EDITORIAL POLICY

This policy describes guidelines in the publication process of our journal.

African Perspectives of Research in Teaching and Learning (APORTAL*)* **ISSN 2521-0262** is an international, double-blind peer-reviewed journal that publishes original articles encompassing a range of current topics related to teaching and learning from all fields, disciplines and subjects. Articles may be rooted in disciplinary, interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary domains. The main thrust of the journal, which will be published once a year is directed at bringing to the fore discussions, debates and issues as they pertain to teaching and learning across a wide spectrum of education contexts in Africa without a commitment to a particular approach, methodology or worldview. It is concerned with and devoted to high quality articles that unravel, explain or problematize contemporary complexities of teaching and learning. It also embraces the ideal of building a new generation of teaching and learning scholars through the promotion of primary research by new and established researchers

1. Submission of manuscript

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CHIEF EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Africa, its situation and situatedness calls for a higher education teaching and learning agenda that aims at unleashing its potential in terms of its contribution to big debates and global agendas. For example, values such as respect, social justice and sustainability are promoted in most African thought and belief systems, both tacit and espoused. However, and sadly though, knowledge and knowledge arts in higher education is yet to recognise and vigorously tap into this rich African cultural capital to leverage the acquisition of academic capital. Further, in order to assuage learning challenges that confront African students, in a bid to achieve social justice, epistemological access and enable academic success, requires responsiveness of curriculum design, development and delivery to many teaching and learning challenges that have dogged the epistemologies imported from the global north. The *"African Perspectives of Research in Teaching and Learning"* journal considers higher education teaching and learning approaches that are grounded on the cultural, ideological and material realities and concerns of the African continent.

Thus, this journal takes a critical look at these geographic north and colonial knowledge arts, and gives voice to localised and context-specific ideas and practices about teaching and learning and their potential to enable, enrich and enhance learning. It provides exemplars of initiatives by academics around African ways of knowing and learning which do not only complement, but also offer alternative views about teaching and learning processes and models of instruction. The collection of strategies, lessons and innovations harnessed from empirical and theoretical studies in the articles of this journal provide substance on which to understand and appreciate African thought, and use it to foreground teaching and learning. It is in this space that teaching and learning practices imported from elsewhere are scrutinised of their worth, and those grounded in Africa are given a chance to make their way into the discourses about teaching and learning through peer reviews and acceptance as scholarly contributions. Thus, this issue provides a platform for scholars to reflect on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) from the purview of higher education teaching and learning in Africa.

Prof Newman Wadesango
(Chief Editor-APORTAL)

EDITORIAL COMMENT

African scholarship in the 21st Century

The words, "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come" (attributed to Victor Hugo), are an apt reminder that it is time for Africa to contend with the ideologies, cultural hegemonies, knowledge bases, philosophical frameworks and research methodologies of dominant forces that shape its education structures. In particular, the upheavals of the past few years which began with the Fallist movements (e.g. *#RhodesMustFall* and *#FeesMustFall*), and the continued protests actions in higher education institutions, service delivery grievances in un- and under-developed townships of South Africa and rampant corruption in government and industry are indicators of the imperatives to revolutionise its ethical regeneration by way of education.

At various fora, concerns about the values, relevance and usefulness of education at all levels are being questioned, disputed and pondered. Presumably, the blunders in education are linked to Eurocentric content, unresponsive pedagogies, linguistic imperialism, and inappropriate assessment strategies. Consequently, demands for decolonised curricula has intensified. Certainly, it is evident that the values, theories, concepts and frameworks imported for local consumption is incoherent with the contextual complexities of a continent recognised as the cradle of humankind. The articles that follow address some of these contextual complexities.

The first, by Bert Olivier, touches on the fragility of planet Earth and the absence in curricula of ways to sensitize those in our classrooms to the nature and the means to circumvent an impending catastrophe. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that many species are threatened with extinction. The planet is hotter, flatter and more crowded (Friedman, 2009), and an ecological crisis of immense proportions is inevitable, unless we, the creators of the crisis, change our habits. Drawing on a range of scholars, local and international, Olivier argues for an integrated, trans-disciplinary approach to education, which, he asserts, is more likely to produce innovative redemptive efforts. The crisis imperils all who live on the planet, hence the need for complementarity, which depends on harnessing the best thinking available, irrespective of nationality, race or South/West affiliation. Olivier contends that trans-disciplinarity is organic to Africa and Latin America as their cultures do not bifurcate the arts and the sciences (a dominant feature of western education). The potential for solving the ecological crisis, it seems, can be amplified through curriculum disobedience and intervention across all strata of education.

Two articles, one by Devarakshanam Govinden and another by Michael Samuel are innovative exemplars of African scholarship on teaching and learning. Both articles furnish

ideas for an African scholarship without sacrificing the rigour, quality and intellectual requirements of traditional academic writing genres.

Two purposes underpin the Govinden article: one, to challenge the formal, ritualistic modes of writing scholarly texts for publication and two, rethinking the teaching of disciplines through the example of History. She argues for active shattering of the artificial borders that constrain critical thinking and questioning of content, often stitched together by invisible authorities, and taught as an objective and irrefutable series of truths. The power and the decisions that guide the inclusions and exclusions to reconstruct bygone times (historiography) lie outside the consciousness of those who receive an education in History. More pointedly, Govinden's argument poses a challenge to the stranglehold of cognitive, developmental and educational psychology, behaviourism and constructivism on teaching and learning. For far too long, learning has been conceptualized as mere brain activity rather than the exercise of deliberate political and ideological manipulation of thinking. Bruner's exposition about the basic structure of a discipline is typical of a depoliticized conception of learning incongruent with social justice imperatives:

> Grasping the structure of a subject is understanding it in a way that permits many other things to be related to it meaningfully. To learn structure, in short, is to learn how things are related .... The teaching and learning of structure, rather than simply the mastery of facts and techniques, is at the center of the classic problem of transfer (Bruner, 1960, pp. 7 & 12).

To be fair to Bruner, his ideas about learning were revolutionary more than fifty years ago. However, his notions about disciplines now serve as fodder to resist the structure of predetermined, established curricula.

The article by Michael Samuel is another non-compliant stance against standard academic report writing practices. Academic conferences notoriously referred to as, "academic tourism" (see e.g. Steyn, 2015), are reconstructed as opportunities for counter hegemony scholarship. Through a comparative analysis captured through the aesthetics of poetry, Samuel subverts the purposes of conferences for intellectual growth and professional development. Consistent with Olivie'sr and Govinden's perspectives, the Samuel article intensifies the case for thwarting the restraints and weaknesses of disciplinary borders.

One of the undesirable outcomes of colonialism has been the uptake of the language of the colonial masters at the expense of local languages. Throughout the continent, one encounters the dominance of languages that have no resonance with the history of its populace – e.g. English, Portuguese, French and German. Formal education sectors have perniciously devalued and erased indigenous language use. Languages "do not neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations, but, rather, play an active role in creating and changing them" (Phillips & Jørgensen 2006, p.1). In reality, language and cultural imperialism aided and abetted the objectives of colonisation. In recent times, there has been a surge to undo colonial

practices and to rehabilitate the languages marginalized during and after foreign occupation through multilingual policy endorsement.

