THE IMPACT OF STUDENT-LECTURER RELATIONSHIP ON GOOD DECISION-MAKING AND QUALITY PROMOTION IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing need to comprehend the impact of the student-lecturer relationship in the institutions of higher education and training (HET). Thus, this study determines the impact of the student-lecturer relationship on good decision-making and quality promotion in the institutions of HET in the South African context. The study argues that the relationship between student-lecturer is essential because it enhances the decision-making process and promotes quality education and training. The student-lecturer relationship has a significant impact on student academic performance in HET. Similarly, the student-lecturer relationship is key to students' academic, social and emotional development. The Constructivism Theory of Learning (CTL) better understood and explained by Vygotsky (1978) & Piaget (1957) was used to raise critical analysis of the impact of the student-lecturer relationship on good decision-making and quality promotion in HET. Methodologically, the study have adopted a qualitative research approach in a form of document analysis. To further comprehend the relationship between students-lecturer on decision-making and quality promotion, the authors deployed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which is best used in analysing qualitative data. Secondary data sources covering topics of student-lecturer relationship on decision-making and quality promotion were critically reviewed and synthesised. The study has found that the student-lecturer relationship plays a pivotal role in good decision-making in HET and enhances existing learning programmes. It was also discovered that a strong relationship between lecturers-students can help to increase competency among students. Student disengagement, disorganised lecturers, low motivation among students were found as common challenges that affect student-lecturer relationship. The study conclude by offering recommendations to enhance the student-lecturer relationship and its influence to improve decision-making and quality promotion in institutions of HET.

Key words

Student-lecturer relationship, decision-making, quality promotion, higher education, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is undergoing an important transformation, where student success and learning is a primary focus (Haras, Taylor, Sorcinelli & von Hoene, 2017). Quality education yields benefits that extend far beyond the classroom into students' co-curricular experiences and contribute to students' achievement-retention, persistence, and success-ultimately leading to improved institutional efficiency (Haras et al., 2017). Receiving a quality education is an important cornerstone in the lives of every individual (Varga, 2017:1). It is true that every higher education institution wants to boast that it offers high-quality learning and teaching (Fook & Sidhu, 2015:604). Student-teacher relationship building is very important to create good academic experiences and more satisfaction (Niamatullah, Dan Xu & Shafi, 2015:115). The relationship between a lecturer and a student is defined as a formalised interpersonal association between an authority figure and a subordinate who interact on nearly a day to day basis (Camp, 2011). Further, Camp (2011:29), explains that positive student-lecturer relationships are characterised by mutual acceptance, understanding, warmth, closeness, trust, respect, care and cooperation. Varga (2017) clearly emphasised that the first step to helping a student become more motivated and engaged, and thus academically successful, is building and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships. In this regard, Wanders, Dijkstra, Maslowski & van der Veen (2019:13), indicate that students who perceive their teachers as caring, understanding, and listening are better able and more willing to engage in classroom activities.

Through studying student-lecturer interactions, the conceptualisation of what constitutes motivation to learn increasingly has involved emotions as essential to learning and teaching (Meyer & Turner, 2002:107). Varga (2017:5) is of concern that students need to experience an emotional involvement from their lecturers—to know their lecturers care and can provide structure and support. Learning is a process that involves cognitive and social psychological dimensions, and both processes should be considered if academic achievement is to be maximised (Hallinan, 2008:271).

The link that lecturers establish with their students has an imperative role in a students' academic development (Gablinske, 2014:1). Mart (2013:437) indicates that passionate lecturers are distinguished by their devotion to the achievement of their students. In this regard, Mart (2013) further argues that lecturers, who focus on their profession and dedication to teaching and learning, play a pivotal role in the advancement of the students. In their work, Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos (2019) indicate that students who have close, positive and supportive relationships with their lecturers will get higher levels of achievement than those students with more conflict in their relationships but because of favours but due to academic merit. Authors also argue that students that have good relations with their lecturers feel free to ask questions and answer (Q&A) in the classroom and during consultation time. Ultimately, their relationship promotes quality education and training.

