."* Even Chipo`s guardian Dorothy alluded to the same predicament and commented; "*It`s not enough to be in South Africa, those people are useless their children here live in abject poverty, who would you think will be serious about someone`s child when the biological parent doesn't care*."

Guardian Lucy also bemoaned child neglect tendencies by some emigrants which she attributed largely to dishonesty interaction patterns within the communities where the truth was sometimes concealed about the life experiences of the LLB citing the case of greedy community leaders who she cautioned that; "*The community leaders must not accept beer from those people and tell them the truth about the experiences of their children and advise them to take their children with them."* From the family systems perspective, interactions of family members bind the families together as challenges are shared and resolved before they get out of hand which unfortunately was not the case in the current study revelations thereby exposing the LLB to diaspora-induced orphanhood.

The other guardian, Colletta, added that the LLB suffered double orphan-hood because other than the neglect by their parents, the local leadership in the communities neglected them as well by not considering them in welfare programmes because "*my grand-daughters have never benefited from the BEAM, they say their parents work in the diaspora but it boggles my mind because no-one has seen those people here it's me who fend for these kids through engaging in menial jobs if I am lucky to get them otherwise it's just poverty."* The sentiments of neglect of LLB raised against the community leadership seemed to depart from the African spirit of Ubuntu or communalism that recognised the community as a family and that the children belonged to the community hence every parent was responsible for giving a hand or advice to any child belonging to the community whenever the need arises (Gomba, 2018). It seems there was a gap between policy formulation and implementation that needed to be filled in through monitoring and supervision of government programmes to reduce orphanhood among the LLB.

Other than the economic disadvantage, the orphan-hood of the LLB was measured on the basis of the learners spending most of the time alone, unsure of where the parents were and whether they would one day meet them and this was illustrated by a learner, Diana who tearfully lamented, *"I don't know where they are, they don't phone, I had never seen them since they went and it pains me."* Though some parents visited their families, they rarely did so, and the visits were too short as one learner Mercy revealed that "*They come back every December and leave in January after a short stay."* Another learner reported that despite all the provisions she got from her parents, she still felt that there was a void because *"I just want to see them often (Mavis)."* The negative effects of non-returning parents on learners` education expressed by the participants were not unique to this study since Zirima (2016) also reported the negative psycho-social effects on children of non-returning parents. In another study, IFFD (2018) reports that children in Jordan were also traumatized by their parental absence irrespective of remittances sent to them by their parents in the diaspora. Similarly, studies in Ghana, Angola, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe also revealed that LLB exhibited anxiety disorders. (Filippa, Cronje & Feirns, 2013; Mensah & Omigbodun 2020; Tawodzera &Themane, 2019). The current study therefore upholds that non-returning of emigrants was negatively impacting on the education of LLB in ways similar to what some orphans go through hence should be discouraged.

Another guardian Susan was much critical about leaving the girl child alone whom she viewed as more vulnerable to sexual abuse because *"most of the time the girls are without basics which unfortunately drive them into promiscuity."* With respect to school necessities, one of the school heads commended that; *"fees are not paid in time then behaviour wise such learners do not behave well." (Head School A).*

Parallels can be drawn with respect to the findings of the current study to Mabharani (2014) in a study in Dzivaresekwa in Harare, Zimbabwe, and another by Chakombera and Mubikwa (2018) at Nemakonde High School still in Zimbabwe where it was also established that some emigrant parents rarely supported education of their children resulting in decline in learner motivation. On the basis of these corroborating findings, we concluded that 'diaspora orphaned hood' remained a challenge for the education of the affected learners in Zimbabwe.

Effects of the orphaned learners and educators' relationship on schooling.

For the teachers, the learners with emigrant parents were difficult to work with as teacher Andrew laments; *"very few respect teachers because their parents view teachers as people at the extreme bottom end of the social ladder hence bad-mouth teachers in the presence of their children so learners in the upper classes are disrespectful, they say their destiny is South Africa."* All the teacher participants who raised concerns regarding their relationship with the LLB linked that poor relationship to the learners` parental influence as another teacher also lamented "*They look down upon me just because I am poor. When I have seen that this one is looking down upon me, I develop a negative attitude towards him or her." (Diana).*

The finding that biological parents viewed teachers negatively, a perception which they recklessly passed on to their children as they bad mouthed teachers in the vicinity of the children share related connotations to what Brown and Grinter (2014) also found in their study in Jamaica where teacher participants reported that LLB adopted a 'waiting to migrate', the assumption that one does not have to work hard now because he or she will migrate to another country at any time. On the basis of these related findings, it could be concluded that some biological parents of LLB were responsible for the poor relationship that existed between their children and the significant others back home culminating in orphanhood as counsel rarely came in such strained relationships.

Influence of the Orphaned Learners' biological parents and educators' interaction patterns on schooling.

It emerged from the interviews that there was largely a dearth of communication between educators and emigrant biological parents of LLB. One of the educators attested to this when she revealed that; "*the parents communicate when they are about to return otherwise its two, three years without a word."* (Molly). Head of school A was very critical of infrequent communication between biological parents and teachers because; *"guardians only give food and are not concerned about school so if the biological parents are not linking up with the school, the learners dodge lessons knowing that no one will question them."* According to the triangulation argument of the family systems theory (Smith, 2016) the dearth of communication between educators and parents normally results in more challenges because the educational experiences of the learners remain hidden, and unresolved thus exacerbating the orphanhood of the learners.

Guardians and biological parental relationship and schooling

There were two categories of guardians that emerged from our study, old grandmothers and then of nieces, aunts or

housemaids. Apparently, the grandmothers reported that they rarely communicated with the biological parents of the children they took care of as one of them tearfully lamented; *"We had never been in contact since he left." (Sandile).* Another guardian Mary revealed that there was no direct communication between her and the biological parents of the learners since she only learned about them through other people thus, she commended **"***We are not communicating."* Even though the youthful guardians reported that they communicated with the biological parents of the learners, they too raised the concern that the communication was ineffective in addressing the educational issues of the learners because according to one of them it was infrequent because "*Sometimes it's two or three months between calls depending on availability of airtime." (Susan).*

Generally, the current study revealed that there was poor relationship among learners, guardians, biological parents of LLB and teachers which unfortunately limited LLB` s educational access. Similarly, Dube (2014) in another study on socio-economic effects of cross-border migration established that learners in Beit-bridge and Plumtree also despised both guardians and teachers resulting in the teachers failing to control the learners. The lack of adequate contact time among biological parents, guardians and teachers increased the learners' orphanhood because it limited triangulation of the truth about their educational experiences which Brown and Grinter (2014) and Nguyen (2016) found helpful in their studies in Japan and Ethiopia respectively.

School participation and performance of learners left behind by emigrant parents.

The teacher participants observed that while some LLB were completing their primary education, they did so at older ages than their age mates since they repeated grades because of their school attendance inconsistence as illustrated here; "*in my case, about 16 did not return from holiday in South Africa, those who returned did not complete their Grade 4 so their performance is deteriorating hence they may complete but with poor grades because they missed a lot." (Tapiwa).* The other factor that affected the LLB`s completion rate was the age at which they enrolled since; "*They start Grade 1 at 7 to 8 years which makes it difficult to control them when they get to upper classes." (Molly).*

Teachers' concerns regarding poor completion rate among the LLB were also raised by the school heads who singled out boys for absconding lessons and truant behavior because; **"***they do not have parental care and most of them are left behind under the control of uneducated people who do not have quality education to encourage children."(Head School B).*

The participants emphasised that some biological parents kept the learners too long when they visited them resulting in the learners missing learning time and subsequently underperform in class. One may conclude that it is the disintegration of the family network that was largely responsible for the challenges of the learners` poor school experience. The results of the current study highly relate with those found in rural Albania where it was reported that school performance was largely poor especially where fathers had emigrated (Botezat & Pfeiffer 2014; Giannelli & Mangiavachi, 2010). The opposite was however true for Albanian urbanites where Botezat and Pfeiffer (2014) in a study established that grades of LLB improved since the learners worked hard in school knowing that educational success would land them into the diaspora, a scenario different from the situation of emigrants in our study who were largely undocumented and had rarely completed primary education.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the study results, we deduced three key effects of parental emigration on LLB, namely material and social poverty as the root cause of diaspora orphanhood, the disruptive effects of parental absenteeism on the family's functioning system and consequently on the diaspora orphaned children's education. In this section, we therefore compare our findings with the study theoretical underpinning of family systems theory and the findings from earlier studies.

Material and social poverty as the face of diaspora orphanhood.

Though our study revealed that migration from Mwenezi district has largely been a result of poverty due to the volatile economic environment and therefore intended to ease financial pressure on the families concerned, it did little overall in that respect because those challenges seemed to have been passed on to the learners since they also experienced school poverty as illustrated by one learner; "*Sometimes I come to school without food."* (Tichaona). The other learner participant attributed her school poverty (lack of school necessities such as stationery, fees, and uniforms) to her guardian whom she accused of misappropriating educational funds remitted by her parents because, *" my mother`s sister does not pay our school fees although my mother could have sent the money, she pays for her children first so at times we are sent home from school for non-payment of fees" (*Susan). In a related study in Romania, the learners who experienced material needs deprivation similar to those articulated in the current study lost learning time as they sought employment to offset the impact of poverty (Sanduleasa & Matei, 2015). These findings feed into the family systems theory concept of projection of problems onto the child hence one can say that the emigration of parents from the Mwenezi district was largely morally defective in the sense that it created orphanhood to some learners on account of their fees and food provision at school not adequately met. However, the negative effects of parental emigration seem to emanate from the relationship between social parents and emigrants because Nguyen (2016) in a study in Ethiopia found the practice largely benefited the learners as it afforded them school provisions.

Other than the material poverty most LLB experienced, the teacher participants noted that the learners had inadequate and proper guidance that could see them develop into responsible adults in the future because, *"they are in disciplined, they challenge teachers and some guardians bring similar concerns here, it's because of the culture they adopt from their parents who are violent"* (Molly). Even Head School A had this to say about the learners "*their behaviour is not under the strict control of the teachers; the teachers are weak."* These concerns of disrespect of significant others by the LLB in as much as it is largely believed to be the result of the influence of the emigrants show to a larger degree the extent to which the lack of coordination between the emigrants and the social parents and the importation of culture has worsened the orphan-hood status of the learners as they grow inadequately socialized in line with their local community culture because both teachers and the guardians would rarely guide and counsel such powerful learners.

Disruption of family structure and its negative effects on education of children left behind.

While the current study findings revealed that two categories of learners emerged depending on whether they were under the custodianship of young guardians or old guardians, the participants reiterated that both categories of learners experienced schooling harshly reflecting orphanhood. For example, Learner Mimmy lamented that since her parents moved to South

Africa, she had not known peace of mind because despite the fact that the parents were remitting; *"I just want to see them often."* Mimmy`s emotional response to her separation from her parents indicates that while the parents emigrated on the belief that family economic emancipation was all that the family needed, they were somehow wrong since the decision had led to the apprehension of the learner as she tried to adjust to the altered family set up. We juxtapose our finding on learner emotional outburst to family separation to the family systems concept of anxiety which state that sometimes some family members take long or fail to adjust whenever the nuclear family setup is shaken by separation (Guendell, Saab & Taylor, 2013; Moreno, 2013) hence conclude that alteration of family structure if not mutually agreed upon by all the members may be harmful to the whole family system.

It emerged from the discussions held by the educators that parental emigration demotivated the learners to pursue studies because; ''as the learners *grow up, they will be deteriorating academically…as they are ready to go."* (Vinet). Further, the educators reported that the 'orphans' performed dismally because they rarely wrote work given as; "*they hide their books."* (Andrew). Head of school A opined that the diaspora orphaned could not participate in schoolwork taking advantage of some guardians who were not concerned about the learners` schoolwork since; '' *what the guardians need is their remuneration, and some are illiterate so they cannot assist the learners*.'' The negative impact of parental migration on the academic performance of learners that manifests in the current study mirrors results found in related studies carried out in Angola and Nigeria where Mensah and Omigbodun (2020) also established that LLB underperformed due to poor mental well-being adjustments, a development resonating with the family systems theory concept of anxiety that normally characterize members in split families.

It was also reported that some learners had poor attitudes toward learning and as put by teacher participants, this was due to a lack of guidance from both the biological parents and guardians since some parents; *"flush their children with a lot of things to the extent that the child feels that schooling is insignificant." (Peter).* The teacher participants also reported that they had challenges working with learners whose biological parents were not communicating with them since there was nowhere, they could report the learners` progress and problems. We infer from the teachers` sentiments that learners developed a negative attitude towards schooling and disrespected them because they knew that there was no connection between the teachers and their parents where the learners` behavior could be discussed as suggesting that there is a need to involve schools, biological parents and the guardians to collectively proffer solutions to the negative effects of 'diaspora-orphan-hood' as rightly advised in the family systems theorization of triangulation (Johnson, 2010).

What exacerbated the situation for the LLB in Mwenezi district as is reported for other areas in other local related studies (Crush, Tawodzera, Chikanda, Ramachandran & Tevera, 2017; Moyo, 2017; Tawodzera & Themane, 2019), is that the learners were never consulted when the parents decided to leave for the diaspora and a similar concern was also raised in a study in Romania (Sanduleasa & Matei, 2015; UNDESA, 2020). Parental disregard to seek views of their children before migration especially when the children are left behind not only contravenes the children`s right to opinion as stipulated in the Convention on the Right of the Child but also results in exposing the learners to anxiety disorders which lead to limited concentration span in class and academic underperformance. According to family

systems theorisation, parental migration may worsen the family relations if not well handled as the perceived problem that could have driven the desire to emigrate for example in our case the need to relieve stress would have been passed on to the children who remained behind (Moreno, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Our study findings revealed that poverty-induced parental emigration came with disruption of family systematic structures leading to the emergence of two categories of 'orphans 'in the Zimbabwean district of Mwenezi. One group consisted of children whose emigrant biological parents rarely returned and remitted hence the learners had inadequate stationery, food and uniforms yet the communities never assisted on the assumption that their parents were affluent and were supposed to take care of their children in violation of policy, the constitution and general principle of Ubuntu that tended to bind African societies. The other category of the 'orphans' involved those children re-socialised into foreign culture by their biological parents who infrequently returned. While the former group largely experienced material orphanhood, the latter experienced social orphanhood more and hence had behavioral challenges both at home and at school. By and large both groups had their biological parents, social parents, and communities not much involved in their education leading to delinquent behavior and poor academic performance, results which mirror those of earlier studies in West Africa (Rupande, 2014). In light of the cited negative impact of emigration on LLB, we conclude that leaving learners as one emigrates is largely unadvisable for now in the Zimbabwean district of Mwenezi and urge the government, communities and schools to set up inclusive community platforms where the new category of orphanhood and learner welfare policies are interrogated.

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The Defense of Rejneesh's Idea of Inconsistency in Scholars: The Rejection of Rigidity in Academia

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ABSTRACT

Although it is the nature of the world that things always change except the change itself, some scholars have become ideological in the strife for consistency. Some scholars take their ideas as sacred to the effect of sticking by them even when they are no longer sufficiently defensible. This fear of being inconsistent has crept even into the minds of scholars. Bagwan Rejneesh, an Indian philosopher who was always comfortable with changing and embracing change became vital as an advocate of thought development. This defense presents the necessity of being not resistant to change due to what one has held before. There has been a contradiction within the academic thoughts projected by some scholars. The center of the contradiction stems from scholars' arguments for evolution and transformation while at the same time, they worry about being always consistent. Therefore, this paper does not advocate thought anarchy, but it is set forth to logically defend the rejection of consistency when it no longer holds or is even defensible. This attitude of academics with sacred thoughts/ ideas happens to be utterly destructive within the academic sphere where progressive teaching and learning pedagogies must be taken into consideration. Not only that the academics themselves will benefit if they embrace a necessary change but also the students will benefit from the progressiveness and non-ideological teaching of their teachers/ lecturers. In my view, it seems very important that at some time academics rationally accept the change of times and accept that their ideas lack sacredness and universal eternity. Having this understanding of academic rationality, I wish to put forth some skeptical views of Bagwan Rejneesh with regard to ideological ideas that claim sacredness even when they have become obsolete.

Keywords: Ideological, Consistency, Defense, Contradictions, decolonization

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of time till now there was never an existence of a being that is fit to be granted the status of "a universal human". Every person's thought is a collection of historicized and individuated ordinary experiences (Eze, 2008), except if one wants to claim the improbable. However, some people have made serious attempts to portray their thoughts as if they were sacrosanct and universal. Such scholars may include David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Wilhelm George Hegel, David Manning, and many others that I will talk about in this paper. In this paper, I defend the idea of ordinary reason as the truthful interpretation of human reasoning rather than the superficial interpretation of human reason as a universal or sacred supernatural phenomenon. Within the paradigm of critical thinking and analysis as centered within the critical theory I set forth to defend transformative and transforming ways of thinking that truthfully present the human

state of nature. I seek to critically analyze academic misrepresentations of some thoughts as well as their indefensibility. At the end I will then suggest a 'chameleon metaphor' as a tool or a perspective that scholars could adopt and use when it comes to a truthful representation of their thoughts. As the aim is to create teachable educators, I wish this research to shed some light on how teachers should view themselves and portray their thoughts to those whom they teach. According to Crater et al (2021) an educator who allows the change of his/ her ideas to change over time as he/she learns from/ and with the students is a teachable educator. Therefore, in this study, a teachable educator is the one who keeps his/ her mind open to new ideas even if they threaten to change his/ her initial ideas.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is committed to the analytical school of thought. According to McGinn (2002) analytical philosophy emphasizes clarity and argument, which is commonly attained through logical and linguistic analysis. Gottlob Frege (1906) is considered as the father of analytical philosophy, a tradition that emphasizes on clarity of argument through the logical use of language in presenting thoughts. Within this framework, Bertrand Russell found a space to argue for logicism and logical atomism (Soames, 2003). According to Soames (2003) Logicism and logical atomism refers to the practice of breaking the argument into basic propositions in order to understand how coherent are those components that comprise the whole. Similarly, Hallen and Sodipo (1997) argue for the analytical breakdown of issues to simpler and logical thoughts through the use of logic in simple ordinary language. Soames (2003) seems to hold a view that philosophical problems arise from a misunderstanding of language and that all necessary truths are a priori, analytic, and true in virtue if the meaning of words depends upon how the world truly is. Analytic theory helps in producing philosophy that is not ideologically motivated but thought that is analytic and reflective (Hallen, 2005). Under Wittgenstein's (1937) inspiration, Carnap (1961) sought to embed his analysis in logical positivism as a development of this tradition. Logical positivism holds that there are no specific philosophical truths and that the object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts (Soames, 2003). Carnap (1937) and other scholars contributed to this tradition by rejecting the doctrines of their predecessors of constructing artificial language to resolve philosophical problems. According to Glock (2008: 44) philosophers like Carnap collectively argued that the Vienna Circle was erroneous because the "quest for systemic theories of language worked as a misguiding intrusion of scientific methods into philosophy".

The analytic framework in this research study helps in acquire a profound or adequate understanding of the research problem prior to forwarding my own views. Since it is the framework that guides me in my methodology, it also helps in the application of critical analysis that is reasonably safe from any biases. This theoretical framework enables a researcher to be reflective and at the same time be within guards of rationality while being critical of his thoughts. With the guide of logical positivism and criticality of thought, I have been able to deal with incoherencies and ideological speculations around the issues of both human existence and teaching philosophy while operating as a neutral being who is interested in learning more about philosophy and education. As Soames (2003) argued logical positivism holds that there are no absolute philosophical truths, but the object of philosophy is to clarify thoughts, this has helped me to simplify my thoughts. In this paper, I committed to the use of

ordinary language in producing my critical thoughts while at the same time analyzing the common thoughts that are currently existing in the public domain. The analytic framework is adequately relevant when dealing with critical issues like this one of philosophy in education because many people talk about these issues at a peripheral level and never get deeper into the rationality and core of what makes a rational philosophy of education.

METHODOLOGY

Different works of Osho Bhagwan Shree Rejneesh have been critically studied. A collection of 30 lecture videos, 6 documentary interviews, and a series of Osho Bhagwan Rejneesh's teachings were included in the conceptualization of this study. These sources mainly focus on Rejneeshe's philosophy as an Indian classical philosopher who began the anti-religion movement of Sanyasin, a form of a 'cult' that got expelled in India due to the accusations that they perpetrate chaos and governmental instability. Since this is a desktop conceptual research, the sources available in the public domain have been the only usable data which helped in understanding the whole life and teachings of Rejneesh. The ethics of academic research have been adhered to in a form of acknowledging all sources used through academic referencing. All sources acknowledged in this study have been studied and analyzed in order to find main ideas and interpretations of Rejneesh's thoughts.

In studying these sources, three levels of interpretations have been adopted; (a) textual interpretation which analyzes the words as they appear in a text or uttered by a speaker, (b) contextual interpretation which analyzes the context or purport within which particular statements have been written or spoken, (c) subjective interpretation which analyzes the ideas with regards to relevance in the contemporary era. Subjecting all these sources to these levels of interpretation helps to find the core of Rejneesh's within the logical scrutiny that is free from any biasness that risks tempering with the main thought. After having Rejneesh's thoughts analyzed, this study also used 10 academic articles written by African scholars about decolonization. The use of these 10 articles was meant to help in marking the relevance of Rejneesh's thoughts about scholars' consistency in nowadays struggle against coloniality and colonialism.

FINDINGS

Firstly, this study found that some scholars find themselves having taken their ideas as sacrosanct and not subject to review. Secondly, this study found that it is undeniably discomforting in some scholars to learn from/ with their students as that threatens to challenge the very ideas within which their own identity is formed. Thirdly, some scholars talk and write about decolonization without understanding that it demands change of thoughts to the level that it demands openness to new ideas and ways of teaching. Fourthly, while consistency overtime seems desirable, it sometimes hinders progressive learning, transformation, and may give rise to perpetration of obsolete thoughts that completely lack relevance.

Analysis

According to Packer (1973) it is commonly heard in religious studies that somebody received an objectively true knowledge through prophecy. By definition, prophecy in religious settings is believed to be some piece of information from the supreme being which is meant to enlighten all human beings in the world (Fomum, 1990). The idea is that since the knowledge in that case descends from the supreme being who is omniscient and omnipresent it is then not subject to any limitation (Okeke, 2019). At this point there is no denial to the claim that the supreme being can have a superlative

cognition that goes beyond individuality, historicity, and geographically environed experiences. However, the argument here is that scholars are not like the supreme being and none of them get some revelations or God's inspirations when writing their academic thoughts. Hence, I argue that there was never a universal person, and it is alarming when some scholars present their thoughts in a way that seems to claim eternity and universality. Among those scholars who present their thoughts as universal, I would count David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Wilhelm George Hegel, David Manning, and others. Those scholars seem to have believed that they are some kinds of universal persons who then emit universal and eternal thoughts. Before delving into their thoughts, I deem it proper to bear in mind that I do not only intend to deal with what they said, but I intend to also analyze their presentation critically in literature. At last, I wish to delve into what the thought and its presentation portray about the author himself.

David Hume wrote "On National Characters" where he argued that Negroes are naturally inferior to the white race (Hume, 1825). He defended the writing of that essay to the level of uttering some derogatory words against Professor James Beaty who took a stand to question him about some extremes he seems to be committing in the presentation of his thoughts (Mosley, 2017). Immanuel Kant came later to corroborate Hume in his writings when he wrote that there was never a developed race that nature has witnessed other than the white race (Kant, 2013). Both these scholars considered their thoughts to be somehow universal and eternal in the sense that they present them as if they are objectively definitive of existence itself. The sacrosanct nature of these views to their authors can be seen in the compulsive force of their presentation at the time they wrote them. According to Hunter (2019) many scholars approach the analysis of these thoughts during the discussions on the topic of race, inferiority complex versus superiority complex of some races over other races. But in this paper, I take a different angle than that of race philosophy and racism discussions. I set forth to talk about thought as human thought and thought presentation as ordinary and limited rather than being universally eternal. It is understandable that due to some academic authority, someone might develop some arrogance which then makes him/ her thoughts remain forever and unchallenged by the world's changes. I hereby argue that such kind of thinking is not only untrue, but it is also rationally indefensible.

Honesty in thought

An honest philosopher would voice out his/their views in a way that shows some consideration of the fact he/ she is an individual human being whose thoughts are affected by factors like time, space, and environment. In arguing for this view of honesty I take with gravity Leigh's (2015) views that honesty should be the basic garment of every human being who needs to make it in the world. I hold on to that view because I also believe that for any person to be understood it is always better to be understood for the truth of what they are as their true self. The word "naturally" in Hume's statement seems to suggest that his views hold as long as nature stands. The kind of presentation seems to have much force of rigidity than flexibility at any time. At any time when one reads such a thought, s/he can see how much the author was unwilling to change his views. This is the same with Kant's words, when one reads Kant's writings on race it is easy to see that he viewed his ideas as universal rather than being simply ordinary views of a limited human being. It is my view that honesty in scholars should dictate the above wishful thinking because there is some level of

falsehood that creeps in when a scholar starts to present his wishful thinking as truth. In this case truth is an honestly presented idea or statement which factually presents what is or what happened as it happened (Shaw, 2014). According to Smith (2015) truth does not include the wishes of the presenter, an honest interpreter will always be conscious of his limitations and the changing world in which things happen. Another commonly ignored truth is that truth itself changes over time (Lyons and Coyle, 2016). I concur with Lyons and Coyle, in that truth itself changes because of changes in the world situations, and it is within that ambit that Heraclitus argued that the only constant thing in the world is change itself (Sotemann, 2008). In light of all that, it is then arguable that scholars like Hume, Kant, Hegel, Manning were very much concerned about consistency in their thoughts than rationality and honesty.