The article by Pascal Nadal and Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen explores the choices made by parents to enroll their children in Mauritian Kreol, (only recently accepted as an optional extra school subject). Personal factors motivated the decisions. The positive impact parents have on revitalizing a marginalized language is one of the lessons for decolonization emerging from the study. In a similar vein, a study by Rubby Dhunpath found that a concerted effort to support multilingualism beyond policy posturing by government was not sustainable. However, a key finding indicated that schools supported by non-governmental organizations were more likely to espouse multilingualism. Both studies, conducted in two different countries (Mauritius and South Africa) accentuate the importance of the involvement of communities for successful multilingual efforts.

The challenges women encounter predate colonisation. Patriarchy and toxic masculinities have oppressed, subjugated and orchestrated their lives for millennia despite evidence that educated girls transform societies and positively influence national development. At the turn of the 21st Century, millions of females are denied basic education. Unesco (2017) provides worrying statistics: two thirds of the 758 million who lack basic literacy are female while only 1% of girls from the most poverty-stricken populations in the world complete secondary education. It is not surprising, therefore, that boys outnumber girls in institutions of learning, more so in higher education because without secondary education, admission is denied. The reality is that gender equality has yet to be achieved. In Zimbabwe, for instance, a study by Chaminuka and Gunduza argues that access to higher education does not level the education opportunities of males and females. The curriculum is not gender sensitive and negative sociocultural factors in conjunction with economic hardship compromise access, participation and success in higher education.

The second article from Zimbabwe explores the perception of service quality in a higher education institution. Justina Mtezo's article is an uncommon quest to explain the actions of affluent students' choices to study outside the borders of the country despite the existence of higher education institutions within and the high costs involved in studying abroad. A critical finding was that the quality of service (administrative, academic, physical environment, support facilities) was perceived to be poor. It is clear that academic aspirations will be pursued in local institutions provided students feel confident that their needs and aspirations will be sufficiently supported.

The final article by Etta Daru and Georgina Njenwei examines the effect on internationalization on university culture in Cameroon. Internationalization, as contrasted to de-colonial agendas, actively seek intercultural encounters, intellectual dialogue, exchange and cross-pollination of ideas. The higher education sector is undergoing seismic shifts in terms of its roles and functions. There is greater demand for instance, for transformation, inclusivity, access, career preparation and massification, while improving its rankings, competitive edge, knowledge production capabilities and responsiveness to local and global trends. The dynamism of the sector is increasingly dependent on its ability to maintain high academic standards and quality for the production of world-class graduates, who Daru and Njenwei argue, can be counter-productive if it is more beneficial for the graduate export market. Quality university education, they suggest encompasses the use and the promotion of local knowledge while carefully negotiating international, commercial, economic, political forces to serve local rather than international needs.

To conclude, Africa is vested with a rich history of art, culture and science that can benefit the future as attested to by the selection of articles in this, the second issue of *African Perspectives of Research in Teaching and Learning*. The articles deal with matters that reclaim Africa's marginalised cultural knowledge, reinsert its contribution to the arts and sciences alongside other contributions, actively produce and share new knowledge, apply its teaching and learning approaches in addition to those currently used and demonstrate creative imagination. Reasserting erased histories and shifting the contributions from the margins to the centre is not a rejection, substitution or displacement of Western thought. The wisdom of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong' O (1986) is useful to clarify the nature of actions instigated:

> After we have examined ourselves, we radiate outwards and discover peoples and worlds around us. With Africa at the centre of things, not existing as an appendix or a satellite of other countries and literatures, things must be seen from the African perspective … In suggesting this we are not rejecting other streams, especially the western stream.

Important though, is the imperative to examine received knowledge from African perspectives, purposes and prospects. This issue provides incisive insights into a range of matters, which build on the promises made by the Editor-in-chief in the first issue. The production of knowledge is a serious and valuable venture. The compendium of papers, we hope, will extinguish any lingering doubts.

Prof Nyna Amin
University of KwaZulu-Natal
(Sub Editor-APORTAL)

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An Eco-centred Alternative to 'Business as usual' in Teaching and Learning in (South) Africa

Bert Olivier
University of the Free State, RSA
OlivierG1@ufs.ac.za

ABSTRACT
The present paper is an exploration of a wholly alternative approach to education in South Africa, and argues that, contrary to present educational practices globally, teaching and learning – in fact, all aspects of education, including curricula – should be reframed in light of the imminent ecological crisis facing all living beings in the world. Foremost among these is humanity, given its exceptional position among living beings as the ones implicated in the crisis in both a negative and a positive sense: in the age of the Anthropocene, we are causally implicated, but also potentially as the species which, alone among all living creatures, is capable of ameliorating, if not resolving the crisis. The work of Emmanuel Wallerstein, as well as Joel Kovel, James Lovelock, Naomi Klein, John Bellamy Foster, Claire Colebrook, Zakes Mda and Bernard Stiegler is enlisted in articulating the argument, and the art of cinema is employed to illustrate what different, countervailing attitudes are possible regarding the value humans attribute to the earth, in the face of the very real possibility that our home planet may become virtually uninhabitable for extant living creatures, although other, newly adapted species will be spawned by a hotter planet.

Key words: alternative pedagogy, capitalism, climate change, Earth, ecology, extinction, global warming, technology

> Planet Earth, creation, the world in which civilisation developed, the world with climate patterns that we know and stable shorelines, is in imminent peril. The urgency of the situation crystallised only in the past few years. We now have clear evidence of the crisis … the startling conclusion is that continued exploitation of all fossil fuels on Earth threatens not only the other millions of species on the planet but also the survival of humanity itself — and the timetable is shorter than we thought. (James Hansen, leading climatologist, in *Storms of My Grandchildren*, quoted in Foster et al., 2010, pp. 11-12).

INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s I read a book by Immanuel Wallerstein, entitled *Open the Social Sciences* (1996), which was the Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences, headed by himself. I recall that, having argued in favour of such restructuring, he expressed optimism that in countries, including those in Africa and South America, which are less bound by the tradition of separating the humanities, the natural and the social sciences, conditions existed that are favourable for these changes. He wrote that in Africa "a process of experimentation has already begun" (1996, p. 101), and pointed to alternative spaces that have been created by the "emergence of independent research institutions in Africa and Latin America" (1996, p. 102). Elsewhere (Wallerstein 1996a, p. 7) he wrote about the need to "create new mixes" among disciplines, and how to do it, the point being that torpid scientific divisions (which have always had contingent grounds) do not keep track with what is happening in the world, and these "mixes" might expedite the gestation and formation of new disciplines that are engendered by the needs of the time. Not only do I endorse Wallerstein's sentiments, but believe that the time in which we live cries out for a new disciplinary matrix, as it were, which would provide direction and orientation for existing disciplines, and possibly spawn new ones.