This study is comprised of three parts. First, it focuses on the impact of the student-lecturer relationship. Second, it identifies challenges that affect the student-lecturer relationship. Third, it determines factors leading to improvement of the impact of student-lecturer relationship and good decision-making and quality promotion in HET.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Camp (2011), some

lecturers do not put in the extra effort that could assist to build and sustain positive and supportive relationships with their students. Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos (2019) revealed that negative student-lecturer relationships are stressful for both lecturers and students. In this regard, Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos (2019) further argue that the lecturer's anger and irritation are among many reasons that result in a negative lecturer-student relationship. In classrooms, lecturers may find themselves resorting to screaming and harsh disciplinary control, and communications may appear sarcastic or disrespectful. However, the narrative used in this study is more suitable to contribute to the field of higher education by providing both lecturers and students with direction on relationship building that enhances decision-making and quality promotion in HET. Hagenauer & Volet (2014) indicate that the issue of the student-lecturer relationship is not taken seriously by education practitioners and academics. The authors of this study argues that there some of the key challenges facing the lecturer-student relationship in the 21st Century. The following are some of the challenges which need critical attention for policy-makers at HET and lecturers *inter alia;* old lecturers do not listening to young students, respecting boundaries, being sensitive to differences and poor relationship building morals. Therefore, this study titled; *The Impact of Student-Lecturer Relationship on Good Decision-Making and Quality Promotion in the Institutions of Higher Education and Training* also serves to strengthen and provide lecturers and students with information on how to support a quality relationship that promotes better education.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of the student-lecturer relationship on decision-making and quality promotion in the institution of higher education in South Africa?

2. What are the challenges that affect the student-lecturer relationship?

3. What are factors leading to improvement of the impact of the student-lecturer relationship?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS
CTL as a Lens to the study

A theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated concepts that guide the research. Understanding of the topic of the student-lecturer relationship was achieved through the adoption of a theoretical framework. CTL was adopted in this study to comprehend the relationship between students and lecturers on quality promotion in higher education. This theory is better understood and explained by prestigious scholars such as Vygotsky (1978) & Piaget (1957). Both authors affirm that constructivism is an approach to learning. Furthermore, the authors explained that the theory holds that people actively construct or make their knowledge and that reality is determined by the experiences of the learner. CTL was used in this study to guide data collection. Additionally, the theory was used because it supports that the students construct knowledge and that learning occurs in a social environment such as the classroom with experiences that have been carefully constructed.

According to Bada (2015:69), constructivism requires a lecturer to act as a facilitator whose main function is to help students become active participants in their learning and make meaningful connections between prior knowledge, new knowledge, and the processes involved in learning. This theory shows that the relationship results in the promotion of the quality of education.

The theory conceives the constructivist lecturer as someone who encourages and accepts student autonomy and initiative; uses a wide variety of materials, including raw data, primary sources, and interactive materials and encourages students to use them; inquires about students' understandings of concepts before sharing his or her understanding of those concepts; encourages students to engage in dialogue with the lecturer and with one another; encourages student inquiry by asking thoughtful questions and provides time for students to construct relationships (Bada, 2015).

Bada (2015:67) further explained that constructivism's central idea is that human learning is constructed, meaning that learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning. In this regard, Jankowski (2017:6) argues that students can learn through doing the assessment task, built upon high expectations and authentic assignments, constructed in ways that support integration and intentional learning. The authors through this theory want to show that the relationship between a lecturer and student promotes the transmission of learning that takes place among them.

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and intentional learning. Lastly, CTL is relevant in this study because it unpacks the relationship between student-lecturer as the constructive approach that promotes quality in HET. The authors through this theory want to show that the relationship between a lecturer and student promotes the transmission of learning that takes place among them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing literature was reviewed in line with the following themes: impact of the student-lecturer relationship challenges that affect the impact of student-lecturer relationship and factors leading to improvement of the impact of the student-lecturer relationship.

Impact of the student-lecturer relationship

According to Varga (2017), a positive relationship with students enhances a favourable learning environment. Students who perceive their lecturers as more supportive and mentors have better achievement outcomes. In this regard, Downey (2008) opined that the quality of the relationship between a student and the lecturer results in a greater degree of learning in the classroom. Furthermore, the importance of positive lecturer-student relationships extends to both parties involved. The lecturers place value on the personal and working relationships they have with students in their classes (Varga, 2017:15). Baker (2006) opined that strong lecturer-student relationships may be one of the most important environmental factors in changing a student's educational path. Camp (2011) indicates that with increasing empirical attention, the student-lecturer relationship has been identified in the literature as a significant factor influencing academic and behavioural success in institutions of higher education and training. Varga (2017) opined that when students perceive that they are warmly welcomed and wanted in the classroom,

they are more likely to be engaged and self-motivated to the participated classroom. Camp (2011:88), reveals that students who enjoy a positive relationship with their lecturer attend better to instruction, put forth a greater effort, work through difficult situations, are better able to cope with stress, and are more accepting of lecturer redirects and criticism than students who do not enjoy supportive and positive lecturer-student relationships.