An honest philosopher will know that his/ her duty is to think, analyse thoughts, and present thoughts as pure as they are. According to Finkelberg (2017) those thoughts will surely be shamelessly envisaging all his/ her limitations as an ordinary human being. A progressive thinker is the one who is open to challenging views without getting upset and resort to vulgar or any form of unnecessary defensiveness. A scholar that protects his thoughts to the level of granting them some level of universality becomes more of a thought dictator than a liberal thinker. According to Kreeft (2002) it is known from Socratic teachings that a teacher who does nothing best than imposing his thoughts to the students is not a good teacher. Peterson (2011) agrees with Kreeft (2002) in his argument that once a person portrays himself/ herself as absolutely knowing s/he blocks the possibility of himself getting to really be knowing. Socrates declared himself as a man who knows nothing except that very fact that he knows nothing (Kreeft, 2002). In my view a teacher who is that open to declare himself as unknowing does not only open himself/ herself to a wide learning and honesty, but s/he also protects himself from being a thought dictator. Although Magrini (2018) Argues that Socrates declaration of being unknowing was some sort of a mockery against sophists I view it as some way of declaring to the world that he is always willing to learn. The important thing about being open to learning is that a scholar gets to be updated and is always transformed into being more of a progressive thinker. As a result of that humility, thinkers like Socrates easily learn life as nature unfolds it with calmness and acceptance of their ordinary nature of existence.

Within that idea of an ordinary calm being that accepts its existential state as being ordinary and limited I take solace in the teachings of Osho Bhagwan Rejneesh, one of the classical Indian philosophers of enlightenment. Unlike other philosophers of enlightenment, Bhagwan Rejneesh made it his mission to never comfort anyone with objective and unchallenged claims (OSHO International, 2020). According to Bhagwan Rejneesh (OSHO International, 2020) any human being becomes beautiful when s/he accepts himself as s/he is, other than thinking of himself/ herself as that which s/he is not. It seems that Rejneesh was being confronted by many experiences of some thought dictators some of whom even claimed some divine revelations. Krishnamurti (2009) narrates that at an early age Rejneesh believed in questioning all ideas until there is no more thing to question about them before believing in them. At the same time, McComack (2018) argues that it was always difficult to ascertain which side of thought does Rejneesh follow because he was never afraid of changing at any time he deems fit to change. Gayatri (2018) argues that it was always difficult to be Rejneesh's student because one would never be certain of what direction does he

want his students to take. Bhagwan Rejneesh himself said "many times you [referring to his students] have been consoled and commanded on what to believe and do, but myself I am to tell you that believe and do nothing except seeking true knowledge" (OSHO International, 2018). In my view scholars like Rejneesh are open-minded thinkers who accept their limited nature and present their views with full consideration of the fact that they are limited ordinary beings. That acceptance of the self makes a thinker beautiful in the sense that it shows freedom from self-deception and saves students from the manifestations of a thought dictator. In this perspective, a thought becomes beautiful when it is honestly presented in a way that is conscious of its time, space, and natural limitations that fully grasp its ordinary nature.

Bhagwan Rejneesh argues that when a philosopher gets much concerned about the consistency of his/ her thoughts s/he then becomes not only irrational but horrible to engage with (OSHO International, 2018). It becomes a horrible endeavor to engage with him/ her because of his obsession with manipulation, standardization, and generalization as that is a nature of positivists (Smythe, 1992). According to Detlef Von Daniels (2004) those qualities are core reasons why it was proper to reject positivism as an educational philosophy and grant it outdated. A philosopher's thought should be scholastically defended with absolute scrutiny against indefensible wishful desires and prejudices. Rejneesh argues that thought should not only be transformative, but it must also be ready to transform itself when or if situations change due to the effects of time, space, and understanding. In this paper I want to make it clear that understanding of a particular idea also evolves or transforms over time as the ordinary word changes. Charles Sotemann (2008) argues that as human population evolves over the ages, idea also change greatly, sometimes what has been the truth in the past generation becomes entirely false in the next generation. For instance, in the early 80's being homosexual was a taboo to such an extent that it was normal to frown at, but nowadays if you carry on with that kind of thinking you get to be the one frowned at, and be called a homophobe (Gonda and Mounsey, 2007). Besides being affected by the era of existence, some ideas even get affected by the geographic environment like one idea being true in some place while being completely false in another place. A transforming thought is the one that is able to change human views while a transformative thought is the one that is presented openly to welcome change of situations that may even change itself.

Defensibility of flexibility over rigidity

Thus far I have been defending an idea that is directly contrary to thought rigidity posed by a thinker who claims universal knowledge. However, I understand the desire to be always consistent in some scholars, and I say that is an evil temptation that opens doors for thought dictatorship and having followers rather than critical interlocutors. According to Meijer (2018 and Cornell (2020) a universal person with a universal knowledge/ thought is impossible to exist because experience bears evidence to the fact that there was never a man who escaped limitations of time, space, and individuality. An apparent truth according to Bhagwan Rejneesh's teachings is that an honest philosopher will never worry about consistency in presenting his/ her thoughts as an ordinary human being who is subject to all natural limitations. Indeed, it might seem laudable that some thinkers would love the status of being "a thinker of all times" through having projected thoughts that portray some eternity (Hartsome, 1983). However, it is puzzling and astonishing to think of the unexplainable being that explains

all things. That means, if anyone claims to be a universal human, then since there is no definition of what that is, s/he must explain anything knowable to mankind. Within that very same line of thought, it is entailed that once a thought assumes universality and eternity it then becomes hard for ordinary human beings to comprehend it. The core idea here is that any thinker who gets very obsessed with consistency throughout his life creates an impossible situation of the limited that produces the unlimited. Friedrich Max Muller (1897) seems to have pre-emptively understood this argument of human understanding profoundly for him to say that at times students fail to understand a lot of things from those rigid teachers who honor consistency more than anything else. But due to suffering caused by the effects of manipulation, standardization, and generalization, they then resort to pretentious understanding which makes them completely divorced from their true honesty.

I argue that those students of pretentious understanding become a generational problem because they also grow to defend ideas that they do not even have an iota of understanding about them. In other words, a society taught by rigid scholars might end up having a cluster of thought dictators that would suffocate and truncate any thought development of their students. I posit that thought development is very important because it is the main thing that determines human development in any given space and time. That is why most of the time it is quite difficult to alienate thoughts from philosophers who authored them. Faced with this very fact, Michael Tomasello (2014) Ended up admitting Rene Descarte's view that a human being is the mind. He then argued that everyone who emits progressive or developmental thoughts remains much existing and effective than the one who is stagnated with rigidity in outdated thoughts. In dealing with such thoughts, Ian Robertson (2020) broke his silence by arguing that the differentiating factor between the priest and a philosopher is the fact that the priest seeks to be believed while a philosopher seeks understanding. Understanding here is in both senses that the teacher must understand his position and be understood by his students. According to OSHO Bagwaan Rejneesh that goal can only be achieved through subjecting one's thoughts under the scrutiny of rationality and convincing logic. In other words, when a philosopher wants to manipulate his students into being his followers who believe his thoughts as the absolute truth, he then turns into a priest. The nature of thought in a changing world ought to evolve and that should not give any discomfort to an honest philosopher. In fact, Rejneesh argues that thought transformation shows growth, being current, and willingness to develop. Having that in mind then means that scholars who should be ashamed of themselves are those who cling to thought consistency instead of rejecting outdated thoughts in the embrace of the current ones.

Some rigid thinkers face profound challenges nowadays in a world where there is a call for different forms of deconstruction. When Jack Derrida spoke about deconstruction, he was coming strong on the idea of destructuralism which sought to override the rigid structures that were held by the community (Broden, 2014; Schep, 2020). Structuralism was one of the ways to institutionalize the rigidity of ideas and thought presentation, and with any other rigidity-driven thoughts structuralism was pushed as the truth to abide by (Broden, 2014). I will just take decolonization as one example of deconstructions that seem to be quite difficult for those rigid scholars who are a generation of coloniality. Some scholars who witnessed colonization and lived during the colonial era ingested all rigidity in Auguste Comte's positivism (Mandieta, 2013). In this epoch of deconstruction

theories and movements against rigidity and colonial structures, they suffer a lot of discomfort. According to Shawa (2019) some products of colonial-era scholarship get exposed with hypocrisy that exists in their minds when they fear decolonization and its theories like Afrocentrism. This is because of the fact that decolonization demands an entire change of views, and that is subject to thought flexibility rather than rigidity manifest in positivism. Schep (2020) Also argues that some scholars happen to have that discomfort and hypocrisy that exists in their minds when they start talking about decolonization to the rigidity that seems inherent in their thoughts. In my view, they suffer mental conflict when faced with changing times as their fellow existents exacerbate change. In the clear words of Heraclitus there seems to be a profound truth that change at any time in existence is inevitable (Bran, 2011). I take a stance of a serious embrace toward a deeper understanding of that idea. Bhagwan Rejneesh appears to be bringing a solution when he argues that embracing your nature makes you beautiful, that is in a sense that you get to be accepted and appreciated for the real you (McComack, 2018).

A human by nature is a being that exists in a changing world that keeps him/ her affected by various limitations that demand a constant change in thoughts for development to occur. It is then an argument I put forward that all thinkers, scholars, and teachers would be beautiful if they divorced thought rigidity in favor of flexibility in their thoughts as per their existential limitations. If all teachers can seek this beauty of Bhagwan Rejneesh, a new brand of free thinkers who are willing to sacrifice consistency for self-understanding and truthful thought presentation would emerge. Upon seeing how discomforting thought rigidity is for scholars who suffer from it I then propose a chameleon metaphor. According to Carlson-Berne (2014) who always enjoyed animal companionship, the chameleon is one animal that is endowed with natural wisdom that allows it to always change and adopt the status quo. Having noticed it as wisdom in such a small animal of kingdom reptilia (Barnes, 2014), and due to the benefits, it provides to the chameleon, I think scholars should learn something profound. Hollar (2012) and Barnes (2014) Argue that the chameleon's camouflage saves the chameleon from many dangers as it makes it relevant to the environment by blending with it. The chameleon metaphor marks a paradigm of being eclectic, using what works in that particular time and place in order to stay relevant and safe from all evils. However, it should be borne in mind that I am not in any way advocating for thought anarchy whereby all kinds of thought would be allowed and be viewed with acceptance even if they are not bringing any progress. Here I argue for a developmental and progressive thought inconsistency or flexibility which will aid in the openness of thought presentation by scholars.

I submit that thought camouflage is necessary for any scholar who wants to present his thoughts in an ordinary and pure manner. By thought camouflage, I envision a capability to; firstly, accept the particularity of the thinker, secondly accept the challenge-ability of the thought, and thirdly, the alterability of that thought due to natural effects. Rejneesh's philosophy seems to be doing more justice in the handling of human thoughts as opposed to thought rigidity vice upon honest scholars. The chameleon metaphor as a concept entails that a scholar must be open to questioning his/ her thoughts even if it demands the entire change of his worldview. It is for that reason that I include the idea of 'philosophical conversions' in the title of this paper. By philosophical conversions I mean those instances whereby a philosopher gets faced with profoundly challenging situations to his honest

worldview, and due to his honesty s/he deems it better to embrace change. Ivan Creppel (2003) narrated similar praises to Hitchens (2017) for some scholars who have resorted to that route at times when they discovered the level of indefensibility in their thoughts. It is understandable that since some scholars take their thoughts as their identity, they then fear change because they clearly see that it will temper their identity (Jackson, 2019). Indeed, I do not refute the argument that one's thoughts form part of his/ her identity. But the point I am assertive of is that at least scholars must allow philosophical conversions as long as they promise resonance with ordinary nature and progress. According to Carlson-Berne (2014) chameleons do not avoid going to other places because of the fear of change, but rather, they embrace change when it finds them. The main idea here is that scholars should not fear being critically engaged in questions and discussions about their thoughts because that actually grants them a chance to reflect and revise them where necessary. In fact, OSHO Bagwaan Rejneesh rejects thought stagnation as one of the serious illnesses that need immediate redress before it submerges someone into self-deceit.

CONCLUSION

An honest scholar is one who attempts, by all means, to balance emotions and logic without ending up being a commander. This research argues that by virtue of being a philosopher, it then becomes mandatory that one explores all thoughts and avoids any form of prejudice in his/ her teaching. A thought camouflage envisaged by *Chameleon metaphor* liberates those scholars who have held on to their sacrosanct thoughts over time as some form of a belief system. Holding on to thoughts that are no longer relevant or even defensible enslaves someone to end up having to retrogress while human existence and wisdom should be progressing. Having unchangeable thoughts destroys the whole spirit of teaching and learning and reduces it all to mere memorizing of obsolete thoughts of ancient times. Using a Chameleon metaphor, a scholar has absolute freedom to (a) advance and revise his/ her thoughts at any time, (b) accept new information and enhance his/ her knowledge, (c) at some point accept that s/he needs to unlearn other things, and (d) teach students who will have critical thinking skills and face the world as it presents itself to them. The only time diversity may not be allowed is the time when it clouds the truth and threatens to arouse chaos. The chameleon metaphor itself does not advocate chaos, but it allows everyone to express their thoughts and be listened to without prejudice. It is for that argument that this research advocates change in scholars' philosophy in order to embrace decoloniality and avoid the hypocrisy of teaching decolonization while clinking to colonial thought systems.

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To Embrace or Not to Embrace? New Academics (NAs) or New University Teachers (NUTs)' Challenges and Preferences Between Face-To-Face and Online Teaching.

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused institutions of higher education to urgently seek appropriate methods of involving students in matters of learning and teaching. Whether by conscious decision or circumstantial necessity, the imperative to embrace and implement online instruction has proven to be a formidable challenge for some academics, Particularly those who are new to academia and are referred to as New Academics (NAs) or Newly Appointed University Educators (NUTs). Framed within the context of Glasser (1998)'s Choice Theory (CT) and Rational Choice Theory (RCT), and employing a qualitative research methodology, this paper draws upon data obtained from questionnaires focused on needs analysis (NAQs) that were distributed during the induction of new academics from 2020 to 2022. The primary aim was to comprehend the challenges and preferences faced by new academics (NAs) or new university teachers (NUTs) pertaining to student instruction. NAQs were sent to NAs/NUTs prior to the induction to understand the kind of support they need, and the NAQ responses were thematically analysed. The study's findings reveal that NAs and NUTs faced challenges in online teaching due to inadequate resources and reduced student participation. Despite the pandemic's push for online teaching, these NUTs still favored in-person interaction. The article's conclusions suggest that there should be adjustments in how new academics or teachers are introduced to their roles, along with enhanced support to help them develop skills for engaging and instructing students effectively in various online settings.

Keywords: New Academics, Online Teaching and Learning, COVID-19 Pandemic, University Teachers, Needs Analysis Questionnaire, Face-to-Face Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Although significant attention has been directed toward documenting the COVID-19 outbreak and its global impact on people's lives (Ayittey et al., 2020), scant research exists regarding the online teaching and learning encounters encountered by new academics (NAs) who joined higher education institutions amid the pandemic. The Higher Education Sector was not exempt from these adverse effects. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions of higher learning were compelled to enact temporary closures as a precautionary measure (Orfan et al., 2021). Throughout this period, online learning gained unprecedented traction in comparison to traditional face-to-face instruction. Despite the substantial surge in demand for online teaching and learning, academics encountered a spectrum of challenges and prospects (Kong et al., 2020).

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic caught educational institutions off guard, leaving no room for advance preparations for remote instruction. Within the context of higher education, academics were thrust into an emergency response scenario, ensuring the continuity of academic operations through remote learning and teaching. Swiftly, academics embraced online teaching methodologies, encompassing the utilization of video

recordings, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, and various other online platforms (Hashemi, 2021). Although certain higher education establishments had already integrated online learning modalities, the disruptions wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic compelled these online programmes to encompass the entire off-campus population, often without due consideration of users' perceptions or their readiness to engage with virtual learning tools (Mushtaha et al., 2022). Furthermore, the transition from traditional face-to-face teaching to online-based instruction presented an array of inherent opportunities and challenges.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the face of unprecedented and unpredictable times, brought about by events like the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as community and student protests, there arises a necessity to discover means by which learning and teaching can remain undisturbed. Whether by choice or by circumstance, the requirement to embrace and adopt online teaching has never been a straightforward task, especially for certain academic staff or university teachers, particularly those who are new to academia (NAs) or new university teachers (NUTs) within higher education institutions (HEIs). One of the challenges that these teachers encountered when it comes to online teaching is their proficiency in computer technology. This is just one of the numerous obstacles that academics face (Mbongo, Hako, and Munangatire, 2021). Additionally, challenges may arise in formulating and implementing various inclusive approaches that are essential for online instruction. Difficulties might also manifest in effectively engaging students in the process of learning and teaching.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given this context, this paper poses the following questions:

What are the experiences of new academics in relation to online teaching? What challenges are they encountering regarding online teaching? If they were to choose between face-to-face and online teaching, which learning and teaching approach would they prefer? And why?

As Academic Development (AD) practitioners are tasked with offering support and professional growth to academics both new and experienced within the system, these inquiries were directed towards identifying ways through which we can promote and instill new methods, a culture of teaching and learning, and the adoption of alternative approaches in line with the demands of specific periods, such as the Covid-19 pandemic in higher education. Additionally, understanding the challenges faced by new academics would offer insights into how we can best assist those entering higher education institutions to leverage the opportunities presented by online teaching and learning.

REVIEWED LITERATURE

Understanding online learning and teaching

The concept of online learning is not novel, having various definitions and interpretations. However, this study bases its comprehension of online learning on Regmi and Jones (2020), who define online teaching and learning as an educational approach that facilitates learning through the utilisation of information technology and communication. This approach provides learners with access to all the necessary educational programs. In a simpler and more contextual manner, online learning and teaching can be understood as a method for sharing knowledge using technology.

The idea of online teaching and learning gained prominence during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic when diverse online platforms were employed while higher learning institutions were temporarily closed. Amity University (2021) distinguishes between online learning and distance learning. They posit that distance learning is traditionally known as correspondence courses, where study materials and learning

resources are dispatched to students through mail or email. In this learning format, there is minimal interaction between students and teachers.

Online learning represents a more contemporary approach, employing Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) such as Moodle and Blackboard to distribute multimedia lectures, facilitate discussions, share student resources, and conduct exams (Amity Online, 2021). This method of learning fosters interactivity, with teachers and students frequently convening online through digital platforms. Similarly, Heng and Kol (2021) indicate that online learning (often used interchangeably with e-learning) is a form of distance education that leverages technology as the mediator of the learning process, with teaching being entirely delivered through the internet. In contrast, distance learning can be understood as an endeavor to provide access to education for those who are geographically remote.

Hence, the integration of e-learning within most higher education institutions was devised to mitigate the challenges that arose due to the abrupt closure of these institutions. Consequently, faculty members and students had to rely entirely on the use of advanced technological tools and platforms to ensure continuous teaching and learning (Mushtaha et al., 2022).

Opportunities and challenges of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic

The pandemic wreaked havoc across the country, leading to the cancellation of face-to-face classes and their transition to online platforms. This shift brought about the emergence of online learning, enabling students to continue their education (Heng and Sol, 2021). The sudden switch from in-person to online learning posed numerous challenges for students, teachers, administrators, and education leaders. Given that many students and teachers lacked training in utilising technology as the primary medium for learning, Kavaric et al. (2021) indicate that numerous teachers encountered difficulties in adapting to online teaching. This can be largely attributed to the rapid spread of the pandemic, which left little opportunity for training teachers and students in the use of virtual learning resources like Moodle and Blackboard.

Furthermore, the e-learning system has complicated the role of teachers. They are now tasked with gathering, preparing, and presenting information through the internet. Consequently, this has led to a surge in workload for teachers (Adnan & Anwar, 2020, as cited in Kavaric et al., 2021). Additionally, online learning's effectiveness relies heavily on technology devices and internet connectivity. Heng and Sol (2021) assert that the biggest challenge to online learning is technological in nature. If those involved in the teaching and learning process lack digital competence due to inexperience or insufficient training, it hampers the learning experience. Challenges such as lack of familiarity with applications, unstable or slow internet connections, and incompatible browsers posed significant hurdles for both teachers and students. Supporting this, a study conducted by Jalli (2020) in Southeast Asia found that inadequate internet access hindered full participation in online learning.

However, one's geographical location plays a pivotal role in their ability to engage in online learning. Individuals residing in rural areas, where internet stability is more reliable, encounter fewer obstacles (Flynn and Himmel, 2020). Mushtaha et al. (2022) acknowledge that while online learning was the preferred alternative during the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of experience with e-learning among teachers and inadequate support resulted in many teachers devising student courses without proper consideration.

In their study conducted in India, Kavaric et al. (2021) report that the challenges of shifting education online during the pandemic extended beyond technological resources to psychological well-being. Similarly, Mushtaha et al. (2022)

highlight in their research that the sudden adoption of e-learning had negative impacts on users' mental health and socialization. Approximately 55.6% of participants acknowledged adverse effects due to the transition to e-learning. While online learning boasts several advantages, as Prisanna (2021) indicates, it also demands high self-motivation. Correspondingly, around 77.2% of participants in the study by Mushtaha et al. (2022) offered positive feedback on the flexibility of online learning. Prisanna (2021) further notes that successful online students develop diverse strategies to keep up with coursework. The availability of recorded class sessions allows students to learn at their convenience, affording them the freedom to choose their study times. Ultimately, the advantages of online learning lie in promoting familiarity with the technology employed by both students and teachers, facilitating their full participation in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Theoretical Foundations of the Paper

Our paper is grounded in Glasser (1998)'s Choice Theory (CT) and Rational Choice Theory (RCT). Choice Theory (CT) concerns an individual's control over their own emotions and actions, which a person can undertake. Glasser argues that CT teaches and highlights that every behavior is selected by an individual and that such behavior is primarily motivated by the desire to fulfill five fundamental human needs. These five needs are the need for love and acceptance, the need for power or empowerment, the need for freedom, the need for enjoyment, and the need for survival. CT is based on the understanding and assertion that people's actions and engagements are often driven by these five basic needs. Furthermore, CT asserts that all human behaviors consist of four key components: acting, feeling, thinking, and physiology.

Expanding upon CT, Glasser introduces the Rational Choice Theory (RCT), which emphasizes that people typically make decisions based on their assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the circumstances they are in. This implies that individuals make decisions by evaluating or weighing the costs and benefits of the potential options before embarking on any course of action. Additionally, human behavior is viewed as a means of fulfilling individual needs. Glasser (1998) argues that although individuals aim to make choices that they believe will be advantageous, such decisions might turn out to be incorrect, leading to unfavorable outcomes.

Context of the Paper

As Academic Development (AD) practitioners affiliated with The New Academics Transitioning into Higher Education Project (NATHEP), we were assigned the responsibility of devising an induction framework for new academics or university educators. The NATHEP project involves the participation of ten (10) South African universities and is exclusively dedicated to enhancing the capabilities and capacity of staff developers to conceptualize, organize, implement, and assess professional development initiatives for the orientation of new academics within their respective institutions. The induction model is designed to be contextually adaptable and rooted in theory.

With this rationale in mind, we formulated a Need-Based Induction (NBI) model, which we initiated in the period between 2019 and 2022. An essential aspect of our NBI model revolves around the utilization of Needs Analysis Questionnaires (NAQs), which are distributed to the (NAs)/ (NUTs) for completion prior to the commencement of the induction process (Ravhuhali & Mboweni, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This paper employed a qualitative exploratory research design, with data sourced from Needs Analysis Questionnaires

(NAQs) to comprehend the challenges and preferences of new academics (NAs/NUTs) concerning student teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The exploratory research design was well-suited for this paper's objective, as it sought to gain insights into the experiences of a situation, phenomenon, or individuals (de Vos et al., 2005).

The NAQs consisted of open-ended questions and were completed by NAs/NUTs who joined South African higher education institutions between 2019 and 2022. The use of open-ended questions was chosen to provide participants with ample opportunities to express themselves fully, offering them the chance to provide comprehensive answers and share all the pertinent information required for this study (Popping, 2015; Creswell, 2012). Employing the NAQ as a tool before academic induction is vital for AD practitioners in enhancing the preparation of induction programs and, most crucially, in finding ways to support NAs/NUTs in adopting technology-driven pedagogy (Ravhuhali & Mboweni, 2022; Ravhuhali, Mboweni, & Nendauni, 2022). The NAQ offers insights into how we can best assist new academics in their transition to higher education institutions (Ravhuhali & Mboweni, 2022).

A total of forty (40) NAQs were randomly selected from the induction sessions held between 2020 and 2022 for NAs/NUTs. Participants were queried about their familiarity with online teaching or remote teaching, along with the challenges they encountered in online teaching. Furthermore, NAs/NUTs were asked to share their perspectives on their preferences between face-to-face and online teaching, along with the rationale for their choices. Responses from NAs/NUTs within the NAQs were subjected to thematic analysis, enabling the data to be categorized according to emerging themes during the data sorting process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Anxieties and challenges regarding online teaching

The NAQs provided valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by NAs/NUTs concerning online teaching. This holds particular significance given the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on higher education institutions, necessitating a shift towards online or blended learning. University of the People (2020) highlights that online learning typically requires comprehensive planning, which Hodges et al. (2020) suggest might take up to nine months. However, the abruptness of the pandemic prevented thorough preparation and training, resulting in widespread frustration.

Although a subset of NAs/NUTs expressed optimism about online teaching, citing advantages such as increased engagement through resources like lecture recordings, many highlighted fewer positive experiences. Numerous NAs/NUTs noted difficulties associated with teaching online, especially when they were still grappling with the learning management system (LMS) adopted by their institution. Financial constraints also played a role, with some NAs/NUTs noting that the provided data subsidy was inadequate for effective remote work.