What disciplinary matrix would that be, one might inquire. Succinctly put, it would be a multi-disciplinary matrix comprising all those disciplines that contribute to knowledge about the looming ecological catastrophe, beginning with the study of ecosystems (social and natural) and including all those that throw light on its causes, including complexity studies and philosophy, as well as ways to approach it in an informed and emancipatory manner. The latter would include a *revolutionary* teaching and learning that does not shy away from the existentially indispensable imperative, to face the possibility of the extinction of the human race, combined with explorations of ways to preclude this abysmal prospect. And it is my contention that (South) Africa is positioned to contribute to this revolutionary approach to education, given the fact that historically, Africa has had more than its fair share of suffering, and the memory of this should motivate Africans to take the lead regarding the possible amelioration of the greatest crisis that has faced humanity in its existence of almost two hundred millennia. Joel Kovel (2007, p. 22) puts it as follows:

The unhappy nations of Africa, upon whom so many disasters have rained down in the past several centuries, were not always that way. When Europe first found them and began its invasions, African peoples were needless to say not trouble-free, simply because it is impossible for human beings to be so. But they had dignity and social cohesion, and many observers placed them on a developmental par with the Northerners. How they fell so far is not for us to detail here. But whatever its intricacies, their descent obeyed the great law of ecological transformation, that societies, which live in interaction with nature, can disintegrate when the fabric of their existence is disturbed – in Africa's case, chiefly by the inroads of empire, the slave trade, and so on.

Today Africa is facing such 'disintegration' again – not alone, to be sure, but along with the rest of the world – caused by the systemic unravelling of both natural and social ecosystems. Such unravelling is anthropogenic, that is, it has been caused by human economic activities since the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries, the latest incarnation of which is neoliberal capitalism (the subject of Kovel's uncompromising book). Kovel puts the crisis in perspective where he writes (2007, p. 23):

Viewed from nature's end of things, this crisis appears as an incapacity to mend itself, or as we can say, to buffer the ecosystemic breakdown brought about by its human child. Put more formally, the current stage of history can be characterised as *structured by forces that systematically degrade and finally exceed the buffering capacity of nature with respect to human production, thereby setting into motion an unpredictable yet interacting and expanding set of ecosystemic breakdowns.* The ecological crisis is what is meant by this phase. In it we observe the desynchronisation of life-cycles and the disjointing of species and individuals, resulting in the fragmentation of ecosystems human as well as non-human, along with vast changes in species composition, as well as the more formal environmental aspect of things. Humanity is not just the perpetrator of the crisis; it is its victim as well. And among the signs of our victimisation is the incapacity to contend with the crisis, or even to become conscious of it.

The present article is motivated by what Kovel writes in the last sentence of the above excerpt, because the "incapacity to contend with the crisis" is intimately connected with the incapacity "even to become conscious of it". In this respect, teaching and learning could – in fact, *must*

– play a decisive role. The world is today witnessing the proverbial phenomenon of 'Nero fiddling while Rome is burning' on a planetary scale: while people are fretting over their Facebook or WhatsApp 'status', and avidly 'following' their favourite celebrities on Twitter, the life-blood of the planet's ecosphere is draining away, slowly but surely. Does this not warrant a fundamental restructuring of education? Should *all* educational systems and practices, including teaching and learning, not be recalibrated to awaken people – in this case young people, the ones who stand to suffer most as the climate becomes increasingly volatile and intractable – to the need to do whatever is humanly possible to ameliorate the impact of extreme climate change on them and their children (if they have any; no one could be blamed today for not wanting to have children)?

Evidence of and for the ecological crisis is so widespread and readily available (see Kovel 2007; Klein, 2014; Foster *et al.* 2010, among many other sources) that it is hardly necessary to adduce it yet again in this context. Suffice it to say that if the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's assessment report (2014) can make the following unambiguous statement, things are far worse than one can imagine, because natural scientists work with criteria of probability, applicable to the empirical, experiential world (2014 p. 37):

One of the central messages from Working Groups I and II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is that the consequences of unchecked climate change for humans and natural ecosystems are already apparent and increasing. The most vulnerable systems are already experiencing adverse effects. Past GHG emissions have already put the planet on a track for substantial further changes in climate, and while there are many uncertainties in factors such as the sensitivity of the climate system, many scenarios lead to substantial climate impacts, including direct harms to human and ecological wellbeing that exceed the ability of those systems to adapt fully.

In brief, as they say in the movies: 'Be afraid, be very afraid!' But not so afraid that one goes into a state of paralysis; on the contrary, the time for action is *now*, and it would be advantageous to involve young people, through teaching and learning, in the process of alerting them to the unfolding crisis. Here is just a brief glimpse into the reasons for urgent teaching and learning initiatives in the face of the looming crisis (Sachs, 2018)

The oil companies have known for decades that their product is dangerous for the planet, but they relentlessly hid the evidence, stoking confusion rather than solutions. Through individual company efforts to support climate denialism and confusion, and through relentless and reckless lobbying by the US Chamber of Commerce and the American Petroleum Institute, the companies launched a full-blown assault on climate science to stop or delay the shift to renewable energy.

The result of continued reliance on fossil fuels has already been a massive increase in the severity of storms worldwide, of which Hurricane Katrina in the United States stands as a terrifying example (Klein, 2007, pp. 3-7). There is no certainty on how long it would take on the part of humans right now for concerted action to reverse the effects of climate change, but the sooner humanity acts in concert to change their way of living – and this is where education is indispensable – the better. Why put this argument forward in a journal focusing on African perspectives on teaching and learning? As the cinematic work of Jacquet, and of Perrin and Cluzaud (discussed below) demonstrates, the only places in the world today where films can be made on life in rain forests are South America and Africa, where industrialisation has already damaged forests severely, but where there are sufficient forested areas left to evoke the beauty, the mystery and the ecological indispensability of these vast ecosystems, or 'lungs of the planet'. Besides, humanity in the guise of *Homo* and *Gyna sapiens* originated in Africa (Shlain, 2003), from where members of the species spread across the globe in all directions. Is it not appropriate for the much-needed revolution in teaching and learning – from within the matrix field of ecological studies and education – to emanate from Africa, too?

MODE OF DELIVERY

The mode of delivery of the material which is required to bring about a veritable revolution in (critical) thinking and action on the part of students at university level – which need not be restricted to them, however, but could be adapted to high school and even primary school students – can be diverse. Moreover, because I am proposing that everything that is taught at university (and at school, ultimately) be related to, or framed in terms of, the overriding 'truth', that life on Earth can only survive on condition that humans change their way of living fundamentally. It therefore pertains to both what is taught and how it is taught (and learned).