In their work, Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos (2019) indicate that positive lecturer-student relationships draw students into the process of learning and promote their desire to learn. In this regard, Mart (2013:438) emphasised that committed lecturers tend to effectively perform the roles that their job requires and to establish a good relationship with their students in accordance with the professional values.

Camp (2011:30), argues that lecturer relationships with students are critical because lecturers have the power to build students up. Camp (2011:31), suggests that the relationship between the lecturer and the student is the most significant factor in maintaining a positive classroom culture. In their work, Novelli & Sayed (2016:16), emphasised that lecturers are a key component of any education system, and quality teaching is a prerequisite for success. Jankowski (2017:12), indicates that student success and lecturer instruction are necessarily in a mutually shaping relationship where each can support and bolster the other. Jankowski (2017) explains that students should be engaged, and the more they are engaged in learning environments, the more likely they are to complete, learn, and be satisfied. In this regard, Varga (2017:1), indicates that the first step to helping a student become more motivated and engaged, and thus academically successful, is building and maintaining positive lecturer-student relationships.

Camp (2011:214) is of concern that lecturers must believe in all students and must value their students and show these students that they are valued by word and by deed. Furthermore, Camp (2011) highlighted that developing and maintaining positive lecturer-student relationships, where students feel valued and empowered to participate in the learning process, must permeate every nuance of a lecturer's day. According to Varga (2017:1), as lecturers spend an incredible amount of time with their students over the course of the year, it is a lecturer's responsibility to foster an inclination for learning. The strong relationship between students and lecturers promotes a safe and peaceful environment where teaching and learning are considered to be an important focus (Sithole, 2017:10). When a student has positive relationships with lecturers each year it improves the likelihood of forming good relationships with future lecturers (Varga, 2017:8).

Challenges that affect the impact of the student-lecturer relationship

Once lecturers have negative relationships with students, it can lead to stress and feelings of alienation, which affect both their practice and their well-being (Varga, 2017:15). In their work, Ingersoll, Sirinides & Dougherty (2018) found that institutions of higher learning often give lecturers a larger role in areas that appear to be less tied to student achievement and development. Also, Mart (2013:438), is concerned that students will not have the motivation to learn and engage in classroom discussion as long as they do not have a clear idea of how to apply things they have learned to their own lives. According to Camp (2011:2), various lecturers still depend on the power of their lecturing positions to get the day done rather than putting effort into getting to know and serving the needs of their students. Lecturers who respond in different ways depending on the student are

less likely to maintain positive relationships and will have more negative interactions (Varga, 2017:8). Furthermore, Varga (2017) indicates that some lecturers may even fear that familiarity between them and students will create a more undisciplined atmosphere in the classroom.

There is little chance of building a relationship based on respect and trust between lecturer and student unless a collaborative learning environment and willingness to take risks are not created (Mart, 2013:438). In this regard, Koca (2016:2) emphasised that in the classroom setting, the content covered and the social context can vary continuously. Therefore, children are frequently involved in unfamiliar learning environments. This can create ambiguity for some students but can challenge others.

Camp (2011:20) argues that students know when a lecturer is not organised or does not have control of the classroom. Some students may respond in negative ways and disrupt the environment even further. According to Camp (2011), when students fail to engage, they lack a positive relationship with their lecturers. Varga (2017) also explains that the lack of academic achievement among students is ubiquitous. In this regard, Varga (2017) further indicates that there are numerous reasons why students may lose interest in an educational institution and engagement is a key factor.

When students are not motivated, they are at a disadvantage that is difficult if not impossible to compensate for with high-quality lecturers and other resources (Koca 2016:10). Koca (2016) also found that those students that lack enthusiasm fail to succeed and often fail examinations. Furthermore, Koca (2016:10) emphasised that if a student is not motivated, he or she is unlikely to achieve academic success regardless of the lecturer or curricula. According to Camp (2011:215), whether

from lack of professional support, or a pure lack of caring or from a desire to feel superior to their students, some lecturers, by not forming positive and supportive relationships with students, fail to serve their students' needs.