Selected comments illustrate these challenges:

Currently, I am not sure how to use it online as I haven't been trained on it and my students are not well conversant with it. NA1 (2021)

I am struggling with the Moodle learning management system (LMS) used here and don't know how it works. I also used to struggle with Blackboard I have used it previously. NA 8 (2021)

For me, I am wondering as to how the little subsidy of R150-R200 of data is going to help me with data for online teaching. NA 5 (2020)

I have never taught online and now I am confronted with the challenges of how I am going to engage my students and the R200 subsidy. NA 4 (2022)

Network issues and I am not sure about students' participation and their comprehension of the system, especially first years. NA 5 (2022)

Training on Learning Management Systems (LMS)

Effective online student assessment emerged as a substantial challenge during the pandemic, in line with the findings of Mbhiza and Muthelo (2022). Success in online teaching and learning is intricately linked to competence in using the LMS, a fact supported by Bhalalusesa et al. (2013). NAs/NUTs stressed the need for continuous training in using these platforms to ensure successful navigation. This is confirmed when one NA indicated that it is a stressful experience in the beginning. Therefore, training cannot be once-off but should be a continuous exercise until one gets the 'hang of it'. Morgan (2020) confirms this in a study that revealed that lecturers felt teaching online was stressful as they were expected to suddenly transition fully from the traditional face-to-face mode of instruction without sufficient training on LMS. Also, Mbhiza and Muthelo (2022) note that the most worrying challenges experienced were in relation to the design and administration of a variety of assessment tasks. This resulted in assessment activities being done for the sake of ensuring that the content is covered. Some responses included:

Not very well, I am learning. I am learning with Moodle platform; I have not yet applied it in real-class teaching. NA 1 (2021)

A stressful experience in the beginning, but quite effective once you get the hang of it. NA 4(2020)

The challenges are on understanding of the online platforms for both learners and lecturers, more especially module. NA 8 (2020)

It is difficult to establish a connection with students online. Thus, poor connection = poor student engagement. NA 5 (2020)

Some students were reluctant to use Moodle to write their activities. NA 6(2020)

I find it very challenging for students, especially for students in the field of Mathematical Sciences. NA 7 (2020)

Challenges: Learners are not yet well-trained, and they bring all the technical problems to the lecturer instead of designated departments. NA 9 (2020)

In their study on "*Academics' Experience of Implementing E-Learning in a South African Higher Education Institution*", Maphalala and Adigun (2021, p.10) identified a variety of challenges experienced with the use of e-learning platforms in some higher education institutions. These challenges included a deficit in ICT infrastructure, unreliable Internet access, lack of technical assistance or support, and insufficient training opportunities for e-learning activities on the university's e-learning platform. Maphalala and Adigun (2021, p.10) argue that such challenges tend to hinder the confidence and morale of academics. Additionally, these challenges dampen academics' enthusiasm to create interactive content or module/course materials suitable for virtual learning (Maphalala and Adigun, 2021, p.10). These responses underscore the ongoing necessity for training on the LMS platform that the university employs, benefiting both academics and students. It is noteworthy that universities have been urging academics to utilize the established LMS, a call that often encounters resistance. Muthuprasad et al. (2021) advocate for augmenting technological skills as a boon for online learning. Consequently, the challenges of online learning are often seen as secondary to face-to-face learning. This dynamic contributes to academics' preference for the

face-to-face teaching mode, seeking to avoid burdening students with technologies they may lack access to.

Poor network connection and lack of gadgets for students

The challenge of inadequate network connectivity and lack of suitable devices for students loomed large for many NAs/NUTs. These limitations highlighted the digital divide and socioeconomic disparities among students. Some of NAs/NUTs had this to say:

Students struggle with network reception. Not all students can afford suitable gadgets. Others are unable to concentrate during class because of lot of noise coming from their background. NA 10 (2020)

Unstable network connectivity and lack of support in terms of specific needs of Lecturers. NA 11 (2020)

Technical glitches, poor connection during class or while students are writing atest. NA 2 (2022)

Internet connectivity plays a pivotal role in determining the success of students within an online learning environment. When a student encounters issues like poor network coverage, dropped internet connections, or the inability to access and download learning materials, it can ultimately result in their academic shortcomings. Notably, a significant portion of students hail from rural and underprivileged communities where internet access is hindered due to infrastructural inadequacies. Netanda (2020) highlights that remote rural students grapple with challenges in accessing the learning management systems (LMS) utilised for teaching and learning. Those in closer proximity to urban hubs have better LMS accessibility than their rural counterparts. This underscores the need for both students and educators to be equipped with technologies that ensure unfettered access to online teaching and learning, irrespective of their geographical locations.

The observations concerning the lack of devices underscore the socio-economic background prevailing among most students within the institution. Van Staden and Naidoo (2022, p.269) also underscore the adverse impact of limited access to digital devices and unreliable internet connectivity on students from impoverished communities. These challenges impede their ability to effectively engage in online learning and access support services offered by the campus. This is primarily due to students from poor backgrounds having limited or no access to devices that would facilitate their learning process. Consequently, a significant portion of students rely heavily on their mobile phones for online learning, which can present challenges when completing assignments and assessments. Dube (2020) further underscores that some students in rural communities lack even a basic smartphone and must rely on borrowing from those who possess one to pursue their education. Moreover, in addition to resource constraints, Van Staden and Naidoo (2022) point out that the poor network coverage prevalent in many remote rural communities where students hail from has an adverse impact. It jeopardizes their ability to effectively participate in online learning activities and, consequently, excludes them from reaping the benefits of such endeavors. During the COVID-19 lockdown period, certain students experienced anxiety and a sense of isolation from academic activities (Van Staden & Naidoo, 2022).

Students' poor attendance and participation

Another challenge highlighted by NAs/NUTs is the students' poor attendance and participation. The responses below suggest that many academics or university teachers, AD practitioners included, are conditioned to believe that the traditional way of teaching works best. Further, this might be attributed to the fact that NAs/NUTs are not well conversant with pedagogical approaches that one can use to teach effectively online leading to frustrations when it comes to online teaching. The responses above suggest

that many academics or university teachers, AD practitioners included, are conditioned to believe that the traditional way of teaching works best. Further, this might be attributed to the fact that NAs/NUTs are not well conversant with pedagogical approaches that one can use to teach effectively online, leading to frustrations when it comes to online teaching. Some had stated the following:

Poor attendance and it is hard to do tutorials online. NA 12 (2020)

No full student participation and difficulty in gauging student satisfaction and understanding in real-time. NA 1 (2022)

Not accessible to all students. Conducting online assessment. NA 3 (2022)

The challenge is students not attending, talking about the data and the load shading. Also, the R200 that the university is giving is too little for lecturers to work remotely. NA 4 (2022)

The challenges with online teaching are that it limits student participation and when there is load shedding it affects smooth teaching due to the network. NA 5 (2022)

It is important to observe that a variety of institutions host a diverse student body, many of whom originate from underprivileged backgrounds with limited access to digital technology. These students encounter digital technology primarily at the university level, such as when submitting typed assignments. As a result, their proficiency in digital skills remains restricted, potentially hindering their capacity to effectively engage in online learning interactions.

Williamson et al. (2020) highlight that not all young individuals possess the level of digital proficiency often assumed. Consequently, even with the provision of training on online platforms, it may take an extended period for students to become adept with the technologies. In their autoethnographic study, Mbhiza and Muthelo (2022) discovered that only a minority of students actively participated in online teaching and learning sessions, with few contributing to discussions or engaging with the content.

Mbhiza and Muthelo (2022) suggest that one reason for the lack of engagement and questioning among students is the lecturers' limited control over their activities during online teaching and learning sessions. These researchers further hypothesise that students might log into online sessions but refrain from active involvement in the broader teaching and learning process. As Krull and De Klerk (2021) also point out, the unfortunate reality persists that despite owning smartphones, numerous students enrolled in South African higher education institutions struggle to effectively utilize such devices for educational purposes.

Face-to-face as a preferred teaching and learning modus operandi for engaging with students.

When asked about their preferred method of teaching, NAs/NUTs overwhelmingly said that they prefer face-to-face teaching because it provides them with more interactive sessions with students. Their responses suggest that they are not ready to embrace the new normal of doing things online and would rather teach their students face-to-face as they used to do in the past. Some NAs/NUTs' responses are captured as follows:

I prefer face-to-face. NA 10 (2020)

I prefer contact classes because it makes room to give more examples to students and monitor their concentration. NA 12 (2020)

Face-to-Face. You can get full student's participation and gauge their understanding and satisfaction in real-time. NA 1 (2022)

I would prefer to use both mainly because some lockdown regulation doesn't allow gatherings. NA 5 (2022)

Face-to-face because I get to engage and interact with the students on a personal level and get to assess whether they are understanding what they are being taught by their body language. NA 2 (2022)

Face-to-face because it allows vigorous interaction between the lecturer and students. NA 3 (2022)

I would *choose face-to-face because it is more convenient in a way that you get more interactive with students and be able to consultation times.* NA 4 (2022)

Naik (2016) contends that the adoption of online learning facilitates the democratization of access, diminishing the significance of cost and geography as barriers to the engagement of the world's most disadvantaged with the brightest minds globally (p.2). The responses from NAs/NUTs reveal a preference for face-to-face interaction with their students, as opposed to online teaching and learning. These responses resonate with the sentiment expressed by Barrett (2010), who indicates that many teachers derive satisfaction from instructing within a live, physical classroom and require proper training to transition effectively to online learning.

Another notable stressor for NAs/NUTs in terms of online teaching is the challenges posed by network connectivity, power disruptions (load-shedding), and students' accessibility. A study conducted in the United Kingdom by Watermeyer, Crick, Knight, and Goodall (2020) reports that academics felt unprepared, inadequately supported, and significantly apprehensive about online teaching, learning, and assessment. Half of the academics who participated in the study by Watermeyer et al. (2020) expressed reservations about students' ability to access and meaningfully engage with online teaching and learning materials. Zalat, Hamed, and Bolbol's (2021) research uncovered that the most significant challenges associated with online teaching and learning were related to insufficient or unstable internet connectivity, inadequate computer facilities, a lack of computers or laptops, and technical difficulties.

Krull and De Klerk (2021) contend that two narratives regarding online teaching and learning are currently prevalent in South Africa. These narratives suggest that online instruction is more demanding and challenging than face-to-face education and that online learning is inferior to in-person education. Krull and De Klerk (2021) further assert that these perspectives could be attributed to faculty burnout and the complexities and inequalities within the higher education sector, exacerbated by the emergency transition to remote teaching prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. They argue that the reluctance to embrace online teaching is primarily rooted in entrenched inequalities pervasive throughout the country, thus affecting numerous higher education institutions.

Additionally, the geographical placement of several South African universities in rural areas with poor network connectivity could contribute to students' inability to participate in remote classes. Frequent power outages also significantly disrupt teaching and learning in South African higher institutions. While not exclusively a university concern, these issues greatly impact the educational process. Thus, it is advisable for university administrations to collaborate with network providers and electricity companies to devise strategies for mitigating these challenges.

It is conceivable that NAs/NUTs' preference for face-to-face interaction stems from negative experiences and difficulties encountered with online platforms, as previously highlighted. Furthermore, this preference could be influenced by the notion ingrained in NAs/NUTs that face-to-face teaching is more effective due to their own educational experiences. Moreover, the limited familiarity with navigating online spaces in terms of pedagogy, creating interactive online classrooms, and conducting assessments may raise substantial concerns

for NAs/NUTs regarding online teaching. Concerns about online teaching and learning include its potential to isolate students and its lack of accessibility and user-friendliness, which impose substantial pressure on academics. Naik (2016) supports this perspective by arguing that online learning is not an ideal model for advancing student learning in higher education institutions.

During induction sessions, we consistently emphasize the significance of academic professionalization, as it equips educators with theoretical approaches and optimal pedagogical practices for effective online teaching. An additional emphasis in the context of online teaching is the need for NAs/NUTs to engage in scholarly teaching and learning. This entails attending workshops, conferences, and webinars focused on online instruction, enabling them to glean best practices from peers within the higher education sector.

Implications of the Paper on Higher Education Institutions

The expressions of preference for face-to-face instruction over online teaching among educators highlight the need to instill agility and adaptability. This is imperative for them to embrace new methodologies necessitated by unforeseen circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It is crucial that higher education institutions and support structures for staff development ensure that all faculty members are equipped with the requisite skills, knowledge, and expertise in online pedagogies and learning management system (LMS) platforms utilized within their institutions. This need arises from the fact that the prevailing reliance on traditional face-to-face teaching approaches makes the potential of online teaching and learning seem less significant. This stance of prioritizing in-person instruction might hinder their exposure to modern technological approaches essential for 21st-century teachers. It is our contention that higher education institutions, particularly Academic Development (AD) practitioners, should reconsider and devise more effective strategies to help university teachers appreciate the benefits and possibilities of online instruction. This entails engagements that facilitate a comprehensive grasp of online and technology-driven teaching methodologies, coupled with tailored training to simplify, and demystify online teaching, thereby alleviating any apprehensions. This perspective aligns with the assertion by Krull and De Klerk (2021) that teachers should recognize the potential for social learning across various platforms, not solely confined to physical classrooms or campuses.

CONCLUSIONS

For novice academics, transitioning to online teaching and learning represents a foray into unfamiliar contexts, potentially causing them to feel like outsiders. This shift contradicts the pedagogical norms they experienced during their own student years. Considering this, questions arise:

How can AD practitioners develop alternative methods to foster a culture of innovative teaching and learning that aligns with the demands of unprecedented events such as the COVID-19 pandemic?

How can we, as AD practitioners, facilitate the integration of online teaching and learning for new faculty members entering the university environment?

Drawing from these questions, the study's conclusions emphasize the necessity of adaptability, innovative thinking, and adequate support to navigate challenges posed by unexpected events and to ensure the successful integration of online teaching and learning practices, particularly for new university teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating an environment where novice academics feel secure in comprehending the significance and advantages of online teaching and learning is crucial. Achieving this entails providing training on the institution's learning

management system as part of their induction into teaching roles within higher education. Assumptions about their familiarity with online modalities should be avoided, as proficiency in this area may vary. Furthermore, it is important to communicate that network challenges are not confined to specific regions, and educators should be encouraged to explore alternate ways of engaging students despite such obstacles. Collaborative discussions among faculty members can foster the sharing of best practices for enhancing student participation.

Recognizing that embracing new methodologies is often accompanied by apprehension, it is vital to support faculty members throughout their journey toward adopting online learning and teaching. This can be achieved by helping educators understand the significance of embracing online education within the current uncertain landscape.

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School Leadership and its Dexterity to Provide Access to Quality Instruction: A Case of a Private Academy in Masvingo, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The study explored school leadership practices in high-performing schools with reference to a private academy in Masvingo district. Literature suggests that leadership has a strong influence on the performance of any school organization. The nature of leadership is not always known but leaders need the tools to make things happen. The rationale for this study was to explore the hallmarks of leadership in high-performing contexts. The study applied interpretivist philosophy and qualitative methodology. The case study research design was employed as it could draw experiences from a high-performing school. Data was generated using semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended questionnaires. The data was presented through themes that emerged from the data analysis process. Informed by the findings, the themes were discussed following the research questions. Major findings were that school leadership in high-performing schools must have vision and direction, it must capacitate teachers with pedagogical and instructional skills, as well as improving the quality of teaching through supervision. Instilling student discipline is important to allow smooth instruction in the classrooms. School leadership must influence responsible authority to provide adequate financial, material, and human resources to reduce large class sizes to increase teacher commitment. The study recommends that staff development programmes that capacitate teachers be put in place so that teachers are equipped with deep approaches to teaching.

Keywords: School Leadership, High Performing Contexts, Student Performance, Instructional Leadership, Distributive Leadership, Pedagogical Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Access to quality instruction and not to a schooling place is the main reason for the existence of school leadership in an education system. School leadership sets the conditions and expectations for excellent instruction and the building of a culture of ongoing learning for students in a school (Acton, 2021; Kyla & Karen, 2010). The Education for All policy that was put in place by the Zimbabwean government enabled all children to access schooling place to every Zimbabwean regardless of color, creed, or political affiliation. Education was considered as a fundamental human right. By dint of this policy, many children went to school. However, the question that remains is whether the children have access to quality instruction, knowledge, and skills in the schools.

School leadership is broadly accepted as vital in achieving school growth (Bush, 2008), and as such, some schools are high-performing while others struggle. Leadership is central to the success of schools. It is argued that "leadership is a key ingredient to

school functioning" (Christie, 2001:11). In the same vein, Bush, Bell & Middlewood (2010) note that effective leadership is critical for a school to be successful. A school can thus reroute the trajectory of its pupil achievement in the presence of talented leadership. Education is deeply unequal in the United States of America, with students in poor districts performing at levels several grades below those of children in richer areas (Dynaski, 2016). This calls for leadership with craft literacy and craft competence for schools to perform well and change the status quo of these learners in society.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Schools are institutions whose daily operational smoothness and academic performance are influenced to a large extent by school leadership (Jay, 2014). To that end, the school head is the instructional leader who establishes the vision, mission, and core values for the school and these bear a direct influence on student achievement. School leadership ensures the internal efficiency of the education system which enables quality improvement in classroom teaching.

Internal efficiency is an important dimension of the concepts of success and quality of education. It is usually measured by indicators such as student input/output ratios or survival/ attrition rates, learning efficiency, teacher utilization and retention, and teacher effectiveness. It also shows the survival rate of a cohort of students as they go through the current education system (Caillods, Caselli, and Chau, 1999; Galabawa, 2003:4).

It is important to note that learning efficiency matters in instructional practices. There are many children in school who might be learning very little or nothing at all and most learners are not acquiring the basic level of mastery in reading, writing, and mathematics (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015; Msasa, 2016) because of a lack of learning efficiency. It is argued in educational theory and practice that only school leaders who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement (Acton, 2021; Fullan, 2016). School leadership that brings about the concept of the "great men" who are developmental and can "turn around" schools in difficult contexts (Van Rensbur, 2014) are the kind of situations that are needed.

Leadership determines the effectiveness of teaching, as the style of leadership affects how favorable the school's culture is on teaching and learning (Carpenter, 2014). The practices of leadership include setting high-quality interpersonal relations that enable everyone to work hard (Shulhan, 2018). Batliwala (2007) notes that good leadership is the panacea to address specific development challenges. Several studies on the characteristics of effective schools have been carried out. Lezotte (1990) acknowledges the characteristics of effective schools as the 7 correlates to include: (1) safe and orderly environment, (2) climate of high expectation for success, (3) instructional leadership, (4) clear and focused mission/vision, (5) opportunity to learn and student time on task, (6) frequent monitoring of student progress, and (7) home-school relations. Additionally, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, and Hopkins, (2006) identify these characteristics as four core practices, namely: (1) creating vision and setting directions, (2) developing people, (3) restructuring the organization and redesigning roles and responsibilities and (4) managing teaching and learning.

The issue of providing quality education is cause for concern to the Responsible Authorities, parents, students and even the community at large. School leadership is viewed as agents of change and

expected to produce strategies to make teachers tour the global line of teaching conventions. School leadership that emancipates learners from mental slavery and creates bridges that enable effective implementation of the curriculum is quite critical (Mupa, 2020:77). It is against this background that the current study explores the ingredients of school leadership in high-performing schools, particularly private academy in Masvingo district.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There has been an increasing interest in the role that school leadership plays in providing quality education in various communities. In his work, Marsh (2015) contends that school leadership should be viewed as an activity that is inextricably linked to the task of improving student learning. It is further noted that the problem of how to improve teaching and learning in schools has bothered educators at least since the inception of modern schools. Early in the 20th century, Waller (1932: 4) presented his sociological analysis as 'an attempt to find a new understanding of schools and to find such remedies for existing ills as that new understanding dictates'. The desire to 'remedy existing ills' continues into the 21st century (Day et al., 2008; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012), yet Darling-Hammond (2010) laments that many schools still suffer from weak teaching and impoverished learning. There is a gap in the literature on how school leadership influences the performance of schools in successful contexts. Strong emphasis is placed on the quality of school leadership which is suitable for improvement (Marishane, Botha & Du Plessis, 2011). Most schools still suffer from poor quality teaching as if there is a lack of leadership, yet others are doing very well. The problem can be stated as follows: To what extent is school leadership contributing to the successful context of a private academy in Masvingo?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section addresses the research questions. The following research questions seek to address the research problem:

To what extent can school leadership bring about continuous improvement in schools in successful contexts?

To what extent does school leadership influence teacher effectiveness in high-performing schools?

In which way does school leadership enhance the provision of instructional resources by the responsible authority in successful contexts?

What are the experiences of school leadership in successful contexts?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This study is guided by two main concepts, school leadership and schools in successful contexts.

School in Successful Contexts

Schools in rich communities are in successful contexts and are characterized by high performance in terms of learner achievement (Chikoko, Naicker & Mthiyane, 2015), and those schools in advantaged areas that do not suffer a myriad of socio-economic problems (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2004). They possess essential resources and basic items needed to function well. School leadership is central to driving success in such schools (Hallinger, 2011).

Schools that are in high-performing contexts are further described by Maringe & Moletsane (2015) as being those schools that are not in multiple deprivation. Maringe & Moletsane (2015) explain that the concept of multiple deprivation resulted from a concern involving the influence of poverty on

communities in different parts of the world. Furthermore, they conceptualize multiple deprivation as, "a confluence of factors which depress learning and place unique challenges on leadership and which act in combination rather than in isolation" (Maringe & Moletsane, 2015:1). Schools that are in successful contexts do not suffer from multiple deprivation.

School leadership

School leadership is about the ability to give a road map, pointing direction to be followed and encouraging other staff members to start off journeying towards a new and improved state of the school (Davies, 2005). Leadership is a person's ability and readiness to influence, encourage, and invite to be monitored and, if necessary, to force others to accept their influence, and then do something that can help achieve a certain purpose and goal (Shulhan, 2018).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study is guided by the instructional/pedagogical leadership theoretical framework. It was relevant in this study since it looks at the competencies school leadership requires in building up high-performing schools.

Instructional/pedagogical leadership

Southworth (2002:79) says that "instructional leadership…is strongly concerned with teaching and learning, including the professional learning of teachers as well as student growth". Bush & Glover's (2002:10) definition stresses the direction of the influence process: Instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning and on the behavior of teachers in working with students. Leaders' influence is targeted at student learning via teachers. The emphasis is on the direction and impact of influence rather than the influence process itself. Instruction is a way of imparting knowledge and skills to learners. Bush (2008) views instruction as information given to learners on what to do and how to do it. Therefore, instructional leadership focuses on creating an enabling environment in which both teachers and learners thrive. The leader in all this plays a pivotal role in charting the way for all in the school to follow (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Bush & Glover, (2014) propose that the main mission should be to improve the teaching and learning in the organization. Spillane et al., (2004) define instructional leadership as the identification, attainment, provision, and use of the community material and cultural resources needed to create the environments for conducive teaching and learning. Similarly, Bush et al. (2003:10) state that instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning and on the behavior of teachers in working with students. Cotton (2003) contends that effective instructional leaders are intensely involved in curricular and instructional issues that directly affect student achievement. Burch (2007) asserts that the main idea of instructional leadership is that there is a possibility of improving staff quality and hence, instruction by developing professional communities of educators and focusing on instructional roles.

Southworth (2002) considers instructional leadership a powerful strategy used for teaching and learning including staff development and empowering of students academically. Instructional leadership is a very important dimension because it targets the school's central activities, teaching, and learning. Joyner, Ben-Avie & Comer (2000) argue that instructional leadership is a crucial component in improving student accomplishment. According to Pansiri (2008), instructional leadership strives to improve the teaching staff's quality of classroom activities for the definite purpose of increasing student achievement as well as

cultivating positive attitudes and behaviour towards schoolwork and their personal. Therefore, instructional leaders should focus on creating environments that allow learners to be able to fully participate in their own learning experiences thereby improving performance quality results.

Blasé and Blasé (2004) are of the opinion that instructional leadership consists of monitoring staff empowerment. Correspondingly, Blasé & Blasé (2004) concur those instructional leaders, discuss with their staff about their instruction encourage unity and sense of purpose among teachers, and empower them to foster decision-making, professional growth, staff leadership, status, self-sufficiency, impact and self-efficacy. School leaders ought to embrace such ideal situations as these will result in excellent performance from the learners. The learners in turn will have benefitted from such school structures which will be viable and allow for creativity.

According to Horng and Leob (2010) there are characteristics of instructional leadership that are expected of a school head. Setting clear goals and managing curriculum are elements at the core of instructional leadership. Being able to monitor lesson plans and allocating necessary resources are some of the characteristics of instructional leadership. Hornng & Loeb (2010); Jenkins (2009) argue that monitoring and evaluating teachers regularly to promote learning and growth is something expected of an instructional leader. Such behaviour is focused on control, coordination, and supervision of all teaching and learning activities and is linked to instructional leadership Marishane et al (2011). Jenkins (2009) shares the same view that instructional leaders prioritize instructional quality. Instructional leadership is increasingly recognized as the most powerful approach to bring about school improvement and enhanced student outcomes. A strong focus on instructional vision, monitoring of classroom teaching, modelling good practice, and mentoring teachers, contributes to the 'academic press' and improved student learning (Kaparou & Bush, 2020).

Instructional leadership is also called pedagogical leadership. Pedagogy may be commonly defined as "the art and science (and maybe even the craft) of teaching" (Menon, 2016:9). Pedagogy is explored from the context of accompanying learners, caring for learners, and bringing learning to life (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015). The term pedagogy is further defined by Barton (2019) as the study of teaching, and how content is presented and delivered to a learner. It is the creation of an educational process that leads to knowledge gain in the learner. This is the purpose of instructional leadership, to see to it that teaching and learning is going on with the learner at the centre stage of the process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study that was carried out by Sebring and Bryk (2000) in a rural area in New South Wales on the effects of school leadership on school improvement found that school principals who interacted with teachers and learners empowered them both in their teaching and learning processes. Students performed well and scored good grades.