On the one hand, because we live predominantly in a visually oriented society, visual media should be pre-eminently used to 'grab' students' attention; however, this does not mean that written texts should be avoided. On the contrary, once students' attention and interest have been secured, written texts should be introduced to problematise the visual material they have been exposed to, as will be argued below. There are eminently suitable ecologically relevant films and television series available to show to, and critically discuss with students, best known among which is the BBC-film work of David Attenborough, such as his cinematic eulogy to life on Earth, entitled *Planet Earth* (2006) and its sequel, *Planet Earth II* (2016), as well as the captivating French film on the life (and death) of forests, *Once upon a Forest* (Jacquet, 2013). In the same category as the latter there are the films by Perrin and Cluzaud, namely, *Océans* (2009) and *Saisons* (2015), which share with Jacquet's cinematic work the crucial attribute (unlike Attenborough's work, important as it may be) of not being human-centred, but nature-centred insofar as one is enabled to perceive forests and oceans through the roving eye of the cine-camera (sometimes by means of it being fastened to drones), the way that animals and birds would see it. The significance of this lies in the all-important 'posthumanist' principle, that humans are not the be-all and the end-all in terms of eco-importance on this planet; other species are just as important and, furthermore, the current rate of species-extinction is deleterious for ecosystems to the point that a tipping point may be reached where too many interdependent species may go extinct for the 'food-chain' to remain intact. And the capacity of images to mediate what may otherwise be a completely unfamiliar realm to most students who grow up in urban environments, should not be underestimated (see Olivier 2010a and 2010b).

More mainstream-oriented cinema should not be avoided altogether, though; there are examples of films with a powerful ecological – in fact, eco-political – orientation, such as Hillcoat's *The Road* (2009), with its uncompromising depiction of an abject world become virtually uninhabitable after some kind of eco-disaster, and Cameron's vastly underestimated *Avatar* (2009), which challenges people to overcome their 'paralysis' – as represented by the protagonist in the film, the disabled Jake – and galvanise themselves into eco-political engagement to rescue the earth, represented by the moon, Pandora, in the

film (for a discussion of this, see Olivier 2010 and 2011). To these one might add Cuarón's *Gravity* (2013) and Nolan's *Interstellar* (2014), which are discussed below as instances of either affirming the indispensable value of the earth, or denying it – both of which have undeniable implications for the stance one takes towards ecological values.

Regarding the importance of supplementing visual material with critical discussions, the significance of *reading* accessible texts cannot be over-emphasised. These would include (minimally, excerpts from) texts like James Lovelock's *The Vanishing Face of Gaia – A Final Warning* (2010) and Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything – Capitalism vs The Climate* (2014) and conducting or directing critical *discussion* of these by students (in the form of questions and answers, for example). Furthermore, there are by now many instances of eco-critical literature available for inclusion in school literature curricula for critical discussion, as will be shown below under 'sources of learning' with reference to the work of Zakes Mda. This is essential in an age when people read less and less. Yet, reading – and being taught how to read critically – is indispensable, because reading forces the reader to be reflective when she or he comes across words or phrases they do not readily understand. Moreover, it creates the opportunity for learning, when these words and phrases are explained in the context of the overall direction of the text at the unfolding 'syntagmatic' level. One might say that, given the structure of a written text at the 'syntagmatic' (what follows what) and 'paradigmatic' (what belongs together by association) levels, it has a very different effect on the reader's consciousness than a visual medium like film, where the forward movement of the narrative or image-sequences does not leave time for reflection, which usually only occurs afterwards. (This is discussed at length in Olivier 2010b.) Needless to add, reading such texts should not only occur in the context of critical discussion; writing critical responses is equally important, even if this consists in one-page responses to critical questions posed by lecturers.

The third component of teaching critical eco-awareness involves field trips into wilderness areas, wherever this is possible. Witnessing crucial visual evidence of ecological integrity, or its opposite, eco-degradation, through film or television, is not the same as experiencing nature 'directly', albeit always being mediated by cultural notions of what it entails. I recall taking various groups of

students to wilderness areas near Port Elizabeth, and many of them remarking on how relaxed they felt during, and after, spending a weekend in mountains or forests. My explanation was always to remind them of what evolutionary psychology teaches one, namely, that when we enter wilderness areas and sojourn there for a while, we feel relaxed because our bodies tell us that we have 'come home': our species' distinctive genome was shaped in the course of the millions of years that our immediate hominid ancestors, *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus*, as well as our own species, *Homo* and *Gyna sapiens*, lived nomadic lives as hunter-gatherers in close proximity to nature (Shlain 2003). Small wonder that big cities are often experienced as alienating. Hence, although the necessary safety precautions always have to be observed – as a member of the Mountain Club of South Africa I am only too aware of this – embarking on wilderness experiences with manageable groups of students is an almost indispensable component of raising their ecological awareness. Witnessing the flow of rivers and mountain streams (and swimming in these, if possible), sleeping in caves or in tents in the open, becoming aware of the life-rhythms of animals and birds in forests – all these things are essential to inculcating in students a (perhaps dormant, but always latent) awareness of the irreplaceable, intrinsic value of Mother Nature – appropriately so called, because 'she' is the sphere of provenance of all living beings, including ourselves.

SOURCES OF LEARNING: LOVELOCK

The most valuable insight to be gained from the work of James Lovelock, probably the best-known climatologist in the world, and the person who formulated the so-called Gaia hypothesis (now a fully-fledged theory, having been independently confirmed by several other scientists), is that *everything that humans do in the world has an impact on the planet*, or Gaia, because of the complexity of all the interrelated eco-networks that, together, comprise the earth's encompassing planetary eco-system. This is because, as Gaia theory states, the earth is not just a neutral space, or object on which multiple organisms live; on the contrary, the earth itself can be considered a living macro-organism in the sense that, as a self-regulating entity, it (that is, its ecosphere) responds to changes in the relations among other organisms, as well as to changes in the composition of the inorganic elements comprising the medium or mediums in which organisms live, for example, air and water (Lovelock, 2010, pp. 1-8; 105-122).

This insight explains the advent of the Anthropocene, or the geological period so named because, for the first time in geological history, humans have affected the very climate because of their eco-destructive economic activities (such as chemical emissions from factory manufacturing), starting in the industrial age of the 18th-19th centuries and building up to where we are now, with millions of cars spewing carbon monoxide into the atmosphere, day and night. From this it follows that what people do in Africa also affects the ecosystem as a whole, for better or for worse.

But if human activity influences Gaia, and Gaia is a macro-organism comprising the sum-total of constantly changing relations among organisms and inorganic elements, it follows that such activity will also affect other organisms, mostly adversely, as far as climate change is concerned. In fact, anthropogenic climate change, as well as other changes in nature because of human activities – such as the massive amounts of plastic dumped in the oceans (see World Animal Protection's website) – are in the process of causing mass extinctions among animals and insects. Humans are directly responsible for the vast majority of these extinctions today (Foster, 2010, pp. 13-15), and if they accept their responsibility, the very least they can do is to take action that will minimise the effects of climate change and other effects of their economic activities. This action should start at the level of teaching and learning, so that students can become aware, from an early age, of the interconnected nature of ecosystems (Kovel 2007: 95-105) and the negative as well as restorative effects of actions people (may) perform. Africa's 'carbon footprint' is not as large as that of countries in the Northern hemisphere, although that of South Africa is alarmingly large (according to The Carbon Report we rank 16th in the world in terms of carbon emissions, largely because of our use of coal) – all the more reason for introducing an eco-centred foundation into teaching and learning. Only unthinking people would fail to realise that, unless the future is secured by restoring eco-equilibrium in the world, the teaching and learning of *all* other disciplines would be futile.