Factors leading to improvement of the impact of student-lecturer relationship

According to Camp (2011:30), understanding the needs and the beliefs of students is crucial to finding ways to increase their motivation to learn. Students must be genuinely engaged and active participants for maximum learning to occur. Varga (2017) explained that lecturers should have a responsibility of creating respect between them and students so that more positive relationships can be formed and implemented.

Gablinske (2014) emphasised that forming and implanting robust and supportive relationships with lecturers allows students to feel safer and more secure in the educational institution setting, feel more competent, make more positive connections with peers, and make greater academic gains and advancement. Darling-Hammond (2006) is of concern that educators or lecturers are responsible to instruct policymakers, decision-makers and the public about what it takes to teach effectively in today's world. Ingersoll et al. (2018) there should be endorsed policies directing higher institutions of education and training to develop leadership mechanisms.

Downey (2008) is of concern that lecturers need to distinguish how their daily work in classrooms can be infused with interactions and instructional strategies that research has shown can make a positive difference in the lives of students who are at risk of academic failure. Displaying commitment and engagement to student learning can be an essential aspect in inspiring students. Devoted lecturers recognise and attempt to accomplish their

responsibilities to their students (Mart, 2013:438). Lecturers should also be given opportunities to compete with peers and support each other in the development and maintenance of positive and supportive relationships with students and to reflect on the success and struggles in these attempts (Camp, 2011:216). According to Wanders et al. (2019:2), students should have room for discussion, dialogue and nurture a positive interpersonal relationship with their lecturers. For instance, Q&As classroom should be highly be promoted as they have the potential to enhance quality education. In this regard, Sithole (2017:30), suggests that the harmonious link between the lecturer and students is the platform where complex academic and social problems can be solved through engagement and consultation. Camp (2011) effective lecturers need to be aware of the significant differences among students. Identifying the differences help lecturers better apprehend individual students and permits students to understand that the lecturer has a personal interest in them. This ensures students have a sense of belonging and are more inspired to do better in their academic areas.

Fook & Sidhu (2015) suggested that higher learning institutions should emphasise the construction of knowledge as like the Constructivism theory of learning through an active interface between lecturer-students that becomes a platform for the students to cope with the learning challenges they face in higher education. Camp (2011) opined that lecturers who do not show support to their students and fail to serve their students' needs must have their energies refocused or they must be removed from classrooms. Furthermore, Camp (2011) suggests that lecturer preparation programmes should include courses that consider the student-lecturer relationship. For instance, it can be argued that students who often have a good and supportive relationship with their lecturers perform better than those who feel alienated

or unsupported. However, the argument also raises concerns if the students are fairly evaluated or not due to their relationship.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This section focused on how the overall study has been conducted. The discussions in this section focused on research design, qualitative design and how the data of the study were analysed.

Research design

No research study can take place without the research design. Research designs are imperative for the undertaking of any study. Kumar (2011) considers research designs as a procedural plan that academic scholars adopt in answering research questions. As for Pandey & Pandey (2015), they are the frameworks of the study that are utilised for the processes of collecting and analysing the data. Qualitative methods provide results that are generally rich and detailed, offering ideas and concepts to inform your research. MacDonald & Headlam (2014) posit that it has the potential to reveal the feeling of the people and how they think without providing a numerical of the target population that feel or think that way. The research methodology, which was adopted for this study is qualitative. Thus, a qualitative design will be briefly discussed below.

Qualitative design

Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research. Qualitative research is the opposite of quantitative research, which involves collecting and analyzing numerical data for statistical analysis. Qualitative research is commonly used in

the humanities and social sciences, in subjects such as anthropology, sociology, education, health sciences, history, etc (Bhandari, 2020).