Byrk et al., 2010 stated that effective leadership, acting as a catalyst, is the first essential support for school improvement that nourishes the development of additional core supports like collaborative teachers, involved families, supportive environments, and ambitious instruction (Byrk et al., 2010:64).

Effective leadership is critical for a school to be successful (Bush et al., 2010). Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins (2008) emphasize that as an influence on pupil

learning, school leadership is second only to classroom teaching. They further argue that there is no documented case of a school successfully rerouting the course of its student achievement without the presence of talented leadership. The process designed to produce the best possible leadership for schools must be deliberate and not left to chance (Bush, 2008). In many developed and developing countries around the world, there are two increasing realizations which are (1) the role of school leadership is different from teaching, and it requires separate and specialized preparation, and (2) to provide the best education for learners, schools require effective leaders and managers (Bush et al., 2010). Effective school leadership becomes the panacea to improving schools in successful contexts. NCLS (2007:17) insists "leadership must grow by design, not by default".

Christie & Potterton (1997) carried out a study that focused on finding out the role played by school principals on the well-being of schools. They found out that school principals who were responsible and had the willingness and ability to take initiative improved the well-being of the whole school. In another study on dimensions of effective leadership in schools, Ngcobo & Tikley (2010) found that school leaders who worked hard brought noticeable change in their identified schools. They were resourceful in mobilizing additional teaching and learning material. The school heads invested a lot of their time and purchased equipment for learners. The points of being resourceful and managing time effectively are critical mirrors.

In a study to understand effective leadership in schools, the Wallace Foundation emphasized team power and noted that school leadership remains the central source of leadership influence (Wallace Foundation, 2013:8). Leadership that facilitates effective teaching wields high pass rate in schools. The concept of effective teaching and learning has long been looked at by various authorities. Kyocou (2001:5) defines effective teaching as teaching that successfully achieves the learning by pupils intended by the teacher. R.S Peters (1973:39) defines teaching as a complex authority that unites processes, such as instructing and training by the overall intention of getting pupils not only to acquire them in a manner that involves understanding and an evaluation of the rationale underlying them but mastery of skill to the understanding of principles for the organization of facts. Eisner (1979) defines teaching as an array of activities the teacher employs to transform intentions and curriculum materials into conditions that promote learning. Leadership has a bearing on the effective teaching and learning of students (Curzon, 1994).

Effective leaders are said to provide adequate teaching and learning time for students to master concepts. If there is little time to expose students to a wide range of concepts in a particular subject, then students are likely to suffer content deficiency. A great deal of research shows that the amount of learning time is a good predictor for the effectiveness of teaching (Anderson et al., in Houtveen and van de Grift, 2006). Time, however, has no meaning but the way time is used is the most important thing. Time is an instrument to measure, for instance, the opportunity pupils get to learn the curriculum, to measure the efficiency of classroom management, or to give struggling learners better opportunities to master the basics of the curriculum or subject. Leadership must ensure the effective use of time by teachers and learners.

Leadership should ensure the teaching of relevant information, the provision of knowledgeable teachers and

teacher commitment (ILO and UNESCO, 2006).

Leadership effects are primarily indirect, and they appear primarily to work through the organizational variable of school mission or goals and through variables related to classroom curriculum and instruction. While quantitative estimates of effects are not always available, leadership variables seem to explain an important proportion of the school-related variance in student achievement (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003:13).

Effective teaching requires teachers who possess professional knowledge and skills (Santrock, 2011). Traveling on an educational route without adequate teaching and learning resources is moving on a rocky road (Mupa, 2012). It is argued that if the impression on the senses is vivid, arresting or striking, our learning is more effective (Jacinta and Regina in Thungu et al, 2008:111).

A study conducted by Klar and Brewer (2013) investigated the principles of the method in high-needs schools used to enact core leadership practices together with their immediate contexts to institutionalize comprehensive school reforms and support student learning. Their findings showed that each principal built a shared vision, created high-performance expectations, and communicated the direction of the school.

An inductive exploratory study by Leigh Sanzo, Sherman, and Clayton (2011) explored the leadership best practices of successful middle school principals as they lead accountability and standards-driven school environment. The finding revealed five themes including sharing leadership, facilitating professional development, leading with an instructional orientation, and acting openly and honestly.

A study by Mulford (2005) in Tasmanian and South Australian schools found that successful school reform was linked to distributive and transformational leadership, development and learning, context, and a broader understanding of student outcomes. Day et al. (2005) note that there will never be a simple manner in which to precisely define successful leadership as it does not consist of a singular or even a series of values, qualities or skills held or applied; but it is the combination of these through which school leaders have the ability to "make a difference" in their schools and communities. Consequently, Hallinger (2003) proposes a theoretical model of integrated leadership as a way for organizations to learn and produce at the highest levels and to achieve sustainable change. He strongly suggests that transformational leadership is a key element for principals in obtaining the commitment of teachers. Moreover, he asserts that teacher participation is essential in sharing leadership functions and teachers adopting the role of effective instructional leaders themselves.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy

This study is informed by the post-positivist philosophy. Post-positivism gave formal birth to more radical paradigms which include interpretivism, among others (Onwuegbuzie, 2002).

Research Paradigm

The study employs the interpretivist paradigm. The central endeavor of the interpretivist paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This approach tries to 'get into the head of the subjects being studied' and to understand and interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning s/he is making of the context. The researcher tries to

understand the viewpoint of the subject being observed, rather than the viewpoint of the observer. Emphasis is placed on understanding the individual and their interpretation of the world around them. Hence, the key tenet of the interpretivism paradigm is that reality is socially constructed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The study is appropriately located in the interpretive research paradigm which sees reality as subjective and built from a person's life experiences and interactions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

Qualitative Methodology

In considering the methodology for this research, I asked myself the question: How shall I go about obtaining the desired data, knowledge, and understandings that enable me to answer my research question and thus contribute to knowledge? The study thus employs the qualitative research methodology. Mouton (2005:270) points out that in qualitative research, "the researcher is seen as the main instrument in the research process". The researcher is key and plays an active part throughout the qualitative research process. Cresswell (1998) describes the qualitative research methodology as:

an enquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem…and "the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of information and conducts the study in a natural setting (Cresswell, 1998:115).

Qualitative research is a loosely defined collection of approaches to inquiry, all of which rely on verbal, visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory data. These data are preserved in descriptive narratives like field notes, recordings, or other transcriptions from audio and videotapes, other written records, and pictures or films (Erickson, 2011:43; Silverman, 2006:33).

According to Henning *et al* (2011), qualitative research is defined as

... a broad umbrella term that covers a wide range of techniques and philosophies, thus it is not easy to define. In broad terms, qualitative research is an approach that allows you to examine people's experiences in detail, by using a specific set of research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, visual methods, and life histories or biographies Henning *et al* (2011:8).

Qualitative research places emphasis on understanding by looking closely at people's words, actions, and records (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:16). The researcher employed the qualitative methodology because using the subjects' words better reflects the postulates of the qualitative methodology. Qualitative research looks to understanding a situation as it is constructed by the participants. Qualitative research attempts to capture what people say and do (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

Case Study Design

Qualitative studies employ various methodologies and for this study, the case study methodology was employed to sun the characteristics of the private academy that was selected for the study. A research design is defined by Jakaza (2013) as an overall plan for a piece of research including four main ideas; the strategy, the theoretical framework, the questions for who or what will be studied, and the tools used for collecting and analyzing materials. Design situates the researcher in the empirical world (Kivunja & Kuyini (2017:37). The choice of the case study method is in line with Kivunja & Kuyini, (2017) who advance the argument that a case study is a design suited to the

interpretivist paradigm. In another context, a case study is defined as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2014:16).

Population

The population targeted for this study was school leadership, responsible authority, and teachers at a private academy in Masvingo Province. Population refers to a group of individuals that has one or more universal features of concern to the researcher for the purpose of gaining information and drawing conclusions (Creswell, 2007; Briggs, 2012). The population is defined by Welman, et al (2011:52) as the study of objects, which consist of individuals, groups, organizations, human products, and events, or the conditions to which they are exposed.

Sample and sampling procedure

The private academy selected for this study was suitable because of its high performance over the years. A sample according to Strydomm, (2011:223) comprises elements or a subset of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study. Lindegger (2011:468) describes a specific type of sample as any subjects who are available to participate in a study. Sampling refers to the points of data collection or cases to be included within a research project (Gibson & Brown, 2009:56). Durhheim (2011:49) defines sampling as a selection of research participants from an entire population and involves decisions about people, settings, events, behaviors and/or social behaviors. For this study, purposeful sampling was employed as the sampling procedure. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in-depth (Pattorn, 2002). These are the teachers, school leadership, and the responsible authority at the sampled private academy in Masvingo district. This is supported by Christensten et al., (2011:162) who posit that a researcher concentrating on a specific case should utilize purposive sampling to identify members that he/she believes have required data and characteristics.

Data generation tools

In this section, tools that are used to generate data are the focus under discussion. These include, among others, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and open-ended questionnaires.

Semi-structured interviews

Borg & Gall (1989:452) say that the semi-structured interview has the advantage of being reasonably objective "while still permitting a more thorough understanding of the participant's opinions and reasons behind them." They further argue that the semi-structured interview is generally most appropriate for interview studies in education. It provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often permits gathering valuable data that could not be successfully obtained by any other approach. The semi-structured interview was used as the major tool for this study. I used the semi-structured interview in line with the thinking that it captures the "emic" perspective, that is, taking the view of the participants being studied by probing their frame of inner meaning (Strauss & Cobin, 2017). The view is also shared by Patton (2015) who explains that semi-structured interviews are helpful in reading the contents of someone else's mind and permit the investigator to collect information that would be implausible to be collected by means of other tools. The selected participants were subjected to this type of interview while the interviewer and interviewee's words were recorded by phone.

Focus group discussions

A focus group can be defined as "a group interview, centered on a specific topic ('focus') and facilitated and coordinated by a moderator or facilitator, which seeks to generate primarily qualitative data, by capitalizing on the interaction that occurs within the group setting" (Sim & Snell, 1996:189). Kitzinger (1995:299) sums up the essential role of the focus group technique as follows:

The idea behind the focus group method is that group processes can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one-to-one interview…When group dynamics work well the participants work alongside the researcher, taking the research in new and often unexpected directions.

When setting up a focus group, it is generally felt that 8-12 is a suitable number of participants (Stewart & Shandasani, 1990). It is an economical way of tapping the views of several people, simply because participants are interviewed in groups rather than one by one (Krueger, 1994). Focus group also provides information on the dynamics of attitudes and opinions in the context of the interaction that occurs between participants (Morgan, 1988). Focus groups provided a safe forum for the expression of views, participants were not obliged to respond to every question (Vaughn et al., 1996). In light of the above advantages, this research employed a focus group as a data generation tool.

Open-ended questionnaire

According to Foddy (1993:127) "Open-ended questionnaire has open-ended questions which include the possibility of discovering the responses that individuals give spontaneously, avoiding the bias which may result from suggesting responses to individuals." When the open-ended question is being asked, there will occur some broad, general categories that cannot be matched with any specific category from other data generation tools. Open-ended questions give room to respondents to express their feelings freely towards a given situation. Opperheim (1992:56) posits, "The open-ended questionnaire is a very attractive device for smaller-scale research or for those sections of a questionnaire that invites an honest personal comment from the respondent." The questionnaire simply puts the open-ended questions and leaves a space for free responses. In this study, it was a relevant tool to generate data from the case of a private academy in Masvingo province.

Ethical and Legal Considerations

Many people fear volunteering information because they feel information may be used inappropriately. To safeguard the rights of the research participants, in this study permission was sought from the Responsible Authority to conduct the study. Research participants were briefed on confidentiality, anonymity, and beneficence as ethical considerations. Letters of acceptance to participate in the study were sent to the participants and signed before the process of data generation began. Consequently, the research's ethical concern is to ensure that participants experience freedom from coercion (William, 2005:345).

Trustworthiness/credibility/dependability

Guba (1981) suggests that in research conducted within the interpretivist paradigm, the criteria should be based on trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness and authenticity include four critical pillars which are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Thus, to make the data believable, member checking was done.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

In qualitative research, data presentation and analysis happen at the same time. As eloquently stated by Hatch (2002):

Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding. It always involves what Wolcott calls "mindwork" ...Researchers always engage their own intellectual capacities to make sense of qualitative data (Hatch, 2002 cited in Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007:564).

Data from interviews formed the base of the research findings whilst that from focus group discussions and open-ended questionnaires complemented and reflected upon it (Silverman, 2004). The transcriptions of interviews, focus group discussions and open-ended questionnaires were made and formed into the analysis towards forming the emerging themes. The constant comparative method was used in analyzing data in this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership with efficiency

Participants echoed the issue of efficiency as characterizing effective school leadership in high-performing contexts and had this to say:

FGD1: Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling. Within each individual school, leadership can improve student learning by shaping the conditions and climate in which teaching and learning occur. School leadership involves steering the school by shaping students and staff's attitudes, motivations, and behaviours to influence them to adapt to the desires of the vision of the policy makers. The bed rock of continuous improvement of a school hinge on effective leadership, management, and administration.

P4: School leaders ensure that teaching and learning are done properly. They ensure that the school becomes a community where each member plays his or her role perfectly to achieve the common goal and the good results.

P1: School leadership brings about continuous improvement as unproductive conflict gets smothered, and attention becomes directed to beneficial professional practice.

Supervision of educational personnel is the fountain upon which effective instruction is based and requires connoisseurship or some art for it to be effective. To that end, some minimum level of proficiency is required by the school leader so that he/she can see over and beyond the events in the classroom and assist the teacher in improving (Berruga, 2020:4). The major goal of supervision is to improve the teaching and learning process. School leaders must base their supervisory practices on theoretical frameworks so that their supervision is informed and brings in improved change in the school. Leadership for supervision is not about compliance but is about one's ability to identify what works at a given context. It is also about being aware of the instructional needs (Bhengu & Myende, 2016).

Leadership with a Vision

Schools need leadership with a vision to be high-performing schools. The issue of visionary leadership was raised as an important factor that makes schools qualify in the high-performing context group. This was said by some participants as follows:

P1: Effective school leaders clearly define the school vision and values so that all members follow with no doubt.

P2: Leaders assist by setting examples of commendable professional etiquette to challenge subordinates to emulate productive behavior.

P3: Leaders who uphold the values of the institution challenge both teachers and learners to work towards the improvement of moral standards, social relations, and academic excellence.

Participants have clearly shown that effective school leaders provide a clear vision and sense of direction for the school. They prioritize critical tasks to be done. They focus the attention of staff on what is important and do not let them get diverted and sidetracked with initiatives that will have little impact on the work of the students. They know what is going on in their classrooms. They have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of their staff. They know how to build on their strengths and reduce their weaknesses. They gain this view through a systematic program of monitoring and evaluation. Their clarity of thought, sense of purpose, and knowledge of what is going on mean that effective school leaders can get the best out of their staff, which is the key to influencing work in the classroom and to raising the standards achieved by students (National College for School Leadership, 2001).

Distributive leadership

Participants raised the issue that leadership in high-performing contexts can distribute responsibilities to staff. They had the following sentiments to share:

P1: School leadership can encompass people occupying various roles and functions such as heads, deputy heads, leadership teams, heads of departments (H.O.D.s), school staff, school governing boards and other members of the school with a responsibility portfolio. Therefore, the success of any school depends on its leaders who distribute responsibilities.

P4: HODs are overseers, they ensure that there is peace, trust, and meaningful teamwork among members. HODs are experienced teachers who can coordinate and provide teaching materials to new teachers.

P3: At the department level, the HOD serves as the exemplary torch bearer in terms of professional practice so that other members may pass the pride down to learners and, thus, ensure hard work that keeps results improving.

The need to make use of distributed leadership is reiterated for successful school performance. Distributed leadership is best understood as practice distributed over leaders, followers, and their situation which incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals (Spillane et al., 2004). Work that offers a view of distributed leadership as a positive channel for change notes that organizations most successful in managing the dynamics of loose-tight working relationships meld strong personalized leadership at the top with distributed leadership (Graetz, 2000). In Australia, a comprehensive study of leadership effects on student learning collected survey data from over 2,500 teachers and their principals and

concluded that student outcomes are more likely to improve when leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and when teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them (Silins & Mulford, 2002a). The findings from the current study resonate very well with the Australian study.

Leadership is the engine to school success.

Participants raised the issue that leadership is the engine propelling school success. It is the heart of the school that makes things happen. They had this to say:

P1: A school leader contributes immensely to the continuous improvement in school success. School leadership is the engine behind the success of the school in formulating policies that guide the day-to-day running of the school which ranges from pupil's welfare, teaching staff welfare, and non-teaching staff's welfare. It is the duty of the school leadership to formulate policies that must be adhered to for the success of the school.

FDG4: Teaching staff, non-teaching staff and the learners each contribute to the success of the school hence the need of their own supervision for the successful running of the school. It's the role of the school leadership to supervise these areas through their subordinates like heads of departments. Some of the responsibilities include ensuring consistently good teaching and learning; integrating a sound grasp of basic knowledge and skills within a broad and balanced curriculum; managing behavior and attendance; strategically managing resources and the environment; building the school as a professional learning community; and developing partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning and new learning opportunities.

School leadership requires a proper understanding of all the processes that influence high performance in a school. Without an understanding of the knowledge necessary for teachers to teach well such as content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, content-specific pedagogical knowledge, curricular knowledge, and knowledge of learners, school leaders will be unable to perform essential school improvement functions such as monitoring instruction and supporting teacher development (Spillane & Louis, 2002).

Improving the Pedagogical and Instructional Capacity of the Teachers

Participants clearly showed that the teacher's pedagogical and instructional capacity enables leadership to achieve school effectiveness. The following ideas were reiterated:

P1: The teacher's pedagogical beliefs and instructional leadership behaviors are two important variables in understanding the role a teacher plays in leadership effectiveness in schools.

FDG2: Teachers will serve as role models to students. Their passion for their subjects naturally helps students to like the subjects taught. Teachers help pupils to channel their energy and effort towards good performance.

FDG4: Teachers are key participants in the education system as they maintain direct contact with learners and serve as leaders whom learners must emulate. Cooperation from teachers in upholding school values is cardinal for ensuring that the values become cherished and upheld by learners. That way, disruptive behavior is limited, and results maintain an upward trend. If a school secures teachers who work hard, learners will benefit and remain challenged to work hard to beat competitors.

Hence, results will always be good. Teachers will serve as good examples of leaders at their level as classroom practitioners.

The quality of the instruction by the teacher plays a significant role in enhancing high performance in schools. The capabilities and competencies of the teacher are key variables in enhancing school performance. It is also argued in educational theory and practice that:

Without effective teacher guidance and instruction in the classroom, learning and progress cannot be achieved. The underlying rationale is that while organizational aspects of schools provide the necessary preconditions for effective teaching, it is the quality of teacher-student interactions that principally determines student progress (Antoniou, 2013:126).

This shows that instruction requires enough knowledge of what to teach, to whom, how, when, with what depth and breadth, and why so that it becomes effective. This is the reason why pedagogical and didactic skills are needed for effective instruction.

Teaching experience

Teachers with many years of teaching experience are a great resource who improve the context of the school. This was raised by participants who strongly feel that school leadership who works with experienced teachers find life easy to make schools perform high. In their deliberations, participants raised teaching experience as a key component in school effectiveness. This is what they said:

FDG 3: In particular, gender, ethnicity, educational obtainment, classroom teaching experience, primary subject taught as a classroom teacher, years of experience at their current location, and overall years as a teacher contribute effectively to school leadership performance. The teacher's role is to implement, assess, and help pupils achieve the shared mission and clear goals. This is the factor that affects the instructional leadership of schools where teachers are responsible for sharing these school goals with the school community.

P2: The teacher contributes to the effectiveness of school and student performance directly and indirectly with the ways he/she uses to influence classroom and school conditions.

FDG4: The teacher factor contributes greatly to school leadership effectiveness in high-performing schools. Schools staffed by credentialed and experienced teachers who work together over an extended time generate the largest student achievement gains. Students who have access to the most accomplished colleagues make the greatest achievement growth gains. Obviously, less-experienced teachers have the greatest margin for improvement. The experienced teachers spread their expertise to students. They have time to lead and learn from their peers, either informally or through structured professional development experiences.

Teaching experience helps teachers with the power of evaluation of lesson development and content mastery by learners. It is argued that teachers with relevant experience in lesson delivery have the:

art and the ability to judge when children have had enough of art, math, reading, or free time is a judgment made not by applying a theory of motivation or attention, but by recognizing the wide range of qualities that the children themselves display to those who have learned to see (Eisner as quoted in Cross, 1977:9).

Quality of instruction given in the classroom

The issue of the quality of instruction was raised as a critical factor in bringing about high-performing contexts. Participants raised the following issues:

P4: High-performing contexts are achieved through the teacher's quality of instruction and how it is passed in the classroom as well as outside the classroom.

P1: Purposeful teachers will make an indefatigable effort to offer counseling services to students when the need arises. In the case of this academy, some of whose students' hail from the diaspora or other schools are known as academic wildernesses and moral deserts, individualized instruction, and counseling, offered by mature teachers, is highly useful as it redirects behaviour to align it to a sense of purpose. The circumstances become conducive to learning and good results become a norm.

Quality instruction can only be achieved if school principals provide for such conditions in the school. School leaders are the life-forces that animate the schools they lead. School principals are expected to play a pivotal role in enhancing quality teaching and learning in their schools (Huong, 2020). An expanding base of research and practice shows that school leaders exert influence on student achievement by creating challenging environments, caring for students, and providing supportive conditions conducive to each student's learning. They are expected to relentlessly develop and support teachers, create positive working conditions, effectively allocate resources, construct appropriate organizational policies and systems, and engage in other deep and meaningful work outside of the classroom that has a powerful impact on what happens inside (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2020). In a 1977 U.S. Senate Committee Report on Equal Educational Opportunity, the principal was identified as the single most influential person in a school. The committee had the following to say:

"If a school … has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as the key to success" (U.S. Congress, 1970:56).

Resource availability enables effective curriculum/syllabus implementation.

The issue of availability of resources was pointed out as a key variable in enabling teachers to effectively implement the syllabus in the school. Responsible authorities that provide adequate resources make the work of school leadership and teachers easier. Participants echoed the following:

FDG1: The Responsible authority make funds available for practical materials in time, this makes teaching interesting, and pupils enjoy learning as they have more hands-on experiences. There has been provision of projectors that made teaching easier, and projection of power points made teaching easier and interesting.

FDG2: Resources can either be human, financial, or physical (technical or material). The provision of resources is fundamental to leadership effectiveness in any organization. Without sufficient resources, laws will not be enforced, and services will not be provided therefore resources are considered fundamental and undoubtedly necessary for any policy implementation and are recognized as essential factors in the effectiveness of policy implementation.

FDG 3: The sufficiency of human resources is an important factor that affects implementation effectiveness. For example, the availability of manpower with the necessary knowledge base in competency-based teaching such as lesson planning, lesson delivery and evaluation, will facilitate the renewal of and provide diverse leadership skills. As a result, financial resources are a key factor for successful implementation, and they come from the allocated funds from the responsible authority.

P3: Technical resources are, for example, a high-quality curriculum, books, and other instructional materials, assessment instruments, laboratory equipment, computers, and adequate workspace to help in the effective delivery of duty.

Resources are the key variable that enables effective curriculum implementation in schools. They must be available in large quantities and be of the right quality. Effective school leadership is expected to possess key competencies for school improvement. These include, among others, ensuring consistently good teaching and learning, integrating a sound grasp of basic knowledge and skills within a broad and balanced curriculum, managing behavior and attendance, strategically managing resources and the environment, building the school as a professional learning community, and developing partnerships beyond the school to encourage parental support for learning and new learning opportunities (Day & Sammons, 2016).

Resources help students to master concepts.

Participants reiterated the importance of teaching and learning resources in concept formation and concept mastery. They highlighted that resources help students to master concepts taught easily. To that end, they said the following:

P3: Provision of resources such as stationery enables teachers to work with minimum interruption and administrators are saved the hustle of responding to persistent demands by teachers.

P2: There has been provision of projectors and that has added to the resources meant to assist learners in mastering concepts and succeeding in their examinations. Administrators find their work quite fluid if there is no attrition related to scarcity of resources.

A high level of concept mastery enables students to perform in their day-to-day schoolwork and in the final examinations as well. Highly effective principals understand this trajectory and constantly diagnose their school's practices against it. They have a clear picture of their current state, future goals, and the path in between. Principals use this information to identify the few, focused, and highest impact actions they can take to move their schools into the next stage and achieve breakthrough outcomes for children. They recognize that key dimensions of leadership in an early turnaround situation are quite different than in a highly successful, well-functioning school (New Leaders for New Schools, 2007:7). Increase in enrolment must be commensurate with the available resources so that learners do not share resources like textbooks, computers, practical tools, among others.

Incentivised and motivated teachers

The issue of teacher motivation through incentives also ranked high among the quality of resources needed to come up with a high-performing school. Teachers are a great resource, and their motivation is being talked of as a fundamental factor. Participants had this to share:

FDG 1: Incentives in the form of remunerative power such as salaries,

commissions, fringe benefits, among others, is usually the most effective means of inducing in policy implementers the willingness to achieve a satisfactory standard of enforcement and compliance and hence promotes effective leadership in schools. Sufficient incentives, both monetary and non-monetary provided by the RA will likely make teachers more willing to comply with school policy.

The issue of the need for incentives also ranked high in this study. High-performing schools are characterized by teachers who get incentives to increase the maximum productivity. School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment, and working conditions. A key task for leadership, if it is to influence student learning and achievement, is to improve staff performance. Such performance is a function of staff members' motivations, commitments, capacities (skills and knowledge), and the conditions in which they work (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Leadership with direction and influence

Leadership with direction and influence are critical experiences that are needed to come up with high performance. This was raised by some participants when they said:

P2: Leadership is all about organizational improvement; more specifically, it is all about establishing widely agreed upon and worthwhile directions for the organization and doing whatever it takes to support people to move in those directions.