SOURCES OF LEARNING: KLEIN

The name of Naomi Klein – probably the most indefatigable, ecological (and anti-capitalist), investigative activist-journalist in the world – is known to most media-informed people on either side of the spectrum, from people very concerned about climate change/global warming and other kinds of despoliation of the natural environment to the so-called eco-denialists

(like Donald Trump), who, for various reasons, deny that an ecological crisis exists at all. Having exposed the latest strategy of capitalist profiteering in *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), she turned her attention to the ecological crisis in *This Changes Everything* (2014), with the explicitly provocative subtitle, *Capitalism vs the Climate*. Here (2014, pp. 27-55) she uncovers the cynicism on the part of the most powerful defenders of the economic *status quo* – in the face of overwhelming evidence that climate change is anthropogenic – coupled with unscrupulous bribery of so-called 'scientists', with a view to placing articles in scientific journals and the press generally, to the effect that climate change is not occurring because of human economic activities. The result, she shows, has been a drastic reduction in the public's belief that there is an eco-crisis. The value of Klein's work lies in her journalistic perseverance to uncover evidence, wherever it is available (even entering the beast's den, as it were), combined with her determination to communicate it undiluted to the public through her writing (books, articles and her website) as well as the audio-visual productions in which she has been involved. However, there is another aspect of her activism that makes Klein's work irresistible to anyone with a sense of social and eco-justice: in all her work her fearless moral integrity and social conscience shines through, with the result that, predictably, she has many enemies and detractors. This alone confirms that her work has hit a sensitive spot in the armour of the colossus known as neoliberal capitalism, which is, by all accounts, the driving force behind the ecological crisis, for an obvious reason: there *cannot* be indefinite economic growth or expansion in a finite planetary eco-system.

Despite the mass of alarming indications that emerge from Klein's work about the odds being stacked against climate warriors, she does adduce some hints that the tide might turn sometime in the near future, such as the incipient signs of (what may, and should become) a global mass-democratic movement. What has become known as 'Blockadia', for instance (2014, pp. 253-263), is an unmistakable manifestation of democratic mobilisation – worldwide grass-roots' resistance against attempts by governments and corporations to forge ahead with ecologically damaging projects, such as 'extreme' shale gas or oil extraction near communities who would reap the negative effects of such operations, or promoting chemical fertilisers that cause soils to die (for examples of what protesters are up against,

see Shiva, 1993; and Olivier, 2016). In Africa, such instances of democratic resistance to ecologically damaging activities must function as a wake-up call for many who are always ready (and for good reason) to protest against failures in service-delivery by governments and municipalities, but often conspicuously tardy when it comes to practices that are damaging to the natural ecosystem. Here, too, teaching and learning at school and university should lead the way by introducing students to the implications of living in a so-called democracy, particularly as far as their (and their descendants') *ecological* rights are concerned. One of the ways of operationalising the alternative pedagogical approach promoted here – a very unconventional one, to be sure – would be to introduce the topic of 'activism' into curricula, modelled, perhaps, on Klein's (2014, pp. 253-263) reference to 'Blockadia', as well as on an acquaintance with the idea of 'civil disobedience' as it was formulated by the famous American thinker, Ralph Waldo Emerson, in terms of nonconformity and self-reliance (1841; see also Olivier, 2015).

What do these entail? Firstly, they implicate collective ethical principles as far as human and other species' dependence on natural ecosystem-integrity is concerned. It is inescapable for humans to take responsibility, in the final analysis, for the ongoing devastation of nature today – as far as we know; we are the only ethically culpable species on Earth. Just to mention one (very important) issue, the rate at which rainforests are being destroyed for economic gain simply ignores the fact that these forests are the 'lungs' of the planet, and no financial profit could ever replace their indispensable oxygen-producing function for the survival of all terrestrial life-forms. Would not it be the greatest irony if the very (human) beings capable of taking responsibility for nature, as its guardians, turned out to be its (and their own) destroyers? And does this not point to the greatest ethical priority of all for educators regarding teaching and learning – a truly holistic ecological one, particularly on a continent where such rainforests still exist?

SOURCES OF LEARNING: COLEBROOK

Claire Colebrook's work is essential to help students understand the magnitude of the ecological crisis. She does not shy away from the possibility – never encountered in mainstream media – that humanity is facing the possibility of its own, and other species', extinction. Colebrook draws attention to a seldom-

noticed aspect of this, namely 'self-extinction'. This is one of three kinds of extinction that Colebrook (2014, p. 9) distinguishes: the "sixth great extinction event" pertaining to all living species, "extinction by humans of other species" and "self-extinction, or the capacity for us to destroy what makes us human". The latter comprises the kernel of the crisis, insofar as it may be understood, in principle, as what has historically conditioned the other types of extinction. Colebrook elaborates (2014, pp. 11-12):

> There is a widespread lament regarding a trajectory of self-extinction occurring in the human brain. According to Susan Greenfield, in her book ID, we are losing identity: where our brains once operated by a synthesising power of grammar, syntax and critique we are now seduced by a culture of stimulus... We are not just losing one of our critical powers — our power to represent or synthesize what is not ourselves — we are losing our very selfhood. For 'we' are — as human, as identities— just this evolved synthesising power.

Colebrook points out that the concept of 'climate' has played an important role in relation to extinction, reminding one that, like extinction, it, too, is a complex notion. On the one hand it denotes the "standard meteorological notion of climate" (p. 10), but on the other, also entails a combination of temporal and spatial implications, insofar as it is inclusive of that which "binds us to this time on the earth, with its own depletions and limits", as well as the spatial "surface or terrain" on which we live (p. 10). Furthermore, it is only in relation to the context of 'climate' that the geological epoch of the 'Anthropocene' attains meaning, as the era when humankind's power to alter it has left its destructive imprint on the earth, to the point where, as Colebrook remarks, it will be perceptible in geological strata in the future to any intelligent beings who might examine these.

Ironically, the widely publicised effect of human activities on terrestrial climate systems has *not* had any significant effect on governmental or collective public action aimed at arresting the process in the interest of human and other species' survival. On the contrary; as Colebrook points out (2014, p. 11):

> recently, climate change scientists have started to play with new strategies for awakening public affect: perhaps the focus on hope needs to give way to mobilisations of fear, whereby we learn to 'hug the monster,' in order to shift from inertia and quiescence to action. How is it that the human species, seemingly so hungry for

life and dominance, has conveniently forgotten its own self-extinguishing tendencies?

What is arguably the chief reason for public apathy has already been alluded to above, where Colebrook refers to Greenfield's observation, that the human brain, "once operated by a synthesising power of grammar, syntax and critique" is "now seduced by a culture of stimulus...", which marks a loss of "one of our critical powers" as well as our "very selfhood". This is a stark reminder of what has been happening to our species during the last five decades or so: ever since the advent of television, many studies have confirmed the phenomenon of the increasing, systematic depletion of the human capacity for sustained (intellectual, mental) attention for an appreciable time. Why? Because contemporary society is predominantly visually oriented, and students no longer perform basic, sustained reading, which requires uninterrupted attention, focusing instead on electronically mediated images and fragmentary text communication (such as sms- and WhatsApp-messages), as well as frenetically pursuing social relations in cyberspace (on social media like Facebook), where Sherry Turkle (2011) has noted a certain 'performance exhaustion' on the part of teenagers.