Data Collection

The data of this study was generated from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government legislations, and internet sources. The data focused on the impact of the student-lecturer relationship in good decision-making in higher education, identifying challenges that affect the impact of the student-lecturer relationship and its influence on decision-making and determining factors leading to improvement of the impact of the student-lecturer relationship and good decision-making in higher education. The data was also collected from different databases and sources such as Google Scholar and university libraries usig key themes of this study.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is defined as the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, observation notes, or other non-textual materials that the researcher accumulates to increase the understanding of the phenomenon (Wong, 2008). The process of analysing qualitative data predominantly involves coding or categorising the data. Basically it involves making sense of huge amounts of data by reducing the volume of raw information, followed by identifying significant patterns, and finally drawing meaning from data and subsequently building a logical chain of evidence (Patton, 2002). Wong (2008:14) further indicates that analysing qualitative data entails reading a large amount of transcripts looking for similarities or differences, and subsequently finding themes and developing categories.

In this regards, the study adopted

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyse secondary data. According to Mullet (2018), CDA is a qualitative analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimise social inequalities.The existing literature on the student-lecturer relationship on decision-making and quality promotion in higher education was systematically reviewed and synthesised. In other words, the secondary data consulted from sources such as journal articles, books, government legislations, and internet sources were described, carefully interpreted and explained the impact of the student-lecturer relationship on good decision-making and quality promotion in the institutions of HET.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study aimed at reviewing the impact of the student-lecturer relationship on good decision-making and quality promotion in higher education. The discussion has shown significant results obtained from literary materials such as journal articles, books, dissertations, theses among others. Many authors emphasised that the student-lecturer relationship plays a significant role in good decision-making in higher education.

The fingings are clearly showing that learning is a process that depends upon interactions among students and lecturers and this results in quality education. The relationship between students and lecturers in higher education can promote and create an environment in which students can learn.

The study found that the student-lecturer relationship serves as a significant factor that influences academic and behavioural success in institutions of HET. The literature consulted further revealed that student-lecturer relationships help students to put forth a greater effort, work through difficult situations, cope with academic stress among other issues. The

authors also found that through student-lecturer relationship, students should be engaged because this helps them to learn and be satisfied with their academic studies and performance.

In this regard, Gablinske (2014) suggests that more evidence about student-lecturer relationships is required to enhance existing learning programmes. Therefore, the next study will present empirical findings. Many authors emphasised that a strong relationship between lecturers and students can help students to perform well and increase competency. They revealed that students perform better when they enjoy a supportive relationship with their lecturers.

The findings have shown that many challenges affect the student-lecturer relationship and its influence on decision-making and quality promotion in higher education. That includes the lack of opportunity to build a positive relationship between lecturer and student, student disengagement, disorganised lecturers, and low motivation in students among others. Further, the study has revealed that a lack of engagement between students and lecturers leads to a lack of a positive relationship. It was argued that lack of forming a positive relationship with their students, lecturers fail to serve students' needs and expectations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study determined the impacts of the student-lecturer relationship on decision-making and quality promotion in higher education and training. Geographically, the study emanated from the institutions of higher education in South Africa. The article also employed a qualitative research design to uncover the relationship between students and lecturers on decision-making and quality promotion. To challenge and extend knowledge, authors systematically applied CTL to

comprehend the relationship between students and lecturers. It is further concluded that several scholars both emerging and established emphasised that the student-lecturer relationship is strongly related to student achievement because it helps them to actively engage in classroom activities. Interestingly, many researchers emphasised that a strong student-lecturer relationship results in a greater degree of learning in the classroom and maximises the performance of students. The study suggests that there is a need to foster the relationship between student and lecturer to strengthen decision-making and quality promotion in higher education. This can help to encourage students to perform better and bring comfort to institutions of higher learning. In this regard, future lecturers should have positive and supportive relationships with their students than other lecturers who may or may not have such positive and supportive relationships. The following recommendations are suggested by this study below:

- The article suggested that the existing policies of higher education should be strengthened to promote the student-lecturer relationship.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the student-lecturer relationship should be designed and signed by both lecturer and student to promote a better relationship between student and lecturer. This can also promote academic improvement.
- Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely goals should be developed by lecturers to enhance student-lecturer relationships. These goals can benefit both lecturer and student to achieve solid student-lecturer relationships, good decision-making and quality promotion in higher education. If the recommendations are measured and

implemented, students served will be the recipients of quality education.

• The study lastly strongly suggested that active interaction between lecturers-students should be implemented to strengthen their relationship. Other major factors from the literature of this study include having a positive relationship with a lecturer; forming strong and supportive relationships; instructing policymakers and the public about the effectiveness of teaching in present times; showing commitment to student learning, and using strategies supported by research.

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