P1: My generic definition effective leadership is about direction and influence. Stability is the goal of what is often called "management." Improvement is the goal of leadership. Both are very important. Indeed, instability is one of the most powerful explanations for the failure of most school improvement initiatives and it takes many forms.

P3: Good leadership in schools helps to foster both a positive and motivating culture for staff and a high-quality experience for learners. Leaders at all levels in schools can contribute to this by developing the top skills needed by school leaders.

In a national study, it was shown that effective leaders exhibit profiles such as self-awareness, current knowledge, competence, and the ability to influence success in schools (Scott et al., 2008). In the same vein, Bryman (2007:697) analysed international literature and identified 13 forms of leader behavior associated with school effectiveness and concluded that leaders should focus on "vision, integrity, consideration and the use of direction". Individuals in leadership positions who are effective demonstrate emotional intelligence and a consultative and collaborative style that supports academics to perform effectively (Bryman, 2007).

Stability in leadership for culture development

It was noted that there is a need for stability in leadership so that the smooth continuity of those in leadership would help to build a culture of high performance in the school. This is what participants raised:

P3: One of the most obvious and arguably the most frequent experiences is instability of leadership in the form of frequent head, deputy, and general turnover. Effective school leadership is rooted in continuity, retaining the human resources with experience, and having the school culture flowing in their veins.

School leadership should help to build a culture of tenure in the school for

continuity purposes. Staff tenure is a recipe for culture building. Effective leadership profiles that build a culture of excellence are central to the success of educational institutions (Jais, Yahaya & Ghani, 2020). A leader who shows concern for excellence lays emphasis on creativity and innovation, sets trends, push benchmarks, pursue boundary management, be a visionary, build network and culture, mentor and counsel, and multiplies employee excellence through empowerment, possesses the rightful profiles that make things happen in higher education (Halder, 2010).

Continuous staff development programmes and orientation of new staff.

Leadership must provide continuous staff development programmes to both old staff and new staff. Orientation of new staff on how the job is done at that school is important. It is an experience that helps schools to be high performing. These concerns were raised by participants when they said:

P3: Leaders also must be on the lookout the behavior of other members and students.

P2: Leadership has a duty to make life easier for new teachers by showing them how things are done. For example, how to manage weak students and students from rich families.

FDG2: The major obligation of leadership in successful contexts is to uphold success while exploring avenues for improvement of performance to further polish the image of the institution. School leadership must constantly assist new learners to adjust to the requirements of the institution in terms of classroom approach, need for self-discipline, fitting in among other learners, and adopting acceptable moral values.

P4: Leadership has a duty to assist new staff in adjusting to the demands of the institution so that tried and tested practices will remain essential in the institution.

For high performance to be achieved, leadership requires competencies and "skills that contribute to superior performance" (Mohamead Rohana & Abdullah, 2017:1). In the same vein, Burns (1978:46) concludes that "the ultimate test of ... leadership is its capacity to transcend the claims of the multiplicity of everyday needs and expectations, to respond to the higher levels of ... development and to relate leadership behavior, its roles, choices, style and commitments, to a set of reasoned relatively explicit, conscious values". This points to the need for leadership to demonstrate excellence and satisfy customer needs and requirements on daily basis by injecting and fueling activities that give the basis of high performance in schools. Southworth's (2002) qualitative research with primary heads of small schools in England and Wales shows that three strategies were particularly effective in improving teaching and learning which are modeling, monitoring and professional dialogue and discussion.

Managing student discipline

It must be the norm that school leadership manages student discipline all the time. Discipline is key for student success in all cases. Leadership that manages student discipline will see improvement in the accomplishment of tasks. They had this to say:

P4: In successful contexts, leaders manage to work with few hustles as work goes on smoothly. Teachers and students will be busy trying to beat set targets.

P1: Leaders also must be on the lookout for naughty learners who act against school rules during odd times.

School leadership must manage the discipline of students for effective learning to take place. Indiscipline by students is one of the current issues that is totally affecting student performance. It is the responsibility of school leadership to manage such indiscipline and put students in the limelight. School principals have long been thought of as important figures within a school and community but today school principals are facing tremendous pressures from both inside and outside the school building, particularly indiscipline by students (Hansen, 2016). It is also argued that:

Only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement (Fullan, 2002:1).

School leadership should thus manage indiscipline for the smooth process of teaching and learning to take place. The need to focus on student discipline resonates with the findings by Amstutz (2015) who notes that discipline socializes learners into school culture and trains them to take responsibility for their own behavior. Discipline helps students to take class work seriously, helps them to keep occupied with productive activities and keep to time schedules.

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of efficiency and visionary leadership was raised as an important factor that makes schools qualify in the high-performing context. Leadership in high-performing contexts distributes responsibilities to staff and effectively makes use of the distributive leadership theory. High-performing schools are characterized by leadership with knowledge and skills of effective pedagogical and instructional practices. The responsibility of leadership is to ensure that teachers possess such skills to make instruction effective. Leadership equips teachers with deep approaches to teaching since they are at the centre stage of the learning process. Contemporary teaching methods are employed in high performing schools.

A key task for leadership, if it is to influence student learning and achievement, is to improve staff performance and commitment through incentives of various forms. School leadership in the school has built a culture of hard work. Leadership provides continuous staff development programmes to both old staff and new staff. Orientation of new staff on how the job is done at that school is done. It is the norm at the school that leadership manages student discipline all the time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above conclusions, the following recommendations are put forth:

Leadership must continuously carry out staff development programmes to capacitate teachers with the requisite skills for effective teaching and learning.

School leadership must ensure that students are disciplined so that they can concentrate on school tasks with a high level of commitment.

Teachers must be continuously trained in the use of technical media for teaching and learning to keep abreast with contemporary teaching methods that involve ICT.

School leadership must emphasize didactic conversations between teachers and students so that learning is highly productive.

Several workshops must be conducted on syllabus interpretation and use as well as issues to do with quality of

teaching and marking as this helps teachers to become more competent.

Teachers must be encouraged to conduct research to gain adequate content to teach effectively and without poverty of knowledge.

Teachers must be encouraged to prepare their work thoroughly through supervision because the greatest resource in any school is the teacher so teacher quality matters in high performing schools.

School leadership must remove weak teaching that makes students suffer by ensuring that teachers build learning bridges and teach all students and attend to their individual needs.

Teachers must be incentivized so that they commit themselves to school tasks.

School leadership must show prowess in attending to discipline issues by students.

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Learners' Opportunities to Learn Algebra Content in Grade 9

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to examine the extent to which algebra content was taught to Grade 9 mathematics learners in four schools within a specific education district in Gauteng province, South Africa. This qualitative case study was conducted within the framework of interpretive qualitative research. Document analysis was employed as the method of data collection. The findings of the study indicate that the coverage of algebra content in the participating schools did not align with the prescribed curriculum. Consequently, it can be inferred that the learners did not have adequate opportunities to learn the algebra content. It is recommended that teachers adhere to the curriculum guidelines when delivering instruction.

Keywords: Algebra, Algebraic expressions, Algebraic language, Content coverage, Factorisation, Opportunity to learn

INTRODUCTION

Algebra is a fundamental topic in school mathematics. Strong knowledge of algebra at the lower school level is important for successful learning of mathematics at higher school levels (Blanton, et al., 2019; Bråting & Pejlare, 2019). According to Cai and Knuth (2011, p. 628), "an early development of algebraic thinking may, in particular, ease learners' contact with algebraic symbolism". Algebra provides tools that assist in the development of other areas of mathematics, such as geometry, trigonometry, statistics, and calculus (Cetner, 2015; Moru & Mathunya, 2022; Welder, 2012). Hence, algebra is included in the school mathematics curricula of many countries, including South Africa, even from the early years of schooling (Bråting & Pejlare, 2019). In South Africa's mathematics school curriculum (the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement [CAPS]), the content area of Patterns, Functions, and Algebra carries a 35% weighting of the year's work in Grade 9, making it the largest of the five content areas (Number, Operations and Relations; Patterns, Functions and Algebra; Space and Shape Geometry; Measurement; and Data Handling). However, the findings of Baidoo (2019), Marange and Adendorff (2021), and Pournara (2020), show that algebra is one of the topics that many learners in South Africa struggle with.

One reason for the observed learners' challenges in algebra could be that the learners do not have sufficient opportunity to learn (OTL) the algebra content they are expected to learn. OTL relates to the inputs and processes that are required in the school context for producing acceptable student achievement and intended outcomes (Elliott & Bartlett, 2016; Suter, 2017). The concept of OTL was originally employed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) to aid in interpreting the performance of participating learners (Burstein, 2014). OTL, therefore, can be used to allow valid

comparisons of learners' achievement in international studies (Wijaya et al., 2015).

Kurz et al. (2020), Mohale and Mafumbate (2019), and Stols (2013) report that OTL is a major factor that impacts students learning of a subject. Learners perform better in Large Scale Assessments if they have had the opportunity to be exposed to more and deeper content (Schmidt et al., 2009). Brewer and Stasz (1996) offer an approach where three categories of focus are distinguished when assessing OTL. Firstly, there is the curriculum content, assessing whether the prescribed content required to attain the required standards has been taught. The second category includes instructional strategies, determining the experiences of the learners with the kinds of tasks and solution processes related to the topic being taught. The third category covers instructional resources.

Learners' OTL may be influenced by a variety of issues such as teaching methods, resources available for teaching and learning, teachers' knowledge and qualifications, experience, issues of economic deprivation, and deficient learning culture in schools (Khoza, 2015; Ogbonnaya, 2021). Teacher preparedness, class size, and the socio-economic background of the school may further influence the OTL that is available to the learners. Content coverage is an aspect of OTL that is used to ascertain whether the teacher teaches the subject topic and the subtopics prescribed in the curriculum. Therefore, through content coverage, one can determine whether the learners are provided with information to master the curriculum content prescribed for their age and grade level, or not.

Hiebert and Grouws (2007) assert that the nature of classroom mathematics teaching significantly determines the nature and level of learning experienced by learners. Yet, research has been almost completely silent on this issue until recent studies, which have pointed out that attention must be given to the content to enhance the OTL experienced in the classroom and ensure meaningful learning (Jensen et al., 2016; Kurz et al., 2012).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the coverage of algebra content taught in schools as prescribed in the curriculum. In doing so, the study addressed the research question: What is the extent of coverage of algebra content by the Grade 9 teachers?

BACKGROUND

Algebra in the South African school curriculum

The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is organised according to five broad areas referred to as content areas. The content area Patterns, Functions and Algebra and its overarching focus is on, "the language for investigating and communicating most of mathematics and can be extended to the study of functions and other relationships between variables" (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011, p. 10). The algebra content prescribed for Grade 9, which was also the focus of our investigation, comprises of four subtopics.

a) Algebraic language

- *recognise and identify conventions for writing algebraic expressions*

- *identify and classify like and unlike terms in algebraic expressions*

- *recognise and identify coefficients and exponents in algebraic expressions,*

- *Recognise and differentiate between monomials, binomials and trinomials.* (DBE, 2011, p. 24)

b) Expansion and simplification of algebraic expressions

using the commutative, associative and distributive laws for rational numbers and laws of exponents to:

add and subtract like terms in algebraic expressions.

multiply integers and monomials by monomials, binomials and trinomials.

divide the following by integers or monomials: monomials, binomials and trinomials.

simplify algebraic expressions involving the above operations.

Determine the squares, cubes, square roots and cube roots of single algebraic terms or like algebraic terms.

Determine the numerical value of algebraic expressions by substitution.

Extend the above algebraic manipulations to include:

Multiply integers and monomials by polynomials.

Divide polynomials by integers or monomials.

The product of two binomials

The square of a binomial (DBE, 2011, p. 24)

c) Factorisation of algebraic expressions

Factorise algebraic expressions that involve common factors, difference of two squares and trinomials of the form: $x^2 + bx + c$ *and* $ax^2 + bx + c$*, where 'a' is a common factor.*

Simplify algebraic expressions that involve the above factorisation processes.

Simplify algebraic fractions using factorisation (DBE, 2011).

d) Equations

Set up equations to describe problem situations.

Analyse and interpret equations that describe the given situation.

Solve equations by: Inspection, using additive and multiplicative inverses, using laws of exponents.

Determine the numerical value of an expression by substitution.

Use substitution in equations to generate tables of ordered pairs.

Extend solving equations to include Using factorisation, equations of the form: a product of factors = 0 (DBE, 2011, p. 25).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is framed within Kurz's (2011) conceptualisation of OTL comprising of three aspects, namely content covered, time spent on teaching and learning (time on task), and quality of instruction. Content coverage, which is the focus of this study, compares the content entrenched in the academic standards (curriculum) with the content taught in class to determine if the learners were afforded opportunities to learn the content. It is the specific mathematics topics covered in classroom instruction (Schmidt, 2009).

Time on task is the amount of time spent on teaching the contents of the topics by the schools. It is "the period of time during which a learner is actively engaged in a learning activity." (Kunene, 2013, p. 49). Elliott and Bartlett (2016) note that time on task has been adjudged an important factor of OTL by researchers in education.

The quality of instruction evaluates the cognitive processes emphasised in instructional activities including assessments. Several classification

approaches, such as Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, emphasise a range of cognitive processes from lower-order to higher-order (Elliott & Bartlett, 2016). One aspect of quality used in OTL studies is the cognitive levels of questions used in teaching (Stein et al., 2009). The cognitive processes used in mathematics teaching can indicate how classroom interactions provide opportunities for appropriate intellectual challenges to stimulate learners' mathematical development (Schoenfeld, 2011).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To acquire a deeper understanding of the curriculum being implemented in the classroom, this study employed a qualitative approach, examining teaching and learning artifacts. This study, being naturalistic, warranted the use of a case study comprising of four schools, focusing on Grade 9 mathematics teaching. A case study best addressed the goal of understanding the OTL presented to the learners in the classrooms. The qualitative case study assisted the researchers to gain insight into the coverage algebra content taught to the learners and presented in the learner's workbooks and notebooks.

Convenience sampling was adopted for the selection of the district and the schools for this study. The district and the schools were the most accessible to the first author who collected the data for the study. The schools were quintile 3 schools; of low socio-economic status and were in a local township.

The study used document analysis as the data collection method. The documents were learners' workbooks and notebooks. Two learners' workbooks and notebooks were selected from each school. The learners were top performers in their classes. They were selected by their teachers on the basis that they always wrote notes, did assignments and homework, and attended classes. Hence, the teachers believed their notes would reflect the work done. The workbooks and notebooks of the learners were books used by the learners to write notes, solve examples, and do class work and homework. Document analysis is particularly applicable to qualitative studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon or event (Harrison et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2020). Document analysis was found to be very appropriate for this study because of the stability of data (Morgan, 2022), eliminating any possible influence the researcher may have had on the teachers and students in lesson observations or interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A data collection instrument that listed all the subtopics of algebra in the Grade 9 curriculum was used for data collection by the first author and a research assistant. The instrument was used to indicate if each subtopic was covered in each school. The researchers also collected excerpts from the students' notebooks and workbooks as evidence of the algebra content taught in the schools.

FINDINGS

The algebra contents treated in the four schools (identified here as Schools A, B, C & D) are presented according to the four subtopics.

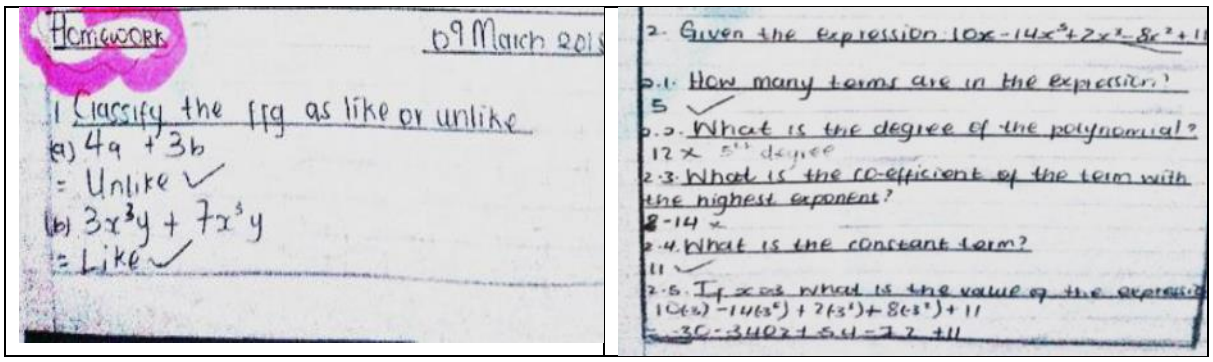
Algebraic Language

There was evidence of coverage of the algebraic language in Schools A, B, and C but no evidence of teaching algebraic language was found in documents in School D. In School A all four subtopics listed in the curriculum were addressed. In School B three subtopics were addressed. The subtopic that was not addresses was recognition and differentiation between monomials, binomials, and trinomials. Figure 1 depicts an example of the content coverage of algebraic language in Schools A and B. Similarly, in School C there was evidence of the teaching of algebraic

language. However, only two subtopics were addressed. The subtopics that were not addressed were identification and classification of like and unlike terms in algebraic expressions, and recognition and differentiation between monomials, binomials, and trinomials.

The summary of algebraic language coverage in the schools is depicted in Table 1

Figure 1: *Examples of algebraic language addressed in Schools A and B*



(a) School A (b) School B

Table 1: *Algebraic language content coverage per school*

Content - CAPS		School A	School B	School C	School D
Algebraic language	Recognition and identification of conversions for writing algebraic expressions	✓	✓	✓	-
	Identification and classification of like and unlike terms in algebraic expressions	✓	-	-	-
	Recognition and identification coefficients and exponents in algebraic expressions	✓	✓	✓	-
	Recognition and differentiation between monomials, binomials and trinomials	✓	-	-	-
	Total	4	2	2	0

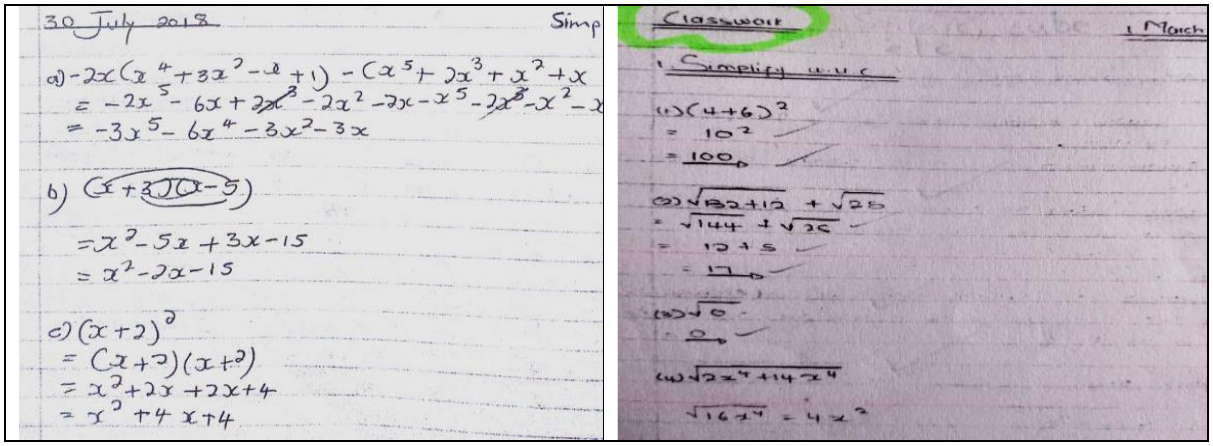
Note: A tick (✓) signifies *Content covered*

Expansion and Simplification of Algebraic Expressions

In Schools A and C, there was evidence of all the subtopics of the expansion and simplification of algebraic expressions being addressed. Figure 2 depicts an example of content coverage of expansion and simplification of algebraic expressions in Schools A and C In School B, there was evidence of the teaching of the following subtopics except for the division of the integers or monomials by monomials and trinomials. In School D, most of the subtopics were not addressed; only the multiplication of integers and monomials by monomials and binomials, the product of two binomials, and the square of a binomial were found addressed. Figure 3 depicts an example of content coverage of expansion

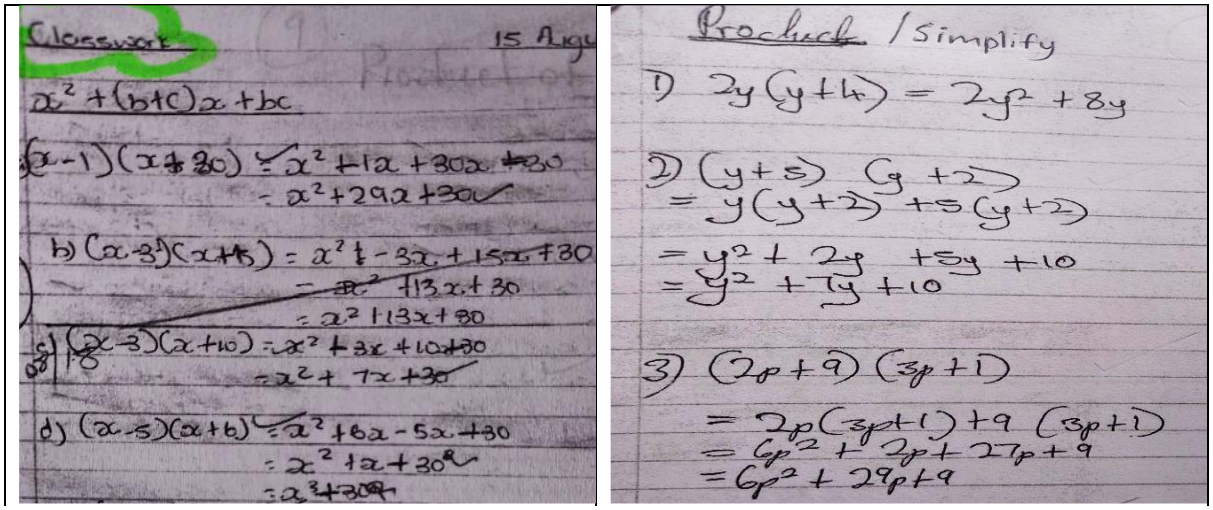
and simplification of algebraic expressions in Schools B and D.

Figure 2: *Examples of expansion and simplification of algebraic expressions in Schools A and C.*



(a) School A (b) School C

Figure 3: *Example of content coverage of expansion and simplification of algebraic expressions in Schools B and D*



(a) School B (b) School D

The summary of expansion and simplification of algebraic expressions coverage in the schools is depicted in Table 2.

The findings in the table show the number of subtopics that were covered for each school, out of a total of 10 subtopics. School A covered all 10 subtopics, which were the target number of subtopics. School D covered three subtopics, which was the least number of subtopics. Schools B and C covered a total of 10 and four subtopics respectively.

Factorisation of Algebraic Expressions

In School A, all the subtopics under factorisation of algebraic expressions were addressed. In School B, most of the subtopics were addressed except the

factorisation of algebraic expressions that involve: $ax^2+ bx+ c$, where '*a'* is a common factor was not treated. Figure 4 shows examples of the treatment of factorisation of algebraic expressions in Schools A and B.

Table 2: *Expansion and simplification of algebraic expressions content coverage per school*

Table 2

Expansion and simplification of algebraic expressions content coverage per school

Content - CAPS		School A	School B	School C	School D
Expand and simplify algebraic expressions	Add and subtract like terms in algebraic expressions	✓	✓	✓	-
	Multiplication of integers and monomials by monomials, binomials, and trinomials	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Division of integers or monomials by monomials, binomials, and trinomials	✓	✓	-	-
	Simplification of algebraic expressions involving the above operations	✓	✓	-	-
	Determining the squares, cubes, square roots and cube roots of single algebraic terms or like algebraic terms	✓	✓	✓	-
	Determining the numerical value of algebraic expressions by substitution	✓	✓	✓	-
	Extension of the above algebraic manipulations to include: Multiplication of integers and monomials by polynomials.	✓	✓	-	-
	Division of polynomials by integers or monomials.	✓	✓	-	-
	The product of two binomials	✓	✓	-	✓
	The square of a binomial	✓	✓	-	✓
	Total	10	10	4	3

Note: A tick (✓) signifies *Content covered*

In School C, only four subtopics under factorisation algebraic expressions were treated out of the six that were expected. The subtopics treated were factorisation of algebraic expressions that involve common factors, difference of two squares simplification of algebraic expressions that involve the above factorisation processes, and simplification of algebraic fractions using factorisation. The subtopics, trinomials of the form: x^2+bx+c *and* ax^2+bx+c, where '*a'* is a

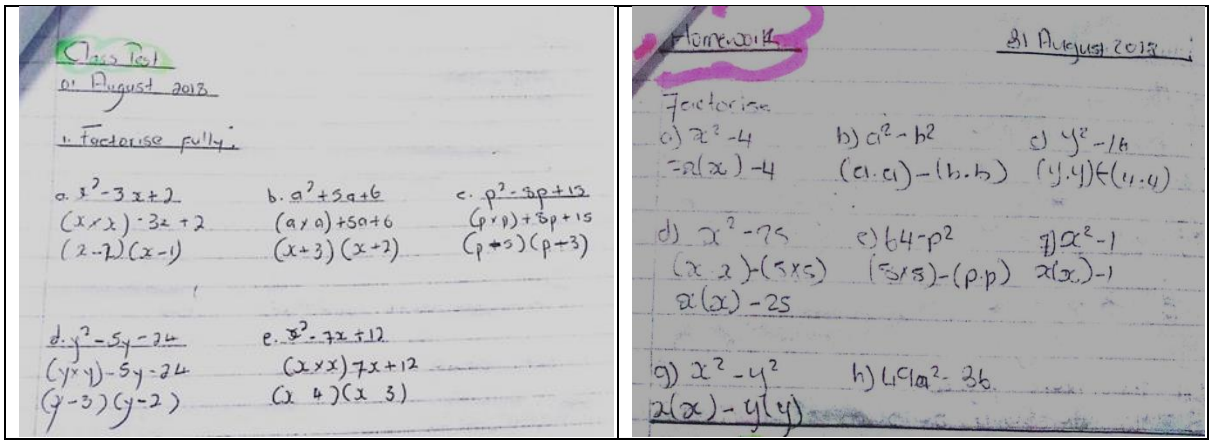
common factor (DBE, 2011) were not addressed.