By contrast, in this era of the 'space of flows' (Castells, 2010), the ability to sustain intellectual attention, as when one is reading a demanding book, or writing something that demands close, sustained attention to logical coherence and linguistic lucidity, has become a rarity, as Bernard Stiegler (2015) has argued at length. Instead, Stiegler has shown, the profit-driven 'culture industries' maintain a sustained attack on consumers' sensibilities through mnemotechnical devices such as smartphones and their attendant 'applications', capturing consumers' (including young people's) attention with a view to marketing the latest commodities – certainly *not* to make them aware of the spectre of an ecological cataclysm. The point is that the very same technical means that are robbing people, young and old, of their *savoir-faire* (know-how) and *savoir-vivre* (knowledge of how to live), can, and should, be used through teaching and learning to enlighten them – particularly the young – about ways to live that preserve and promote life instead. With the prospect of a worsening climate-crisis, they should certainly be employed to coordinate actions intent on ameliorating its worst effects, primarily in educational circles, to avert the very real possibility of extinction. Those of us who live in Africa are better positioned than the

rest of the consumption-driven world to drive such a project of eco-awareness and conscientisation, with the emphasis on critically informed action.

SOURCES OF LEARNING: MDA

If university and school curricula in (South) Africa were to be restructured, as argued here, according to the fundamental acceptance that all learning would be futile unless it be oriented to according the primordial value of life on Earth, then an indispensable component of the literature syllabus would have to be eco-critical literature, and what better than a powerful eco-critical novel by prolific South African novelist, Zakes Mda? I am thinking of Mda's novel, *The Heart of Redness* (2000), which resonates significantly with Joseph Conrad's arguably anti-colonial novella, *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad: no date), and for obvious reasons: where Conrad's narrative is set in the Belgian Congo at the height (or is it nadir) of colonial exploitation of Africa, Mda locates his narrative in the context of the neo-colonial exploitation of (South) Africa by capitalism, and gives it a complex eco-critical twist, to boot. I say 'complex', because Mda refuses to opt for a choice between the simple (and simple-minded) valorisation of a return to 'pure', unadulterated nature in the face of the neo-colonisation of relatively pristine land by corporations in the name of modernisation, and the (dubious) benefits of such modernisation in a small coastal community of Qolorha on the Transkei coast. Rather, he demonstrates that today there is no such choice available to people, given the history of intertwinement of colonial appropriation of the land (not only by people, but also by the alien flora and fauna they brought to Africa) and forms of resistance to this by indigenous peoples – something that still continues to this day.

Ingeniously, Mda stages this complex narrative as a kind of diegetic dialogue between two different, but connected, eras. The first is that of a previous age, when the amaXhosa under British colonial rule lost virtually all their cattle by responding to the prophetic vision of Nongqawuse, of a land purified of settler-contamination by the eradication of all their cattle – something that led to mass starvation among the amaXhosa and capitalised on by the British governor at the time, Sir George Grey, by appropriating Xhosa land for British settlers. This bygone era, when there was a split between the 'believers' (in the prophecy) and the 'unbelievers', personified by Mda in twin brothers, still echoes in the present, in the tension between contemporary 'believers' and 'unbelievers' regarding what one might call 'modernisation' or 'progress', were it

not for the complexity of even this opposition.

The aspect of the novel that is directly relevant for eco-teaching and -learning, comes into view through the choice faced by the local community: do they accept the offer of a corporation, to 'develop' their community with the provision of modern amenities like streetlights, jobs, and so on, in exchange for building a casino, or do they resist this in the interest of keeping their environment 'pure'? I put 'pure' in scare quotes because Mda deftly disabuses one of the illusion that 'purity' or harmony between humans and nature is still an option (or ever was, for that matter) – even in the 19th century, tribal authorities had to prevent members of the tribe from killing certain birds, for example, as his narrative shows. Mda allows the different positions – pro and contra, regarding the desirability of the casino – to play themselves out in the course of the narrative, with those resisting the threat of capitalist neo-colonisation provisionally 'winning' against the developers and those in the community that support it. I say 'provisionally', because Mda's text makes it clear that, given the constant change of communities and of ecologies, these are decisions that will have to be made over and over in the course of time.

Byron Caminero-Santangelo (2011, pp. 301-302) points out that Mda stages a confrontation, among others, between those who want to help the community resist the corporations in an authoritative, albeit well-meaning, manner (personified by Dalton, one of the leaders of the resistance, in the novel) and those who (represented by Camago), in Fanonian fashion, choose to formulate modes of resistance in dialogue with people from the community instead. Interestingly, Caminero-Santangelo (2011, p. 302) also detects a difference between Fanon's approach and Mda's: while the former concentrates on the 'nation', the latter focuses on the community in its relation to the surrounding ecosystem (and by implication the wider nation), which – as the novel demonstrates narratively – cannot be ignored by human communities, and requires a resolute cosmopolitan, combined with 'bioregionalist' approach. Caminero-Santangelo (2011, p. 302) sums it up as follows (2011, p. 302):

In the context of the novel…`living' with nonhuman nature is not just a matter of living in a particular environment but also of seeing oneself as part of a community. The focus on ecological affiliation as one basis for geopolitical identification is perhaps the most salient 'bioregionalist' feature of *The*

Heart of Redness. The notion that humans are interdependently related to wider ecological communities comes into particular relief in the novel's representations of the ways that abrupt ecosystemic changes have drastic implications for human societies and cultures.

In sum, this complex literary work by Zakes Mda is paradigmatic of the kind of literary work that ought to form part of curricula for teaching and learning in (South) Africa, and indeed of the world, given its clear-headed exposition of the global situation, localised in a specific community, where local as well as global ecological, but also economic and hence political forces and changes come into conflictual relations with one another. In fact, I would argue that it provides a model for the questions that have to be considered when planning the eco-centred restructuring of curricula.

TWO PARADIGMATIC FILMS

There are diametrically opposed beliefs regarding the claim, that the earth is humanity's inalienable, originary home, which should be recuperated by adopting every possible measure to restore it to habitability. The current interest in the discovery of water on Mars (Sample, 2015), and what it might mean for possible human migration from the earth, is telling in this regard. Two recent films adopt diametrically opposing positions regarding this question. To be able to understand what is at stake, the narrative of each of these films has to be reconstructed briefly. One of them – Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar* (2014) – puts across the view that, as NASA scientist Dr Brand (Michael Caine), tells NASA pilot Cooper (Matthew McConaughey) in the film, humans "were meant" to leave Earth. Brand has been working on a theory that would, if successfully formulated, enable humans to use gravity to escape from the earth, where widespread crop blight has made it virtually impossible to produce food. In a nutshell, he convinces Cooper to volunteer for a mission to look for habitable worlds through a wormhole in space that others have travelled through before him, to pave the way for human migration to an alternative planet. This is Plan A, which is predicated on Brand's theory – still to be fully elaborated – that gravity could be harnessed to generate sufficient propulsion to enable the human race to break free from Earth's atmosphere en route to a different home. There is also a Plan B: the spacecraft that Cooper will pilot would have a cargo of 5000 frozen human embryos on board, should Plan A fail, in an effort to ensure humanity's survival. The intricacies of the plot are not

important here; suffice it to say that the relationship between Cooper and his daughter, Murphy, is central to it, to the extent that her successful solution of the equation that was Dr Brand's life ambition regarding Plan A – which he fails to carry through – depends, paradoxically, on her father (Cooper) transmitting crucial information to her at different times of her life after gathering relevant gravitational data from a massive black hole into which he and a robot plunge. In this way Murphy solves the theoretical problem that stood in the way of humanity's flight from their doomed 'home planet'. Although the main focus of the film narrative (and of all the special effects employed to make some of the 'deep space' sequences convincing) is on the question of the relation between time (and therefore mind-boggling differences in ageing on the part of characters) and space travel through 'wormholes', one cannot ignore the central assumption, if not principle, in the film, that human beings' presence on Earth has nothing to do with an inalienable bond between them and this planet, and that their sojourn here is at best contingent and subject to change.