In School D only three subtopics out of the six that were prescribed were addressed. These were factorisation of algebraic expressions that involve common factors, the difference of two squares, and trinomials of the form x^2+bx+c. It was found that the following subtopics were not addressed, factorisation of algebraic expressions that involve ax^2+bx+c, where 'a' is a common factor, simplification of algebraic expressions that involve the above factorisation processes and simplification of algebraic fractions using factorisation.

The subtopic, trinomials of the form: x^2+bx+c and ax^2+bx+c, where 'a' is a common factor (DBE, 2011) was not addressed.

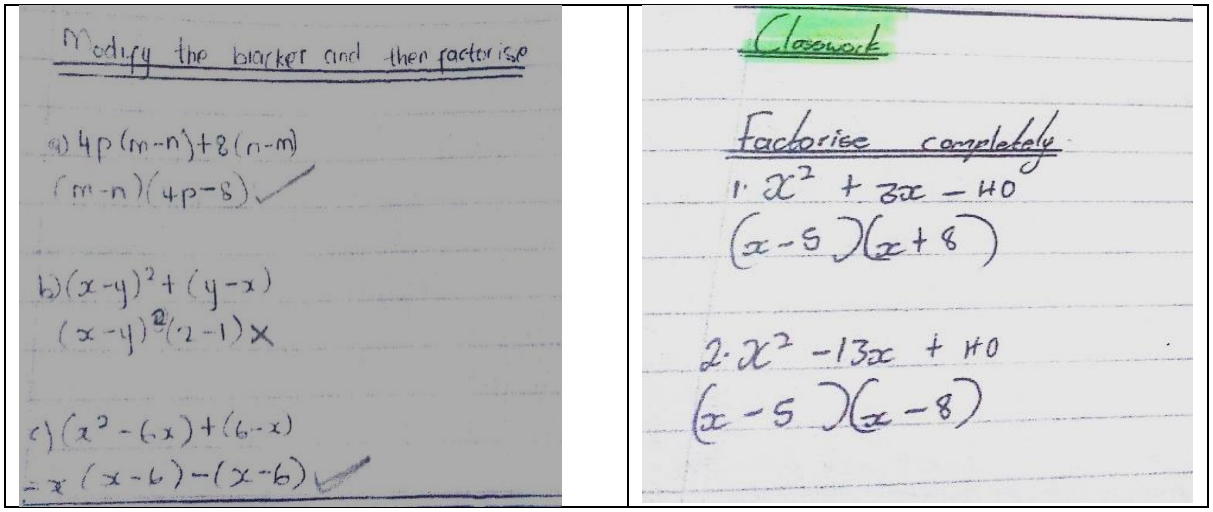
Figure 5 (a) and Figure 5 (b) depict examples of content coverage of factorisation of algebraic expressions in School C and School D respectively.

Figure 4: *Example of content coverage of factorisation of algebraic expressions.*



(a) School A (b) School B

Figure 5: *Example of content coverage of factorisation of algebraic expressions in Schools C and D*



(a) School C (b) School D

Table 3: *Factorisation of algebraic expressions content coverage per school*

Content - CAPS		School A	B	C	D
"Factorise algebraic expressions."	Factorisation of algebraic expressions that involve: Common factors,	✓	✓	✓	✓
	the difference of two squares,	✓	✓	-	✓
	the trinomial of the form $x^2 + bx + c$	✓	✓	-	✓
	$ax^2 + bx + c$, where *a* is a common factor.	✓	-	-	-
	Simplification of algebraic expressions that involve the above factorisation processes.	✓	✓	✓	-
	Simplification of algebraic fractions using factorisation	✓	✓	✓	-
Total		6	5	3	3

Note: A tick (✓) signifies *Content covered*

In School D, just like in School C, only three subtopics out of the six that were prescribed were addressed. These were factorisation of algebraic expressions that involve common factors, the difference of two squares, and trinomials of the form $x^2+ bx+ c$ (DBE, 2011).

It was found that the following subtopics were not addressed, factorisation of algebraic expressions that involve $ax^2+ bx+ c$, where '*a'* is a common factor, simplification of algebraic expressions that involve the above factorisation processes and simplification of algebraic fractions using factorisation.

Table 3 shows the summary of factorisation of algebraic expressions coverage in the schools.

The findings in the table show the number of subtopics that were covered for each school, out of a total of six subtopics. School A covered all six subtopics, which was the target number of subtopics. School B covered five subtopics. Schools C and D covered a total of three subtopics each, which was the least number of subtopics covered.

Algebraic Equations

There was evidence of the teaching of all the content algebraic equations being addressed in School A except solve equations by inspection. Figure 12 is a vignette of the subtopic, solving equations by using laws of exponents in School A.

Figure 6 (a) depicts an example of content coverage of algebraic equations in School A. In School B, there was evidence of the treatment of the subtopics of algebraic equations except solving equations by inspection and equations where a product of factors = 0. Figure 6 (b) depicts an example of content coverage of algebraic equations in School B.

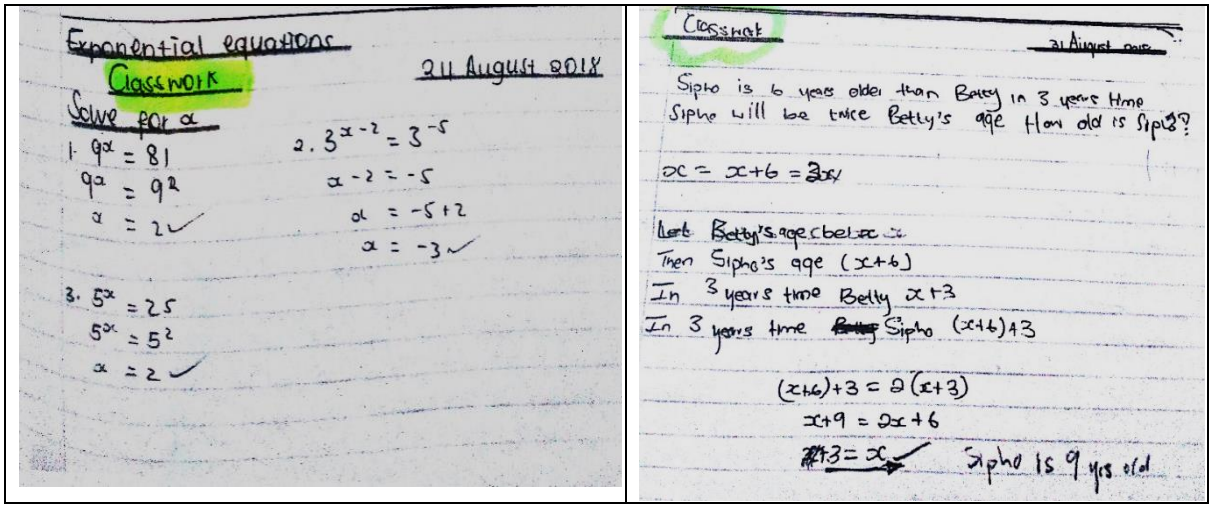
In School C, there was evidence of the teaching of the following content algebraic equations except setting up equations to describe problem situations and solve equations by inspection.

Figure 7 (a) and (b) show examples of content coverage of algebraic equations in School C and D respectively. Only three subtopics of algebraic equations (solve equations by using additive and multiplicative inverses, using laws of exponents, and the use of substitution in equations to generate tables of ordered pairs) were treated in School D.

Figure 7 (b) depicts an example of content coverage of algebraic equations in School D.

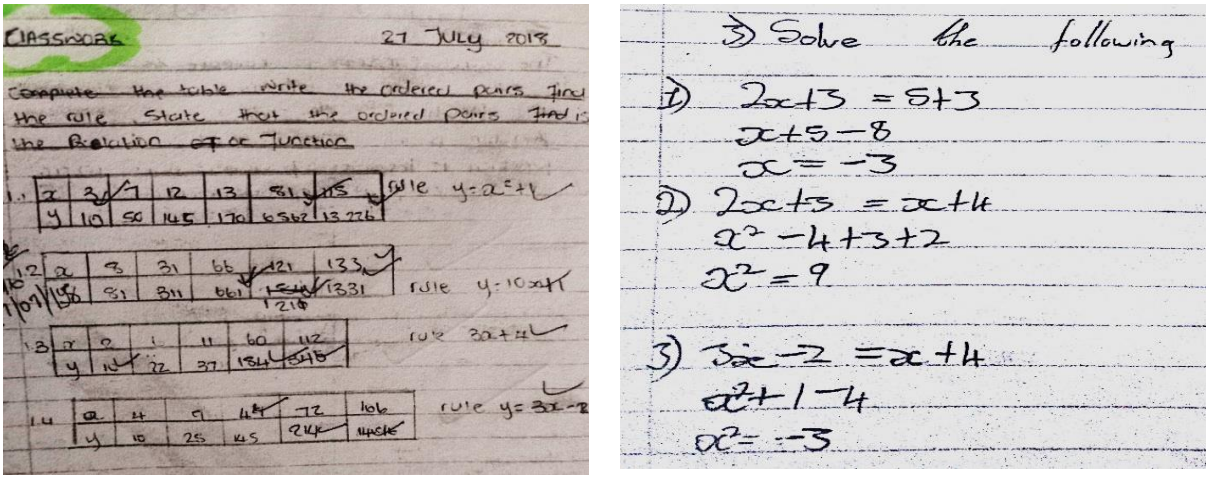
The summary of algebraic equations coverage in the schools is depicted in Table 4

Figure 6: *Example of content coverage of algebraic equations in Schools A and B*



(a) School A (b) School B

Figure 7: *Example of content coverage of algebraic equations in Schools C and D*



(a) School C (b) School D

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings show that out of a total of 29 subtopics, 28 (96,6%) were covered in School A, 24 (82,8%) and 16 (55,2%.) were covered in Schools B and C respectively, while 9 (31%) were covered in School D. The findings indicate that schools did not address all the algebra content as stipulated in the curriculum. Particularly, the content covered in two of the four schools was grossly inadequate and hence not in alignment with the curriculum.

Table 4: *Algebraic equations content coverage per school*

Content - CAPS		School A	School B	School C	School D
Equations	Set up equations to describe problem situations.	✓	✓	-	-
	Analyse and interpret equations that describe the given situation.	✓	✓	✓	-
	Solve equation by inspection,	-	-	-	-
	-Using additive and multiplicative inverses	✓	✓	✓	✓
	-Using laws of exponents	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Determination of the numerical value of an expression by substitution.	✓	✓	✓	-
	Use substitution in equations to generate tables of ordered pairs.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Extend solving equations to include: Using factorisation	✓	✓	✓	-
	Equations of the form, a product of factors = 0	✓	-	✓	-
Total		8	7	7	3

Note: A tick (✓) signifies *Content covered*

The average coverage of the content in the four schools was 66,4%. In general, the learners were not afforded sufficient opportunity to learn the content of algebra. Although the literature does not provide an acceptable measure of a gap, the researchers regard the 33,6% uncovered content as too high; therefore, the content coverage was inadequate. Many subtopics were not covered in three of the four schools. This implies poor OTL afforded to the learners in those schools.

When learners have not learned a particular mathematical concept, they will not be able to apply that concept in real life. Analyses and interpretations of equations that describe a given situation, which is very significant in real-life, was not treated in two schools. The content not being covered creates a gap in the learners' knowledge that could negatively impact their future mathematics learning and their application of the concept in real life. This is an indication of how much foundation is lacking for the learners to progress to a higher grade in school. The findings of this study are similar to the findings of Stols (2013), that some curriculum content was not covered in some schools. Kokonyane (2015) observed that there were challenges with the implementation of the curriculum in schools as teachers sometimes diverged from what the curriculum prescribed. The non-coverage of the curriculum content could be due to teachers' poor knowledge of the content or large class size (Ogbonnaya et al., 2016) which makes it difficult for teachers to have sufficient time to cover the content. It could also be due to the incorrect interpretation and understanding of the curriculum policy (CAPS).

CONCLUSION

The study explored Grade 9 learners' OTL algebra content in some schools. The main focus of this study was to explore the extent of algebra content coverage by teachers in relation to the curriculum policy. It was found that the

Grade 9 learners were not afforded sufficient opportunity to learn the expected content of algebra as stipulated in the curriculum, in that the content was not completely covered in the schools studied.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For teachers to provide optimal OTL for the learners, the teachers must dedicate instructional time to covering the content prescribed. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should follow the guidelines during teaching to cover the content. To ensure this, the mathematics subject advisors (i.e., subject experts based at the education district offices who support the schoolteachers on curriculum implementation) should continually monitor teachers' implementation of the curriculum. The mathematics subject advisors should also guide the teachers on how to effectively sequence subtopics to cover the contents of the curriculum adequately. At the beginning of each term, teacher development workshops may be organised for teachers to collectively plan their teaching.

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"Pathetic Scholarship" In Gukurahundi and Related Studies: A Silver Lining From Social Media Cloud

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ABSTRACT

"In every dark cloud, there is a silver lining".

In this context, the perceived prevalence of pathetic scholarship in Gukurahundi studies and other cognate fields is cause for concern among scholars and practitioners. However, pathetic scholarship is not uniformly understood by interested parties, who largely base their arguments on Euro-American perspectives that only provide a partial understanding of this phenomenon. Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to critique pathetic scholarship, whether real or imagined, in Gukurahundi Studies, Media, Politics, Conflict, and Peace Studies, just to mention a few. For this paper, pathetic scholarship is understood as studies of sub-standard in terms of set criteria. Methodologically, this paper employs conversations and interdisciplinary discourse analysis with an alternative Afrocentric approach. In this paper, it is argued that pathetic scholarship has not yet reached a crisis point. In fact, pathetic scholarship (in its current form) carries the hopes and aspirations for interdisciplinary richness in tackling difficult subjects such as Gukurahundi and apartheid.

Keywords: Facebook; Social Media; Knowledge; Development; South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

"Pathetic scholarship nothing will come out here. The problem is the peer review system in these journals where you pay to publish!"

This infamous social media injunction is part of the status update that was posted on Facebook by Shepherd Mpofu on the 17th February 2023. It is reproduced here with its gross substantive editorial errors, perhaps a confirmation that it was meant to defend a thesis that was under imagined attack. This injunction was a direct response to a status update I posted on my WhatsApp and for some reason, it caught the attention of his eyes even though he does not feature on the list of my contacts, who have the privilege to view my status updates. The logical conclusion that can be drawn is that one of my contacts munched my status update and shared it with Mpofu for reasons that are beyond the comprehension of this paper. On the 16th February 2023, at 23h46, I first posted the screenshot of the working title for the article manuscript entitled "Grappling with the *Ndebelification* of Gukurahundi studies", with a tag "done and dusted" (Author, 2023a). Therefore, it is possible that my status update was shared with Mpofu by one of my contacts who shares his angry and intolerant consciousness so far as Gukurahundi is concerned.

The purpose of this paper is not to proffer criticism of Mpofu's social media injunction as captured above. It is important for this debate to be broadened beyond the narrow prism of ethnicity, linguistics, and individuals. Emerging from this, the paper seeks to critique the notion of "pathetic scholarship" from a disruptive Afrocentric viewpoint (Asante, 2003). It is instructive

for the reader to note that while the question of pathetic scholarship stems from the subject of Gukurahundi as hotly contested mainly between the current author (academically), Mpofu (academically and publicly) and others, to a certain extent; it can also be observed in other fields of study and practice. The Afrocentric viewpoint in this paper is meant to offer an alternative and contextually relevant explanation which has recently permeated social media (Asante, 1990). Hence, social media is a manifestation of the Euro-American practices and value system; which are largely anchored on the lived experiences and consciousness of Euro-Americans (Mazama, 2003; Legodi & Shai, 2020).

The foregoing observation should be understood within the context that the ownership of social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter (now renamed X) rests in the Global North (Legodi & Shai, 2020; Ndaguba, Shai & Arukwe, 2019). Returning to the gist of this paper, the notion of pathetic scholarship is not a recent development, and it is emphatically neither limited to Political Science nor Media Studies. It is just that it is at times called in different names ranging from "madness", "bullshit" to "nonsense" scholarship. Elsewhere, I have characterised pathetic scholarship as epistemic madness in reference to contemporary Public Administration scholarship in South Africa (Author, 2023b). On the one hand, Kirchherr (2022) sees pathetic scholarship as "scholarly bullshit" and she laments the prevalence of this phenomenon in sustainability and transitions literature. On the other hand, Tourish (2020) notes a growing concern of scholars about an increase in "nonsense" within Management Studies. While my previous work and that of Kirchherr (2022) and Tourish (2020) have a common denominator with linguistic/semantic variation; Marjanovic (2023) argues that we have not reached a crisis point and those who attempt to paint such a bleak picture are driven by a sense of exaggeration and hopelessness.

The justification for this paper rests in the parallel perspectives in the literature which address the questions of who accounts for pathetic scholarship and in which manner it finds expression within academic circles. This question remains unsettled, and it is not the intention of my paper to settle it. My intention is to broaden the debate in a field that has not been adequately theorized and explored (Marjanovic, 2023). This point should be understood within the context that pathetic scholarship and its various names and forms is hinged on profanity, a practice that is not common in academic circles; despite the long history of its use in the arts, business, and politics (Greene, 2013; Kirchherr, 2022). Provocative and shocking as it may appear, the reader's attention is drawn to the fact that the application of profanity in this paper is not the author's invention/handwriting, he draws from those scholars who have used it in historical and contemporary times (Greene, 2013; Kirchherr 2022; Marjanovic, 2023; Author, 2023b).

In this conceptual paper, no attempt is made to present the typology of pathetic scholarship. This dimension has been critically and in detail addressed by previous scholars (Kirchherr, 2022; Marjanovic, 2023). For instructive purposes, however, pathetic scholarship is understood in this paper to denote studies that are grounded on "pathos, persuades by appealing to the emotions of the reader or listener" (Greene, 2013, p. 1389). Greene (2013, p. 1389) reinforces the conception of pathetic scholarship by arguing that its argument "exists in parallel to logical argument, which appeals to deductive or inductive reasoning, and ethical argument, which appeals to the character of the speaker".

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMING

Theoretically, this paper is based on Afrocentricity as articulated by intellectual giants such as Asante (2003) and Mazama (2003), just to mention a few. This theory was chosen as the contextual and theoretical lens for this paper whose research and writing are largely based on African consciousness; as demonstrated through the use of African metaphors and proverbs to enrich the analysis of this paper (Asante, 2007). Furthermore, the choice of Afrocentricity was informed by its propensity to foster epistemic justice (functional role) alongside its cognitive role (Mazama, 2003). Because the author of this paper is an African, it would logically make sense to base his studies on concepts, ideas, theories, and philosophies that are centered on Africa, her people, and their culture. A failure to observe this may result in intellectual derision that can manifest in the form of a more dangerous double consciousness (Azibo, 2011). Meanwhile, the attention of the reader is drawn to the fact that in this paper theoretical framework is not only understood as an integral part of the literature review; it is also viewed as a part and parcel of the research design hence the choice of theory for any study (including the current one) has serious implications for the methods chosen and applied to address a particular research problem. Due to the symbiotic relationship between theoretical framework and research design, it then follows that this paper is located within the Afrocentric paradigm - a re-enforcer to the broader qualitative research methodology (Milam, 1992). To be precise, the data for this paper was collected through conversations and interdisciplinary discourse analysis with a slant toward Africanity (Legodi & Shai, 2021).

It is worth remembering that among the data sources used for this paper is Mpofu's Facebook post referred to above. From an ethical point of view, Mpofu "voluntarily" made his Facebook status update (also read as post) public. At the time when he posted the status update in question and I wrote my article, he did not provide a "disclaimer" that such cannot be used for academic purposes. Besides, his right to consent cannot weigh against my right of a reply in a scholarly manner; especially when such posts cast serious aspersions on my academic and professional standing, that of my associates, and the institutions I am affiliated with. Otherwise, all research processes for this paper were conducted with due regard for the fundamental ethical principles in an Afrocentric context (Milam, 1992). This point is important because of the competing conceptions of ethics in research and beyond. This is because my academic works are the subject of his post. Thus, the author occupied a central position in the conceptualization, operationalization, and reporting of the findings for the research of this paper hence the use of first-person "I" in this paper is justified by the fact that its paradigm is dismissive of the notion of objectivity, which is generally deemed as the inter-subjectivities of those who regard themselves as the connoisseurs of the truth or scientific knowledge in broader terms (Azibo, 2011). Besides the above, in this paper the researcher is also a research instrument who is central in data collection, analysis, and presentation as per suppositions of Milam (1992); and Xu and Storr (2012).

The findings emerging from the discourse were descriptively and critically analyzed and then, narratively and thematically presented. Equally important, the elements (perspective, orientation, and grounding) of Afrocentricity were also used as the analytical categories for the research of this paper. These elements are based on African values such as cooperation, interdependence, and communalism, just to name a few (Mazama, 2003). The methodological direction of this research was alive to the reality that this paper's

primacy is not the quantification of data. But an attempt to paint a qualitatively rich picture of the phenomena being studied within the context of very limited respondents (Author, 2016).

SIFTING *PATHOS* FROM *LOGICS* IN GUKURAHUNDI AND RELATED STUDIES:DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Current international trends in research are treading towards interdisciplinarity (ASSAf, 2021), a notion that echoes the cooperation of scholars and the cross-pollination of ideas in different disciplines. This is because the problems bedeviling society are so complex and compelling that they cannot be easily addressed through pointed and/or inward-looking approaches. A coordinated and interdependent approach in the mode of interdisciplinarity is critical to our shared quest as scholars to use science to positively make a difference in society. As such, the suggestion that no less than 50% of publications in sustainability and transitions qualify as inferior scholarship is nothing more than a guess (ASSAf, 2021). This is because some of the works that speak to the heart of sustainability and transitions are featured in non-disciplinary journals hence they address issues that overlap with key topics in sister disciplines such as Political Science, Sociology, Economics, and Law, just to mention a few.

In fact, contributions by non-subject experts tend to be valued and welcomed in certain disciplinary journals as they introduce new dimensions to the targeted readership. For conservative disciplinary subject experts, contributions by non-subject experts may be misconstrued and quickly dismissed as poor or inferior scholarship. I argue that in research, we do not have a good or bad research problem, as provisioned in Western-centred scholarship. It then follows that the notion of inferiority or superiority of scholarship is also non-existent in reality. When such binaries find expression, they are deliberately used as a means to perpetuate existing divisions in society; especially between those who claim to know (knowers) and those who are purported as not knowing (Maserumule, 2011). This injustice has been recently challenged by advocates of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to a point wherein the undervalued and underrated knowledge bearers/holders (research participants) and practitioners within the African communities ought to be properly acknowledged by principal investigators and where possible, robbed in as co-investigators (PMG, 2023).

Like research participants, some of the scholars who are said to be producing inferior scholarship have innovative ideas and at times they are limited in terms of their capacity to communicate in a manner that is acceptable to the scholarly community (Smith, 1999). Contextually, the existing divisions within the scholarly community are fuelled by unhealthy competition between scholars. This practice also finds resonance in Eurocentric value systems due to its pollution by selfishness and individualism. As it is metaphorically retorted in some circles that "behind every dark cloud there is a silver lining", it then follows that what is deemed as pathetic scholarship is not a total waste. It can serve the purpose of sparking or sustaining a debate in lieu of laying a fertile ground for future research. Besides, it has to be borne in mind that what is normally valued by scholars in a particular discipline may not necessarily enjoy a certain level of recognition by scholars emanating from elsewhere hence scholars from different academic persuasions can research a common theme. However, the interest or focus of their research may vary in terms of dimension and/or approach (Shai & Vunza, 2021). For example, when it comes to Gukurahundi Studies, Media Studies scholars will be interested in reporting/representations in the discourse, while Law experts will focus on legal implications and Political Scientists may be preoccupied with political forces at play.

Therefore, disciplinary rigidity and arrogance have a rich potential to erode the interdisciplinary wealth that has long served as a bedrock for Gukurahundi Studies. Such rigidity and arrogance are germane to Eurocentric value systems with a hardened attitude and false belief in its leadership in civilization and other processes in the society (James, 1954). While modern scientific research is generally perceived as discipline-based, one should hasten to point out that the provincialisation of academic disciplines is a Westernised construct and it does not gel with the African thought system (Author, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

Sebola (2018) attributes the current patterns and trends in scholarship to reviewers and editors of scientific journals. This is a tired argument that I have brutally dismissed elsewhere (Author, 2021). Contrary to this, Marjanovic (2023) puts the blame on authors as being responsible for the proliferation of pathetic scholarship. Apparently, most of these scholars chase the quantity (number) instead of the quality of publications. In disregard of the complementarity between quality and quantity, the emerging and exclusive tendency was caused by the fact that the current system of evaluating and rating scholars is metrics-driven (NRF, 2020). The impact of scholarly work tends to be measured by citation index as opposed to real effect in finding lasting solutions to societal problems. This approach is problematic because not all works that are cited by scholars have been really read. Also, because scholars have mastered the art of co-existence and suitability in the system, others tend to cite one other and overlook those who are not in their circle even though their works may be more relevant and compelling.

In the case of South Africa, the drive towards quantification of scholarly works is even worse. This is because in addition to prospects of academic growth, promotion, and tenure that come in recognition of one's publication record, some universities highly incentivize their personnel for publishing (ASSAf & Universities South Africa, 2018). In short, some universities in South Africa share the research output subsidy received from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) with the authors. Sadly, this trend has unintentionally produced a situation wherein South African academia is divided between teachers and researchers. Subsequently, an unhealthy working environment has been availed among academics due to the fact that in some universities, researchers enjoy higher regard than ordinary teachers. This is particularly the case in research-intensive universities. On the other hand, teaching-intensive universities tend to treat research as a luxury and therefore, not create an environment that is conducive to scholarly productivity. Those who actively teach do not see research as part of their responsibilities as academics.

Similarly, those who actively research do not see teaching as part of their responsibilities. In short, there is an emerging trend in South Africa wherein teaching and research are treated in some universities as mutually exclusive due to the wanton commercialization of scholarship (Motau, 2018). The latter has sacrificed quality when it comes to research on the alter of chasing profits. The foregoing analysis does not in any way imply that it is not possible to strike a fair balance between quantification and quality of research outputs, but it is not easy to do so. One gets compromised in the process as universities pressure their academic staff with the mantra of "publish or perish". In the midst of this, the polemic question is what needs to be done? I argue that there is an urgent need for the revitalization of African value systems (i.e. humanization) within the higher education sector. This system will go a long in terms of inculcating or resuscitating the culture that values humanness over money and material

acquisitions as per the Sesotho proverb: *Feta kgomo o sware motho* (Ramose, 2002).

According to Marjanovic (2023, p. 2) "Academic publications that do not make any notable scientific contributions may not necessarily have negative consequences on the development of a particular academic field as a whole". This is because there is no scientific proof that suggests pathetic scholarship consumes publication space that could otherwise have been used for cutting-edge scholarship. After all, the categorization of scholarship as pathetic or cutting-edge is not sacrosanct among scholars. The foregoing analysis should be understood within the context that scholars/authors operate with competing or varying backgrounds, perspectives, methodological inclinations, and interests (Milam, 1992). While pathetic scholarship cannot be promoted, the fact remains that it is not deliberately produced. Those who bash new entrants into what they consider to be uncharted territories are understood by Lao Tzu's order that "a great man is hard on himself; a small man is hard on others". As such, the producers of pathetic scholarship cannot be condemned to oblivion. At least, they made an effort out of passion and commitment to produce something intellectual. Thus, research and writing are an art/skill that can only be honed and perfected with time. As such, it is not in the best interest of knowledge development and promotion to ridicule the scholarship of those scholars (especially those emerging) whose work may not necessarily meet our subjective standards. Thus, they may be discouraged and demoralized from giving it a try in the future. Such a fear can only work against the efforts to grow the next generation of academics who operate in a sector that is already slim in a developing country such as South Africa. Related to this, Jim Rohn (undated) reminds academic leaders that "a good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well and to help those who are doing well to do even better". As such, destructive criticism (as opposed to constructive critique) has no safe space in knowledge creation and development.

Marjanovic (2023, p. 5) moves that "whether an article genuinely deals with an issue that it declares should not be judged merely by its title or the highlighted keywords but by its content". This motion dovetails with a long-held warning among readers "do not judge a book by its cover". But the rise of social media has created opportunities for some scholars to popularise or market their publications. Sadly, the same social media has been exploited by others to pursue hate speech in a manner that devalues the credibility of the works of those they intellectually differ. In certain cases, such disagreements raged on social media and other media platforms in such a manner that closely brought into disrepute the names of the universities where the differing scholars are affiliated. I am not suggesting that scholarly excellence is the preserve of certain universities over others. For Marjanovic (2023, p. 5), when research is bad, it is bad regardless of who is its producer. It then follows that when research is ugly or good, it is ugly or good regardless of its producer and his/her institutional affiliation. However, the binary standing of research as either good/evil, qualitative/ quantitative, and empirical/non-empirical is problematized by Maserumule (2011) who sniffs the complementarities between this knowledge(s). Therefore, it ought to be known that the characterization of some works as pathetic scholarship may as well simply qualify as a "rant". Hence, the conclusion is at times made on the basis of insufficient evidence by authors who intentionally blur their scholarly and activist obligations to achieve a particular political cause. In relation to the latter, Frantz Fanon (undated) has this to say:

"Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against

that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore, and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with the core belief".

Emerging from the above, it is noted that some scholars have produced many publications on Gukurahundi (Mpofu, 2019). But none of their works offer any new knowledge. Such scholars feel entitled to be over-cited by those who come after them. Yet their works in the main would qualify as a product of what is known within scholarly circles as "salami slicing" (Adams, 2022). In this, the only gratuity that we can offer them is to cite their latest publication or just that one publication that captures the master of their thesis. In a highly unequal society such as ours, it is unlikely that a scholar will regularly produce seminal works (Marjanovic, 2023). Thus, the acceptability of a submission for publication partly depends on the explicit or implicit agenda of the targeted journal. For example, some journals have a clear transformation agenda which causes their editorial board to be sympathetic to contributions on previously marginalised topics/themes; even though their submissions may not be perfect (if there is such) in terms of clarity of thought and scholarly rigor. Other journals are produced to advance a particular narrative (dogma) and any misfit to such a narrative is rejected. If the foregoing analysis is anything to go by, then Wendi Jade's conviction is as correct today as it was in proverbial yester years. Jade (undated) cautions that "An environment that is not safe to disagree in is not an environment focused on growth- it's an environment focused on control". Nevertheless, the fact remains that our work would not be liked by everyone. But such does not make them pathetic. After all, we are not writing to be liked. We are researching and writing to stay and make a difference within our academic disciplines and the society at large.

CONCLUSION

The Sesotho proverb has it that "Molato ga o bole". The rough translation of this expression denotes that time does not change the truth. What follows is that pathetic scholarship has been a feature of our academic establishments for centuries. While pathetic scholarship has proven to wields both positive and negative implications; its description has also been abused/exploited by some scholars to achieve narrow and short-term goals. On the question of the value and waste attached to pathetic scholarship, the outlook is dependent on the epistemic and ontological location of the observer, and the relation between the author and the reader. Knowledge creation and development is a complex and ambitious task, especially for the Global South and Africa in particular. As such, it is important for scholars in Africa to put aside their ethnic, linguistic, political, personal, and other differences in collective pursuit of the knowledge of reality. Hence, it is only in the knowledge of reality that situated truth can be found and redirected for the purpose of positively shaping policy formulation, adoption and implementation in a manner that will maximally benefit our people. Lastly but not least, feelings and emotions cannot be suspended but they should not be allowed to cloud scientific judgment in the treatment of sensitive subjects such as Gukurahundi, apartheid, and other conflict situations with an ugly charge.

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The Indelible Verwoerd's Edicts: A Critical Review of their Indirect Impact on South African Basic Mathematics Education Reforms.

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ABSTRACT

Several decades into having become a democratic state, the proclamation "What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when he cannot use it in practice" (Verwoerd, 1953 cited in Clark & Worger, 2004, p.48) haunts the mathematics classroom and its curriculum reform. Drawing from the ideas of Althusser's ideological state apparatus and critical discourse analysis, this article argues the non-causal inference of Verwoerd's mathematics ideological construct on the current mathematics education reforms. Significant discussions and efforts have been dedicated to improving basic mathematics education in South Africa, but many of these discussions and efforts have yielded inadequate outcomes. Policies in basic mathematics education have inadequately addressed the challenges faced in the mathematics classroom. This article critically reflects on Verwoerd's ideological edict and how it has indirectly shaped and continues to shape the culture and the state of mathematics teaching and learning and how the culture has translated into education policies.

Keywords: Bantu Education, Culture, Ideology, Discourse, Policy

INTRODUCTION

Education is a contested endeavor and continues to inform the development of cultures and countries' social capital. In 1954 Hendrik Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs at the time, said "There is no place for [a black man] in the European community above the level of certain labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open" (Pelzer & Speaks, 1966, p. 83). It is through Verwoerd's positional thinking that South Africa saw the birth of the Bantu Education Act, which would determine how a 'black man' would be educated. To think and analyse some of these statements when reflecting on the current state of the education system, the paper draws from Althusser's ideological state apparatus idea and critical discourse analysis. The early reference to the theoretical frameworks aims to prevent a staggered and disconnected flow of ideas between literature, descriptions, and interpretations of the statements.

The article takes a conceptual writing form, and it outlines some of the notable traits of apartheid education in South Africa, and the state of mathematics education in the basic education sector. It also outlines Althusser's ideological state apparatus and critical discourse analysis theories and uses the theories to make arguments about the ideological impacts on mathematics education policy and the improvement of mathematics education in South Africa.

History of Apartheid Education in South Africa: Ideological Outlook

The South African education system has been shaped by the legacies of the past and there are ongoing efforts to address these past issues. Thobejane (2013, p.1) argues that "constructing a new education system in post-apartheid South Africa cannot be fully grasped without a proper understanding of the pervasive impact of Bantu education." What is the pervasive impact of Bantu education? Where does it begin? And what are the foundations of this education that haunt the nation close to three decades into democracy?

Verwoerd's racist policy quest saw the formation of the Bantu Education Act (Act No. 47) in 1953 (Union of South Africa, 1953). Bantu education was created as an "inferior type of education" that was designed to "maintain the subordinate and marginal status of the majority racial group" of South Africa (Thobejane, 2013, p. 2). Abdi (2003, p. 92) describes Bantu education as "extensively in control of almost all the learning programs of South Africa's disenfranchised majority population." An important trait of Bantu Education was the total control of the education of the oppressed people by the governing state. (Abdi, 2003).

As such, the state used education as a tool of domination, ensuring that it "perpetuated hierarchical views of society and fostered an ideological consciousness of superior-inferior, master-servants, and ruler-ruled structure" (Thobejane, 2013, p. 2). It is this characteristic of the education system that is central to the argument of this article. Education is "always an identity formation" (Msila, 2007, p. 146). Bantu education was an intentional building of systems that guaranteed an embedded ideological foundation that would shape the identity of an African child. As argued by Abdi (2003, p. 90), the education system was "designed to create a psychologically weak native", resulting in a passive citizen that would not question colonialism. Schooling was, therefore, a central "purveyor of ideology", instilling the idea that the majority of black people should "learn how to prepare themselves for a realistic place in white-dominated society" (Christie & Collins, 1982, p. 60).

While the general mission was to provide low-quality education, Verwoerd expressed a strong stance on the exclusion of an African child from studying mathematics or any field related to mathematics as a specialisation (Abdi, 2003). It is on this premise that I interrogate the extent to which this ideological undertaking has affected mathematics development in the South African education system. According to Macrae (1994, p. 271),

"One of the mistakes (more appropriately, crimes) of apartheid was to waste the talent and potential of the huge majority of its people, particularly in the scientific and technological fields. As a consequence of the separate and unequal development, 86 percent of the African population is seriously underachieving in mathematics. The legacy of apartheid for mathematical education includes the subordination of ethnocentric considerations to European traditions and the exclusion of the majority of the population from access to and participation in mathematics-related professions."

For this reason, the traces of the construct of Bantu education are still evident in the shortcomings in the South African Basic Education sector. It was highlighted by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994, that "apartheid education and its aftermath of resistance has destroyed the culture of learning within large sections of our communities, leading in the worst-affected areas to a virtual breakdown of

schooling and conditions of anarchy in relations between students, teachers, principals, and the education authorities" (ANC, 1994, cited in Spaull, 2013, p. 2).

Although it must be acknowledged that there are various developments to improve the level of literacy and numeracy, South Africa's improvement is still hoped for. The factors highlighted in the ANC's statement can be seen in the number of challenges faced in predominantly disadvantaged schools. Others may argue that it is an excuse for the governing party's (African National Congress) little development and improvement of the education system (Clercq, 2020). However, there is a need to be critical of the underlying factors and principles that have resulted in these challenges. The next section will take a closer look at the state of education in general, and mathematics education in particular, in South Africa.

The Mathematics Education Deficiencies in South Africa

The South African education outlook is characterised by "severe underperformance, high-grade repetition, high dropout, and high teacher absenteeism" (Spaull, 2013, p.2; Fleisch, 2018). While these include research findings which reported on the underperformance (Fleish, 2018) in numeracy and literacy, the focus of this section will be on the numeracy area.

Spaull (2013) contends that there is a dualistic nature of the South African primary schooling system, leading to bimodality in student performance. He argues that

(1) "For whatever reason, historically disadvantaged schools remain dysfunctional and unable to produce student learning, while historically advantaged schools remain functional and able to impart cognitive skills; (2) The constituencies of these two systems are vastly different from the historically Black schools still being racially homogenous (i.e. Black, despite the abolition of racial segregation) and largely poor; while the historically White and Indian schools serve a more racially diverse constituency, although almost all of these students are from middle and upper-class backgrounds, irrespective of race." (Spaull, 2013, p. 2)

Spaull highlights the deeply embedded historical traits that maintain the structural deficiency in the education system. The challenges that are currently witnessed in the previously disadvantaged schools (schools attended predominantly by black people) are not to be exclusively attributed to the post-democratic era mismanagement. Instead, Spaull (2013) acknowledges how the past oppressive system has shaped the nature of the current education system.

According to Mlachila and Moeletsi (2019), there are various factors, such as inadequate public education funding, inadequate resources, poor content knowledge, and low accountability that contribute to poor educational outcomes. There are many research articles and reports that have covered the issues around mathematics education in South Africa (Alder & Pillay, 2016; Jojo, 2019; Adler, Alshwaikh, Essack, & Gcsamba, 2017; Spaull, 2013 and many others). While there are many factors attributed to poor performance in mathematics education, the leading factor is poor teacher content knowledge (Spall, 2013; Askew, Bowie, & Venkat, 2019)

Teachers are central to the success of education outcomes. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report of 2005 concluded that "factors to do with teachers and teaching are the most influences on pupil learning. In particular, the broad consensus is that teacher quality is the single most important school variable influencing pupil achievement."

(OECD, 2005, p.2). The conclusion is supported by other reports that highlighted that "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers" (Schleicher, 2011, p. 204). It is, therefore, a cause for concern that "most South African Grade Six mathematics teachers do not possess desirable levels of mathematics content knowledge." (Spaull, 2013, p. 25). It is an alarming reality especially because primary education is critical in building a foundation for the learners' future education endeavours.

Another notable factor is language and location, and Howie (2003) notes that in the findings of her research study, she found that "pupils who spoke either English or Afrikaans at home achieved higher scores in both the mathematics and the English tests than those who did not." (p.13). Furthermore, she highlights that "students attending school in rural areas perform worse in mathematics than those attending school in urban areas" (Howie, 2003, p. 13). Unlike teacher content knowledge, language is a central aspect of people's culture.

While all these factors are equally important in terms of what should be explored and addressed, the focus of this article is to foreground an ideological argument that advances the notion that there is a lurking historical ideology that continues to inform the culture of learning in mathematics education. The next section will explore, through the lenses of theory, edicts that have long-term implications on the shaping of the culture of learning that is espoused by education policies.

Althusser's Ideological State Apparatus and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

"Man is by nature an ideological animal" (Louis Althusser, 1970, p. 28)

Ideology is a powerful tool in the creation and definition of people (subjects). Ideology has the capacity to "define the (grammatical) subjects' range of action and possibility: what they are capable of doing, what they must and must not do." (Myers, 2005, p. 152). This power of ideology was expressed in the intentional crafting of declarations (discourse) during the apartheid era. Through the lenses of critical discourse analysis, one can deduce that, through discourse, ideology has the power to create "social power abuse, dominance, and inequality." (van Dijk, 1997, p. 1). The first example to consider is the declaration by the Eiselen Commission:

> The Bantu child comes to school with a basic physical and psychological endowment which differs so slightly, if at all, from that of the European child, that no special provision has to be made in educational theory or basic aims But education practice must recognise that it has to deal with a Bantu child, i.e. a child trained and conditioned in Bantu culture, endowed with a knowledge of a Bantu language and imbued with values, interests and behavior patterns learned at the knee of a Bantu mother. These facts must dictate to a very large extent the content and methods of his early education. The schools must also give due regard to the fact that out of school hours, the young Bantu child develops and lives in a Bantu community, and when he reaches maturity, he will be concerned with sharing and developing the life and culture of that community. (Eiselen commission, 1951 cited in Christie & Collins, 1982, p. 69)

Ideology, which in this case was propagated by discourse, made it possible to maintain and transform social relations of power (Fairclough, 1989; 2013). As evidenced by Eiselen's statement, the objective was to perpetuate a system that would a have limiting factor in the development of black people in the social structures. Norman Fairclough's

development of critical discourse analysis is cemented in the question of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others (Fairclough, 1989; 2013).

The concept of power often strikes the human mind with fear as it is often loosely associated with only oppression and domination of the subject. However, Foucault (1982) takes it a step further in his study of what he called "dividing practices", where he said that the "subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others" (p. 778), which objectifies the subject. Bantu education and the Group Areas Act managed to achieve both levels of the exercise of power. Foucault (1982) argued that the subject is placed in "power relations which are very complex" (p. 778) and he suggested that maybe the appropriate method that can be used to understand these power relations could be to investigate "the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations" (p. 780).

It is worth noting that the black child's (subject) identity was carefully crafted through discourse to reflect the apartheid ideology that deemed Africans inferior to European white people. Eiselen's declaration further goes on to define and dictate the limitations of the black child in terms of his place in society. The analysis of Verwoerd's edict in relation to mathematics will be discussed later in this section.

Fairclough (2010) asserts that discourse and power "flow into each other" (p.4). From a critical perspective, Fairclough (2010) strongly suggests that to "talk about discourse and power in terms of hegemony" (p.95) entails talking about the idea of "constituting and reconstituting social relations through discourse" (p.64). According to Skog (2014), hegemonic systems are "orders of discourse where relations of domination are sustained as part of the legitimizing common sense" (p.36). It is for this reason that the Eiselen Commission defended the establishment of the Bantu Education Act. It was argued that this type of education was 'good' for the Bantu child. The idea by Skog (2014) captures how apartheid ideology was able to maintain and legitimise dominance through ideology. The maintenance of dominance was possible because ideology "stitches together a comprehensible narrative out of a complicated world, explaining both the nature of that world and our particular place in it" (Myers, 2005, p. 151).

The fundamental element of critical discourse analysis in relation to this article is the way in which apartheid was able to proclaim, legitimise, and reproduce power relations (van Dijk, 2017). To expound on discourse, Wodak (1997), says:

"Discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo and in the sense that it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and positions people." (p.6)

Fairclough's (1989) model of critical discourse analysis consists of three interconnected analyses which are linked to three interconnected dimensions, namely: the object of analysis (including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts), the processes by which the object is produced and received (writing/speaking/designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human

subjects and the socio-historical conditions that govern these processes.

The above are linked to the following: text analysis (description);

processing analysis (interpretation); social analysis (explanation).

In the process of analysis, there are micro and macro levels of analysis where "language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication belong to the micro level of the social order. Power, dominance, and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to a macro level of analysis." (van Dijk, 1997, p. 4). An example offered by van Dijk (1997) where a member of parliament offers a racist speech in parliament involves micro and macro analysis. There are multiple ways to analyze and reconcile the macro and micro levels of analysis in the example provided by van Dijk (1997, p. 4) these include:

"Members-Groups: Language users engage in discourse as members of (several) social groups, organizations, or institutions; conversely, groups thus may act 'by' their members."

"Action-Process: Social acts of individual actors are thus a constituent part of group actions and social processes, such as legislation, news making, or the production of racism."

"Context-Social Structure: Situations of discursive interaction are similarly part or constitutive of social structure, such as a press conference may be a typical practice of organizations and media institutions. That is, 'local' and more 'global' contexts are closely related, and both exercise constraints on discourse."

"Personal and Social Cognition: Language users as social actors have both personal and social cognition: personal memories, knowledge, and opinions, as well as those shared with members of the group or culture as a whole. Both types of cognition influence the interaction and discourse of individual members, whereas shared 'social presentations' govern the collective actions of a group. Thus, cognition is also the crucial interface (or with a biological metaphor: the missing link) between the personal and the social, and hence between individual discourse and social structure."

Power as Control

There is an interpretation of power that resonates with this article, that is, power "can be seen as a capacity of people, or groups of people, to maintain social structures of inclusion and exclusion." (Skog, 2014, p. 37). According to van Dijk (1997) groups "have (more or less) power if they are able to (more or less) control acts and minds of (members of) other groups." (p. 5). It is convincing that the long-term goal of apartheid and its products (education acts and social acts) was to achieve a mass psychological engineering of the black majority in order to protect the interests the white domination. Appropriation of this power as a means of control is afforded by scarce social capital such as status, money, information, culture, force, and different forms of public engagements and discourse (van Dijk, 1997). These various benefits were in the control of the state ensuring sustenance. To prevent an interpretation of power as an absolute act, van Dijk (1997) indicates that "Groups may more or less control other groups, or only control them in specific situations or social domains." (p.5).

Discourse and power are interrelated in critical discourse analysis because, first, access to discourse materials in different disciplines is in itself a powerful medium. Secondly, human actions are controlled by the mind thus control of people's minds which includes their perceptions, opinions,

and knowledge, grants us the power to control their actions. Thirdly, people's minds are controlled by text and talk. Therefore, discourse "may at least indirectly control people's actions, as we know from persuasion and manipulation." (van Dijk, 1997, p. 5). The major achievement of the exercise of power through deliberate discourse is to "control people's beliefs and actions in the interest of dominant groups, and against the best interests of the will of the others." (van Dijk, 1997, p.5).

Now, back to Verwoerd's edict: "What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when he cannot use it in practice?" (Verwoerd, 1953). In the center of Verwoerd's statement is the Bantu child, as a subject, and what follows from this point is informed by the subject's place in society at the time. Verwoerd's statement brings up three aspects, that is, cognitive ability, valued knowledge, and the exclusionary society (which is an arena in which this unfolds).

The words "teaching" and "cannot use it" reveal the first point of interest in Verwoerd's edict. Through these words, Verwoerd, although not intentionally, acknowledges that the Bantu child has the cognitive capability to learn the mathematics subject. The point of contention, at least according to this statement, is the role and status of the Bantu child in the apartheid state. As seen in the introduction, "there is no place" for the Bantu child in society (Pelzer & Speaks, 1966, p. 83). If there are inclusionary practices applied against the African people, why waste resources teaching the Bantu child mathematics? As seen here, mathematics was a valued subject under apartheid education and as such was only reserved for white children.

It is understood that discourse, which advances ideology, creates a means to "control people's beliefs and actions in the interest of dominant groups, and against the best interests of the will of the others" (van Dijk, 1997, p. 5). In this case, the discourse was perpetuated in the interest of white people and children's education. It further noted that "discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people." (Wodak, 1997, p. 6).

There are major ideological effects on the current system that may have been created by the ideological engineering in apartheid education policies.

Implications for Mathematics Education Reforms in the South African Context

A well-renowned economist Professor James Heckman, has argued that:

"Policies that seek to remedy deficits incurred in early years are much more costly than early investments wisely made and do not restore lost capacities even when large costs are incurred. The later in life we attempt to repair early deficits, the costlier the remediation becomes" (Heckman, 2000, p. 5).

To fairly address the challenges in the education system, one has to acknowledge the issues of the historical inheritance of oppressive ideologies. It is understood that discourse "may at least indirectly control people's actions, as we know from persuasion and manipulation." (van Dijk, 1997, p. 5). Could it be that the education system is under ongoing manipulation by earlier ideologies that are deeply embedded in the system? Understanding certain policies' directions in mathematics education could reveal a glimpse to help answer this question.

In 2011, the education minister, Angie Motshekga said "Our national curriculum is

the culmination of our efforts over a period of seventeen years to transform the curriculum bequeathed to us by apartheid." (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011, p. i) This is an important opening statement in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). It is cognisant of the historical ideological and systematic inheritance that comes from the apartheid government rule.

An extensive intentional transformation of the curriculum was concentrated in the period of 1995 to 2006, driven by the transformation or redress agenda (Adler, Alshwaikh, Essack & Gcsamba, 2017). This was an important exercise; however, it is important to question the level at which the transformation was addressed. There is a level of formal access to education, whereby the education minister would highlight the number of learners enrolled in a particular subject. In the minister's speeches, this is often presented as an improvement. However, the conversation on epistemological gains is often not considered in the debates.

Adler et al. (2017) highlight that post-2006, the South African curriculum efforts can be "described by a shift to a focus on performance and quality across the system coupled with increased attention to teachers' knowledge." (Adler et al., 2017, p.1). Although this may be the case, it has become a "truism that the large majority of South African learners perform poorly at mathematics." (Taylor, 2021, p. 2). While this is an undesired situation, it has been recorded that there are gradual improvements in performance at both primary and secondary levels (van der Berg & Gustafsson, 2019).

Schollar (2008), reporting on the findings of the Primary Mathematics research project which looked at over 7000 learners from 154 schools in South Africa summarises the conclusion as follows: Phase 1 concluded that the fundamental cause of poor learner performance across our education system was a failure to extend the ability of learners from counting to true calculating in their primary schooling. All more complex mathematics depends, in the first instance, on an instinctive understanding of place value within the base-10 number system, combined with an ability to readily perform basic calculations and see numeric relationships . . . Learners are routinely promoted from one Grade to the next without having mastered the content and foundational competencies of preceding Grades, resulting in a large cognitive backlog that progressively inhibits the acquisition of more complex competencies. The consequence is that every class has become, in effect, a 'multi-grade' class in which there is a very large range of learner abilities, and this makes it very difficult, or even impossible, to consistently teach to the required assessment standards for any particular Grade. Mathematics, however, is a hierarchical subject in which the development of increasingly complex cognitive abilities at each succeeding level is dependent on the progressive and cumulative mastery of its conceptual frameworks, starting with the absolutely fundamental basics of place value (the base-10 number system) and the four operations (calculation)'' (Schollar, 2008, p. 1).