Utilising Deleuze's distinction (2005, pp. 80-94) between different "time crystals" (the "perfect crystal", the "flawed [or cracked] crystal", "decaying crystal" and "crystal of seeds") in what he calls the "cinema of the time image", one could say that some of the scene-sequences in *Interstellar* exemplify images comprising a "crystal of decay". For Deleuze, a "time crystal" in cinema is an image or image-configuration that condenses a theme or themes in multifaceted format, so that one is able to analyse the film in question by disentangling the layers of signification as concentrated in the image functioning as a crystal of sorts. With regard to *Interstellar,* I am thinking particularly of 'crystal'-images and image-sequences evoking something like the notorious American 'dust bowl' of the 1930s, where, in several paradigmatic image-sequences, people, animals and cars are shown as being hardly visible through curtains of swirling dust. These cinematic images encapsulate or concentrate in themselves, like in a crystal, a decaying world, or a world increasingly incapable of sustaining life.

Interstellar also features what Deleuze describes as a "flawed crystal", insofar as the image of a 'wormhole' in space represents a 'flaw' through which humanity can flee from their decaying crystal to a different, habitable world. In this respect, a "flawed crystal" is the antithesis of a "perfect crystal" in more than one sense: whereas a "perfect crystal" in cinema instantiates the conceit of a

utopian world, where nothing is deemed to be lacking, more often than not the utopia turns out to be a dystopia – Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936) readily comes to mind (for a thoroughgoing discussion of this, see Olivier 2012) – insofar as the internal disruption of time as a "perfect crystal" cannot conclusively be prevented. By contrast, "flawed crystals" in film denote either images of "flaws" such as endemic gender discrimination (for example, in Ridley Scott's *Thelma and Louise*; 1991), or of 'flaws' in a different sense, namely, a fissure or crack in an edifice or institution that offers a means of escape. The wormhole-image in *Interstellar* represents a "crystal flaw" in this sense, and simultaneously functions as an index of the film's rejection of the idea that the earth is humanity's originary home.

On the other hand, Alfonso Cuarón's recent film, *Gravity* (2013) can be described as a "crystal of seeds" in Deleuzian terms, insofar as its images function intermittently like "crystal seeds" – "entrances" or "openings" through which something novel may appear. Unlike Nolan's *Interstellar*, it adopts the position of a cinematic affirmation that the earth is humanity's home, and that even someone like the protagonist of the film, biomedical engineer Dr Ryan Stone (Sandra Bullock) – who has literally turned her back on the earth – can, in principle, rediscover *terra firma* as her originary home. In conversation with Lieutenant Matt Kowalski (George Clooney), Dr Stone reveals that she lost her daughter when the latter died young in an accident, and that since then she has struggled to find meaning in her life on Earth. Because of this ineradicably painful, traumatic experience on Earth, in a sense she has nothing to go back to there, and hence working on the Hubble telescope alongside the space shuttle Explorer, appears to be a welcome opportunity to escape from the mundane space of Earth, where she is constantly reminded of her irreversible loss.

When the space shuttle is irreparably damaged by a cluster of space debris, inadvertently caused by Russian destruction of a defunct satellite and travelling at high speed in orbit around the earth, Dr Stone and Lieutenant Kowalski find themselves in dire straits. Using a "manned maneuvering unit", they set out for the International Space Station, and on arrival there discover that it, too, has been damaged by the orbiting space debris. Moreover, the crew has evidently escaped in one of the station's two Soyuz modules, while the other one is no longer fit for returning to Earth because its parachute

has deployed prematurely. They, however, could still use it to reach the Chinese space station, Tiangong, and use a Chinese module to return to Earth. Out of fuel and with almost no oxygen left, Stone and Kowalski try to stop their momentum by grabbing at the International Space Station as they pass it. Stone's foot gets entangled in the Soyuz module's parachute cords, and although she gets hold of Kowalski's space suit, it becomes clear that their combined mass is too much for the cords, and Kowalski releases himself (drifting away to certain death) to enable Stone to enter the International Space Station. For a while he remains in radio contact with her, however, and continues encouraging and advising her while he can. To cut a long story short, after being forced to enter the Soyuz module and using its "soft landing jets" to reach Tiangong, which happens to be de-orbiting, Stone manages to use one of its modules to re-enter the earth's atmosphere, eventually landing in a lake, where she has to wriggle out of her space suit and swim to the surface after opening the hatch. The scene where she emerges from the capsule and kicks upwards, breaking the lake surface and gulping down the air, is an almost paradigmatic image-sequence of a rebirth of sorts. The woman who previously found that she had no reason left to want to be on the earth, eagerly embraces it as her home. This is the real, eponymous 'gravity' of the narrative, and viewers who do not 'get this', would be the poorer for it.

The entire sequence of cinematic images – from the time that Kowalski and Stone set out for the International Space Station through those that embody their, and eventually her, efforts to leave the inhospitable depths of space behind and return to Earth, to those final images capturing her fiery re-entry into the atmosphere, watery landing and emergence from the sinking capsule – is an image-concatenation that functions as a series of Deleuzian "crystal-seeds". It can hardly be otherwise, firstly because each of these images bears the imprint of time (mostly of time running out), and secondly insofar as every image concentrates in itself the preceding events as well as the "seeds" of possible, divergent trajectories of future events. Because events could have unfolded along different axes, these images have the status of "crystal-seeds", and as the narrative, embodied in these images, unfolds, it becomes clear which of the earlier, "virtual" seeds eventually germinate.

Comparing the scene-sequences in space with the final sequence where Stone swims to land and emerges, Venus-like, from the water, is instructive in the light of

the notion of *genius loci*. There is no *genius loci* 'in space', because there is no 'place' there, except perhaps when Dr Stone enters the International Space Station and eventually the Chinese module, which has an interior space that could pass as a 'place' of sorts. Perhaps one might say that the only *genie* that one senses in the space-scenes is a *malin genie*; hence Dr Stone's desperate attempts to return to Earth, despite her earlier misgivings about it because of the traumatic loss of her daughter in mundane spaces. At any rate, the contrast between *Gravity* and *Interstellar* is clear: while the latter instantiates a cinematic valorisation of the prospects of leaving the earth, which has become an inhospitable place to humankind (it is a moot question, whether this fictional scenario has been informed by the looming environmental crisis of today), the former is an affirmation of the value of the earth as humanity's true home – hence the wish to return to it on the part of the protagonist when the technological means to survive in space collapse. The title of the film, *Gravity*, is a succinct metaphor for the intrinsic human value of what one ordinarily takes for granted (the natural tendency to be 'drawn' to the earth's surface), and which the protagonist in the film learns to desire anew when caught in the weightlessness of space.