Schollar (2008) exposes the epistemological deficiencies in the efforts seen in mathematics education. By its own admission, the Department of Basic Education acknowledges that policies alone do seem to address the shortcomings of the mathematics education objectives. Noting that "the teaching and learning of mathematics in South African schools is not yielding the intended outcomes of South Africa's education policies and curricula" (DBE, 2018, p.6). The Department of Basic Education speaks about creating a dynamic classroom culture, in which the teacher plays

a critical role in "establishing this culture" (DBE, 2018, p. 19). The establishment of culture is a social exercise, and it is integral in forming and defining the identity of the members of society.

Although apartheid is in the past, there are accountabilities that anyone who dares desire to contribute to improving education must undertake. Firstly, there must be a deliberate acknowledgment of the impact of the ideological constructs that shaped the identity of the citizens that are now responsible for educating the next generation of citizens and scholars. The Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) research project notes:

"Mathematicians attach positive connotations to the subject such as 'exciting', 'creative' and 'curiosity'; yet many learners do not. Instead, many believe that the subject is for the 'intellectually gifted'; and the manner in which it is taught reinforces these attitudes and perceptions. The history of elitist access to mathematics, and the employment context requiring mathematics to gain decent work, have major political and socio-economic implications. While education may be used for emancipation, mathematics can be used as a weapon to increase and perpetuate inequality". (MISTRA, 2019, p. 3).

The project findings note an important aspect; that is, although we have turned our backs on the apartheid days the same inequalities that were envisioned by Verwoerd in policies may be perpetuated to this day. The idea that mathematics is for a selected few is the 'power', which has become a common 'maxim', affording it an exclusionary power. As it stands, mathematics is "perceived as a difficult subject, accessible only to the few" (Terera & Ngirande, 2014, p. 432) in South Africa. Research records that learners' mathematics aptitude is linked to their attitudes and beliefs toward mathematics (Mazana, Suero Montero, & Olifage, 2019).

The South African education system must purge itself of the embedded ideological engineering that was carefully constructed by apartheid education. The identity transformation of the citizens must happen at all levels of society to ensure that the generations to come can explore education without any limiting discourses (ideology).

CONCLUSION

The greatest concern we should have is that ideology outlives the time and epoch in which it is created and enacted. Althusser (1970) argues that the peculiarity of ideology is that it is endowed with a structure and a functioning such as to make it a non-historical reality, i.e., an omni-historical reality, in the sense in which that structure and functioning are immutable, present in the same form throughout what we can call history. (p. 29)

In the earlier sections, I asked 'Could it be that the education system is under an ongoing manipulation by earlier ideologies that are deeply embedded in the system?' And there is no definitive answer. However, our duty is to interrogate this throughout our construction of society and to deliberately destroy any traces of dangerous ideological advancements.

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Resistance to Online Learning in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools: the Content and Reasons

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the content and reasons for the resistance to the implementation of online learning in secondary education in Zimbabwe in light of the lessons and experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic. The study employed a systematic literature review as its methodology that relied exclusively on secondary data. The Overcoming Resistance to Change (ORC) model was exploited as a desirable model for the review, findings, and recommendations. The study found that online learning as a pedagogical innovation is and has been resisted by stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and learners due to factors like poor communication, unpreparedness, education, and training. Other factors like isolation, costs, fear, vested interests, ingrained habits, and workload also compounded and increased the magnitude of resistance. The study recommended the need to overcome resistance to the implementation of online learning by proposing strategies such as education and communication, participation, negotiation, resource provision, and positive soft power.

Keywords: Innovation, Online Learning, Overcoming Resistance to Change, Resistance, Secondary Education

INTRODUCTION

Education and social change have a symbiotic relationship and are inexorably intertwined. Of importance is the acknowledgment that education is a stimulant for social change, while social change also brings considerable alterations in the education system. “With the value of education emphasized, it is understandable that when COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020, an immediate major concern was how best to maintain a continuity of education for all children amidst this devastating global disruption” (Cunningham & Gibson, 2022.para1). Education had to proceed besides the baring of face-to-face interaction to contain the spread of the virus. “With the Coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic which resulted in national lockdowns across countries, there was a need to adopt (ICT) to make sure that learners still had access to their basic right to education” (Zinyemba, Nhongo, & Zinyemba, 2021,p. 223).

Remote and online teaching methods were adopted in an attempt to save the education of Zimbabwean secondary school students like the rest of the world. “There has been a shift towards virtual classrooms as a mode of education delivery with students being taught remotely through electronic platforms in many developed countries but for countries like Zimbabwe, virtual classrooms were prematurely delivered having being induced by the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic” (Zinyemba et al, 2021,p. 223). However, the rupture of education during the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the existing

inequalities in education systems worldwide (Cunningham & Gibson, 2022; Mukute, Burt, Francis, & De Souza, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented educators at all levels of schooling with the challenge of converting face-to-face instruction to online learning. "Past efforts to enact educational change, especially the adoption of technology in the classroom, have had mixed results" (McQuirter, 2020, p.47). This in many instances resulted in resistance among learners, parents and teachers. "Resistance to change is a well-known phenomenon. It is natural to resist modifications since they can mean more risks, upsetting the established balance and emotional stress" (Martins, 2016, para 2). Today's teachers are faced with a myriad of platforms and ever-changing digital tools in their delivery of new content (McQuirter, 2020) hence more changes of resistance are expected. Any change will mostly be met with some resistance at first as long as people are still not aware of the purpose of the change (Mandukwini, 2016; Juli, 2017). The resistance by teachers and other stakeholders may be a sign of the burden they bear in the implementation of online learning as a pedagogical innovation. It may mean that "the demands have multiplied over the past years when teachers had to move from a face-to-face model to a fully online platform in the absence of prior training, modelling of best practices, or easily accessed technical support"(McQuirter,2020,p.49).

A social change or an innovation comes with it some social, economic, psychological and cognitive costs and burdens. As a result, stakeholders tend to resist avoiding upsetting the status quo and ingrained habits. Having noted that online learning has faced resistance in some sections of the society by some stakeholders in Zimbabwean secondary education, the study found it prudent to examine the content and reasons in light of the experiences, lessons and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The argument is that, although the COVID-19 pandemic was devastating it opened opportunities to improve pedagogy so as to avoid loss of learning in the case of future emergencies. However, online learning as a pedagogical innovation has been met with strong resistance and as such the content and reasons need to be examined. This was the main focus of this systematic review paper. As the bedrock of this study, the Overcoming Resistance to Change (ORC) model was employed. The literature was reviewed in light of factors such as isolation, low education, vested interests, the cost of change, workload, ingrained customs and habits, fear of the unknown and role conflict.

THE PROBLEM

Instead of being an equaliser, technology in education is certainly an area of change that has been problematic through the amplification of already existing social inequalities. "The unexpected arrival of COVID-19 and the almost overnight need to move delivery of programs online at every level of schooling has exacerbated an already uneven implementation of digital technology" (McQuirter,2020,p.48). This innovation was met with resistance from the stakeholders in Zimbabwe such as teachers, learners, and parents. It was therefore important to examine the content and reasons for resistance and suggest ways of overcoming the barriers. Solving this problem is of value because it helps the user system and change managers in coping with the challenges of implementing technology-related innovations and overcoming the related resistance and inequalities respectively.

AIM

The aim of this study was to examine what (content) and why (reasons) teachers, learners and parents in Zimbabwean secondary schools resisted in implementing online learning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study hinged on the Overcoming Resistance to Change (ORC) model as articulated by proponents such as John Kotter and Leo Schlesinger (1989; 2009). The model claims that change is basically stressful and burdened with uncertainties hence individuals naturally develop strategies to cope with it. The first strategy is natural coping in order to adjust (Abbas, 2022; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2009). This process is characterized by stages such as denial, resistance, exploration, and commitment. In other words, the individual first refuses to recognize an innovation or a change upon first encounter. When realizing that the innovation is real an individual starts mourning the past using passive and active strategies of resisting the change (Abbas, 2022; Miller & Guerrero, 2022). Upon realizing that change is inevitable individuals begin to regenerate to explore the change. Finally, the individual gets committed to the demands of the innovation and takes action required for its implementation (Miller & Guerrero, 2022).

Individuals have different tendency towards change. They have their own pace of coming out of the emotional phase and adjusting with change. Some individuals remain stuck in denial and resistance, and this is where change managers should not leave it to natural coping strategy and find some other ways or resort to other strategies (Juli, 2017; Abbas, 2022; Miller & Guerrero, 2022). It is when the natural strategies fail that attraction strategies could be used to overcome resistance to innovation or change. In this case the change managers need to communicate the change or innovation in a way in which the change agents would clearly decipher the tangible and intangible benefits of the change (Grace, 2018). People who are affected by the change need to be convinced that their prior knowledge, values, and beliefs are significant and that the change is necessary for the advancement of the quality of education (Mandukwini, 2016).

Proponents, Kotter and Schlesinger (2009) suggest that contingency strategies can be brought to use if the natural coping strategy and attractions fail to work. The contingency strategies they raised are discussed below.

Education, training, and communication

This is the most common way of reducing resistance to the proposed change. The change agents need to be educated effectively by means of useful communication on the benefits and significance of change. This strategy will benefit the change agents in terms of clarity, skills, and knowledge that are needed in implementing online learning in the case of this study. The change can gain the much needed support if there is two-way communication between the change managers and the implementers especially on the problems and challenges that are likely to be associated with the change.

Participation and involvement of stakeholders

Closely related to education and communication is the participation and involvement of stakeholders.The user system needs to be given the chance to collaborate and to take part in active consultation when an innovation is coming. In this case, resistance will be minimized because the user system feels ownership of the innovation as an active participant in bringing it.

Facilitation and support

When the user system goes through the process of change, it faces challenges like stress, fear, anger, anxiety, and others. They need great emotional support and facilitation from the change managers and be allowed to express their fear so that they will eventually allow them to cope with the challenges of implementing a new innovation. For example, in online learning as a new pedagogical strategy, the user system my fear the cost of training and the

gadgets that are involved. Their fear should not be suppressed as it is genuine for them to do so in order to cope with the innovation.

Negotiation and agreement

This strategy involves bargaining on the various concerns of innovation that emanate from the change managers and the user system. In this strategy, every concern that is seen as a threat to the implementation of an innovation is regarded as important and is given the due consideration it deserves so as to reduce the resistance.

Manipulation and co-optation

This strategy involves persuading the user system to accept the innovation.The change managers can manipulate the information that they think may increase the resistance by concealing it in favour of the change.The strategy may also involve the change managers co-opting other individuals to help in favor of implementing innovation. For example, assigning skilled and knowledgeable individuals to assist other teachers in using online pedagogy.

Explicit and implicit coercion

This strategy involves the use of hard and soft power so that the user system accepts the innovation. In this study, the researcher recommended the use of soft power such as persuasion because it reduces resistance to explicit power such as threats and the use of fear.

The study found the ORC model more suitable and thus employed it to examine what stakeholders resist (content) and why stakeholders resist (reasons) in implementing online learning as a pedagogical innovation. The model also goes further to suggest some possible strategies to overcome resistance, and this makes it a self-contained model to deal with the problems and solutions of resistance to change.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a systematic literature review as its methodology. A systematic literature review entails a comprehensive search that gathers all relevant published studies that focus on research questions so as to reach a logical presentation and incorporation of findings of the results of that search (Siddaway, Wood & Hedges, 2019). In other words, a systematic review is a well-planned and careful examination of published research under the guidance of research questions so as to come up with unified and consolidated findings in an area the researcher finds problematic and requires a panacea.

Foster (2018) recommends the important steps when doing a systematic literature review as planning the methods, identifying and searching for studies, evaluating all retrieved articles, collecting/combining the studies, explaining the results, and summarizing results in a clear and transparent manner.

In this study, rigorous planning was done first to map out the systematic review process in terms of the structure and direction of the study. The structure and direction of the systematic review started by identifying the research aim which is examining the content and reasons for resisting online learning. The research aim then determined the relevance and quality of the publications to be included. The researcher identified and evaluated the relevant theories and studies, particularly from journals and book chapters on resistance to online learning. The ORC model and those studies that were related to the content and reasons for resistance to online were reviewed to come up with integrated findings on what and why the stakeholders resist in online learning. A summary report of results was later presented.

THE REASONS AND CONTENT OF RESISTANCE TO ONLINE TEACHING

This section examines why there is resistance and what is resisted in implementing online learning.

Isolation or lack of relationship with other

In this case, isolation shall be considered in three elements. Firstly, isolation as a geographical aspect, secondly isolation in relation to the differences between the past habit and new innovation and lastly isolation of learners from teachers and peers during online learning. Geographically some areas in Zimbabwe are isolated from the rest hence they tend to resist innovations because of a number of factors that stem from their geographical isolation. Students in the rural areas in Zimbabwe face greater challenges because these areas are highly underdeveloped in terms of internet accessibility, infrastructure, and power generation – requisites that are essential to e-learning (Matimaire, 2020; Moyo, 2020). "To worsen the situation of rural learners most of the educators noted that even if the educators were available at their rural duty stations, no online learning could have occurred as there is no proper infrastructure and basic resources that could enable them to conduct online learning" (Zinyemba et al, 2021,p. 226). Online learning as a pedagogical innovation needs essential requisites such as the internet, power, and infrastructure which are unavailable in most underdeveloped and isolated rural areas of Zimbabwe. The teachers, parents, and learners in the marginalized rural areas of Zimbabwe are poorly connected or may never be connected at all. Given this kind of isolation, such stakeholders are more likely to resist the implementation of online learning because they do not have access to the prerequisites that the rest of the country has.

Apart from geographical isolation, there is peer isolation. Teachers and learners need peer interaction in the implementation of online learning. "Peer support during change initiatives is important. Teachers work in isolation for significant parts of their days. However, isolation is one of the greatest impediments to enacting change" (Mandukwini, 2016, p.304). Teachers need to work with fellow peers sharing ideas on the implementation of online teaching as this will improve their understanding and acceptance of the innovation. Isolation impeded the implementation of online learning more during the COVID-19 pandemic because "many teachers were still in the Disruption stage, dealing with the technical aspects of delivery, unable to ask larger questions related to the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of children in an online environment" (McQuirter, 2020, p.49). The situation was even worse for some of the educators whose rural workstations did not have electricity and internet connectivity (Moyo, 2020). The disruption stage has been raised in the ORC model as a critical phase of coping naturally with change that needs to be handled with care if the proposed innovation is to be accepted.

Learners also need interaction with peers and teachers for effective online learning. Teacher and learner isolation was more 'painful' in practical subjects where learners needed teachers close. "Most practical modules in sciences and technology were severely affected since these areas need clinical supervision and a hands-on approach. They were also finding it difficult to get across new and difficult concepts to children via non-interactive virtual lessons" (Mukute et al, 2020, p.5). A related study in Zimbabwe adds that.

"Lack of self-encounter with educators was a great challenge as there are some topics which require face to face interaction with the educator and difficult to understand while making use of social media platforms like WhatsApp, which were affordable to the majority of the learners and educators, like areas to do with numbers and experiments" (Zinyemba et al, 2021, p. 227).

From the anecdotes above, teachers, learners, and parents among other stakeholders need to interact and share ideas on how best online learning can be implemented and improved. If an innovation is implemented by isolated stakeholders, it is likely to be resisted and suffers from rejection.

Low education/ and poor planning/ time

If there is no training to develop new skills to cope with the change, then the change will be resisted (Juli, 2017). This takes us to the point why education and communication have been some of the contingency strategies to overcome resistance in the ORC model. "Strong institutional support for the development of technical skills, coupled with collegial sharing and building on current practices, leads to a sense of agency among instructors and a greater willingness to embrace change" (McQuirter,2020,p.47). An immediate upgrading of digital proficiency was required by many teachers as they navigated a path for their students from the traditional classroom to online learning(Cunningham and Gibson,2022). During and after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, "teachers in elementary and secondary schools were offered little if any systematic training in full online delivery" (McQuirter, 2020, p. 49).

The attraction strategy of the ORC model makes it clear that "teachers carrying out the change need information about the aims and benefits of change, what is needed to introduce the change, and how the change will be introduced. If this information is not provided, then change will be resisted" (Ncube, & Kajengo, 2000, p.38). It can be inferred that educators, teachers, and parents admitted that online learning was left to trial and error as both the learners and educators were not prepared for online learning and did not know what to expect and how to proceed with online learning and assessment. If the stakeholders in Zimbabwe and the rest of the globe are not educated, trained, and communicated with regarding an innovation, that is a recipe for resistance and the ORC model is very clear about it.

Strong vested interests

The ORC model is clear about the fact that if an innovation is benefiting the stakeholders, then resistance will be minimal. When change comes, power, income, and control of resources may be redistributed. There may be resistance among people who feel they are losing power (Martins, 2016, Vurayai,2023). Some changes may call for a reduction in the size of an organization. This means that some people may lose their top posts or positions (Juli, 2017). There, therefore, needs to be an understanding of what happens to people's personal interests and their power (Martins, 2016; Vurayai, 2022). It may be reasonable to infer that online learning was resisted by Zimbabwean secondary teachers who saw it as a threat to their expert power in face-to-face teaching who were and are now required to attain new skills for lesson delivery.

The cost of Change

Change and innovations are rarely free. They have costs associated with them and the ORC model raised the concern that this is enough to trigger resistance among the user system. Change impacts on the budget of stakeholders and their financial standing.

In education, one other factor that influences curriculum implementation concerns the particular economic circumstances of each school. Schools located in rich socio-economic environments and those that have adequate human and material resources can implement the curriculum to an extent that would be difficult or impossible for schools in poor economic environments (Chaudhary, 2015, p.984).

Online learning brought costs related to gadgets, infrastructure, data, and power

supply, among others that the stakeholders would rarely incur before. It requires an extra budget that some may not afford, and this may result in resistance.

There is no doubt that "no meaningful teaching and learning take place without adequate facilities and resource materials. The availability and quality of resource material and the availability of appropriate facilities have a great influence on curriculum implementation" (Chaudhary, 2015, p.984). Online learning was faced with a lot of educator resistance as not much was done to ensure that the learning could be conducted in a conducive environment. The most cited challenge by the educators in Zimbabwe was footing the internet bill from their meagre salaries and making use of their personal gadgets to accommodate hundreds of assignments (Matimaire 2020;Vurayai, 2022). It was very difficult to conduct the online learning as not all the learners and educators had the electronic devices that could be used for online learning. Most of the educators in Zimbabwe complained that the internet bundle was beyond their reach as they normally used Wi-Fi at workplaces, while the learners had to depend on a daily night bundle that was affordable (Matimaire 2020; Mukute et al, 2020). Some of the learners despite the availability of such learning platforms did not attend all their lessons due to a myriad of challenges that were beyond their control like power cuts with no backup power at home; poor internet connectivity; no connectivity at all and depletion of the paid-up bundle (Mukute et al, 2020).

Apart from data and gadgets, online learning as a pedagogical innovation carries with it more costs in the form of backup power, maintenance, basic devices, availability of additional peripherals, upgrading, and training that are demanding and uncertain for the common person and the poor. The burden to meet these additional costs is so stretching and may result in resistance by stakeholders to implement online learning.

Ingrained customs and habits

From the ORC model, most people find change to be uncomfortable. "We establish comfort zones and routines. Consequently, we need to have important reasons to change our routine" (Mandukwini, 2016, p.304). A change or innovation would deskill or disempower certain individuals in society as they will be required to change their customs and habits. Changes that tamper with traditions and customs are seen as a threat, hence they are resisted (Miller & Guerrero, 2022). When a new change is implemented, new rules and regulations are created in the organization (Martins, 2016). A change may mean adopting new ways of doing things. Old ways that teachers are used to or are competent in are now useless (Juli, 2017). This may also result in new skills becoming essential (Martins, 2016; Vurayai,2023).

Some changes can reduce the influence one has in a school. Such a change will be resisted by the affected persons (Ncube & Kajengo, 2000). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Matimaire (2020) reports that despite the call for online learning, the situation for urban learners In Zimbabwe was a different story as some of the learners were reported to be going for face-to-face extra lessons with private tutors for a fee. Some teachers were cashing on face-to-face private tutorials even in the school premises. The shift to online learning implied loss of income, hence such teachers would resist the innovation. The same also applies to parents. Due to traditional customs and habits, there are many parents who contend that old and traditional teaching approaches are actually the best. If parents decline to accept new, and innovative pedagogic strategies like online learning, then it can be hardly implemented.

Fear of the unknown and fear of failure

As noted in the ORC model, fear of the unknown is normally found in the natural coping stage. At this stage

individuals have no information about an innovation hence they become afraid of a strange and unfamiliar change. This may culminate into anxiety, stress, phobias and panic attacks. Ncube and Kajengo (2000) clarify that

"Teachers resist change because of the uncertainty about causes and effects of the change. Teachers may fear to try out new ideas because they are not sure of the results. They fear of looking stupid. Resistance occurs when the procedures for implementing the change are not explained and they are unfamiliar" (p.38).

In the case of online learning, teachers, parents, and learners were using trial and error. They had no adequate information on how to proceed in lessons and assessments (Vurayai,2023). They had a fear of mistakes and failure, and this compounded the magnitude of resistance that was also induced by other factors. It is important that the fear of the unknown is allayed and mitigated among the stakeholders for change for it to be acceptable and implemented.

Increased workload and Role conflict

A social change or innovation may mean increased workload and complex role conflict. The outbreak of COVID-19 resulted in the rapid digital revolution in the education system through online lectures, teleconferencing, digital open books, online examination, and interaction in virtual environments (Kapasia, Paul, Roy, Saha, Zaveri, Mallick, … Chouhan, 2020). This implied that the stakeholders like teachers needed more time and energy to plan and execute their duties as compared to the traditional face-to-face approach. "Their workload had increased due to virtual learning" (Mukute et al., 2020, p.5). When the stakeholders realize that innovation would increase their workload without a proportional increment in their income, they are likely to resist it.

Online learning may imply that the home becomes a more active site of formal learning. The teachers, parents and learners have other roles to play in the same home. In Zimbabwe, the home space and equipment also have their traditional roles and functions to play which would then be shared with formal teaching and learning. This may pose a challenge of role conflict to the stakeholders. In Zimbabwe, Zinyemba et al (2021, p. 227) observed that home learning "was also a cause of conflict as most of the parents and guardians felt that one could not spend many hours on the phone and viewed that as an excuse for not doing household chores." On the other hand, the home environment itself, particularly for the overcrowded poor, is not conducive for learning as there are a lot of disturbances. It is prudent to note that role conflict may impede the implementation of an innovation like online learning.

Way forward

The deliberate and rational choice of the ORC model was also on the basis that it provides strategies for reducing resistance and also facilitating change management. According to the ORC model, some individuals may get stuck in the denial and resistance stage hence attractions and contingency strategies need to be applied for an innovation to be implemented successfully. "Successful implementation of any programme needs positive behaviour that is free from fear. Teachers should see the change as relevant to their professional lives and necessary to improve the quality of their teaching. Teachers' concerns should be taken into account, considered, and addressed so that they can feel that their opinions are valued" (Mandukwini, 2016, p.19).

The other strategy to contain resistance to the implementation of online learning is supporting the stakeholders in Zimbabwe through education, training and communication and the ORC model is clear about it. "Partners at community levels must

offer well-ness support to children, and especially to those with various vulnerabilities. The government is encouraged to spearhead the training of teachers and learners to make use of educational technologies" (Mandikiana, 2020, p.304). "This can be done by facilitating, retraining, and providing staff development programmes which will help the Zimbabwean teachers acquire new skills to cope with the change. Staff development programmes can be in the form of in-service workshops or seminars" (Ncube & Kajengo, 2000, p.38). Once stakeholders in the Zimbabwean education are supported and educated on the innovation, the greater are chances for it to be accepted.

Robust efforts are to be put in place to cater for the rural and other disadvantaged urban populace to ensure access to education during pandemics like COVID-19 to curb inequality and exclusion. (Mandikiana, 2020, p.304). Establishing more community ICT centers in rural areas in Zimbabwe could be one of the strategies to mitigate access to digital information and knowledge (Vurayai, 2022). It is also important to establish the provision and support of online learning platforms, which can be supported by radio and television broadcasts, universal access to internet and for the government to partner with internet service providers so that it becomes accessible and affordable to the majority of the populace (Mukute et al, 2021).

A new innovation brings with it new challenges. There is a need to take the challenges encountered with a positive mind because they also bring with them some opportunities to identify areas that need to be improved for excellent digital learning across socio-demographic groups (Vurayai, 2022). "Teachers also need to know that change is not final; there will always be new methods and techniques to try out, which make curriculum change and implementation an ongoing process" (Mandukwini, 2016, p.19). Once teachers develop this mindset, they are more likely to be receptive to more new innovations.

This study cannot rule out the role of positive soft power in change management. "Adoption of a change does not occur without some form of pressure, preferably positive in nature. The exerted pressure to change must exceed the pressure to return to the status quo" (Mandukwini, 2016, p.19). The change managers in Zimbabwe need to employ strategies like persuasion, co-optation, and negotiation for an innovation to be accepted. Implicit and explicit coercion are strategies that fall under the proposed contingency measures of change management in the ORC model that have proved to work in the past.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing study examines the reasons and content of resistance to online learning by stakeholders In Zimbabwean secondary schools such as teachers, learners, and parents. It is important to note that resistance is a useful form of feedback to show that there is something that needs to be corrected on the innovation. The stakeholders in Zimbabwe need full information, training and communication for them to accept online learning as a beneficial innovation that is implemented to improve rather than disrupting pedagogy. Online learning as an innovation is resisted because it brings with it burden and loss in terms of cost, workload, time, habits, skills, interests, power, status, and income. As posited by the ORC model there is a need for education, participation, negotiation, and positive coercion (soft power) among the stakeholders in online learning for the innovation to be implemented successfully.

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