These two films demonstrate the power of cinema as a medium, in the first place, but also the inescapable fact that no cultural artefact can avoid being imprinted with a sense of (sometimes diametrically opposed) values – while *Interstellar* promotes the idea that humanity should jettison an Earth that has become uninhabitable, *Gravity* advances the exact opposite axiological (value-related) stance, that Earth is our Mother planet, and ought to be affirmed in that capacity. This is powerfully affirmed in visual terms toward the end of the film when Dr Stone is virtually 'reborn' from Earth's watery womb after her borrowed space capsule fell into a lake.

CONCLUSION

Finally, it should be abundantly obvious that my own axiological position in this paper is an unambiguous commitment to, and promotion of the irreplaceable, intrinsic value of the earth and all her creatures – 'intrinsic' because the time is finally past when humans could only attribute value in the sense of 'usefulness' to living beings insofar as they could be harnessed to and for sometimes dubious human ends. All living beings, including Gaia as a whole, are intrinsically valuable. It should be conspicuous, today – given all the easily accessible information to this effect – that

the conventional (and lamentable) anthropocentric attitude has brought humanity to the brink of the precipice of species-extinction, and that all avenues of recuperative action should be explored without wasting any time. Chief among these is teaching and learning, with all people in mind, but particularly oriented towards young people, for they are the leaders of tomorrow.

It is true that, as a benevolent critic has reminded me, the 'operationalisation' of the alternative pedagogy I have proposed here poses huge, if not insurmountable problems, not least of which is that Africa is already compromised to a large degree by its own neoliberal agenda(s), from which equally (morally) compromised politicians often benefit handsomely in economic terms. In respect of such obstacles, I want to reiterate what was briefly pointed out above, namely, that one should not hesitate to introduce 'activism' into university curricula as a topic, with a view to cultivating it as a praxis to be engaged in when needed. I have no doubt that such a need for activist practice will only grow in a world hurtling towards eco-catastrophe. As noted earlier, both Naomi Klein's (2014) and Emerson's (1841) work could be enlisted in the teaching of activist practice.

Then, lastly – also impressed upon me by my perspicacious critic – there is the pedagogic problem (already implicitly acknowledged above) of operationalising my proposals in the classroom. This includes the difficulty of finding effective ways to educate would-be teachers and lecturers who would possess both the interest in, and capacity for, availing themselves of a wide spectrum of teaching and learning materials (such as the ones repeatedly enlisted in this paper), including theoretical, literary and audiovisual texts, to enlighten, conscientise and activate a critical *practice* on the part of students and future teachers or lecturers. Nothing less than a critical, 'activist' praxis will stand a chance of changing the (disastrous) neoliberal conformist *status quo* to one where communities, and ultimately societies, can take responsibility for saving the ecology on which all living beings depend.

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Women Doing History Differently

Devarakshanam (Betty) Govinden
Honorary Research Associate
UKZN
herbyg@telkomsa.net

ABSTRACT
I was recently invited to give a lecture to post-graduate History students on *Women and History* at Howard College at University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I began by encouraging students to ask broad questions about the way History as a subject in the Humanities is constructed and institutionalised. Coming from an English Literature background, I deliberately deployed examples that showed the intersection and slippage between History and Literature, to encourage the exploration of a more malleable and contentious view of what might constitute History. This article is presented as a working exemplar of how one might work tangentially, with the deployment of diverse case studies, in order to promote scrutiny of traditional, formulaic views in the teaching and learning of a particular discipline. This is not to flatten distinctions, but to encourage critical thinking about the borders and fences we erect around and within disciplines. This contribution has two main purposes specifically for teaching and learning. Stylistically, by retaining the direct presentation mode that I used originally, I question the indirect, reported, journal writing mode that we normally adhere to when speaking about teaching and learning. Secondly, through the use of a particular example, I am prompting a re-consideration of the disciplines we teach, in terms of its received construction, content, and methodology. Even where critical innovation has occurred, there is always room for pushing the [new] boundaries.

Keywords: *Women; history; historiography, teaching history; higher education; presentation mode.*

THE PRESENTATION - WOMEN DOING HISTORY DIFFERENTLY

In this presentation I shall begin by posing questions related to the field of History[1] broadly, as it is constituted as a discipline, and how History [as traditionally defined] does "History". Certainly, as you progress in the study of a discipline – any discipline – you need to look at its construction, its history, its ideology, and not just at its purported content or curriculum. Indeed, that very content is the result of these factors. Often disciplines get normalised, and we forget the dimensions that shaped it. In this instance, this approach takes us to pondering over the "idea of History", and to a consideration of historiography, and issues related to representation and writing of History, among others.

We need to look at the discipline we call History from different angles. When and where did this entity we call History begin? How did it begin to become constructed and formulated as a discipline that is taught and transmitted? How does a certain type of content come to cluster around it, and be identified with it? It is important to bring this kind of interrogation to bear on all our disciplines, to be vigilant towards a certain "manufacturing of consent" that creeps in. This happens in all facets of life, all practices, and discourses; that they cease to be transparent. We have to ask how and when disciplines become institutionalised. In this particular instance, how did the professionalisation and 'scientification' of Historical Studies develop? What were the different stages in the development of History as a discipline?

My field is English Literature, and for a long time I accepted the content of this subject/discipline called "English Literature" as a logical amalgam of what should be included, and what its parameters were. This is how ideology works on individuals: I accepted the content unquestioningly. I studied English and English Literature from my high school days, and through university, and only much later did I begin to question it as a construct, and even see it as such.

I was surprised to learn, years after I began studying English Literature, of its development and formation as a formal subject or discipline. One of the books which changed my perspective on English Literature is Gauri

[1] I use the capital H" to denote the subject on the curriculum in our educational institutions.

Visvanathan's *Masks Of Conquest: Literary Study And British Rule In India* [1989][2]. This book is about the institutionalisation of English, and the way the institution, practice and ideology evolved. It is interesting to note that the discipline was first developed in India – a colony of the British Empire, and then, imported to the metropolis, where it was taught at Oxford and Cambridge and elsewhere, and then, exported back to the different parts of the British Empire.

Viswanathan uses Antonio Gramsci's insights on the relationship between culture and power, on how cultural domination of subjugated peoples seemed to work by consent, rather than coercion, and how this precedes conquest by force [see Kumar, 2017]. She points out that the function of Education, in general, and of English literary education, in particular, had a religious and moral edge in the colonies, that the "discipline" of English had its beginnings in strategies of socio-political control.

It is worth looking at the history of any discipline - as an exemplar for investigation. This is a worthy project in different disciplinary spaces in teaching and learning.

One of the theorists of History was Hayden White, who considered the philosophy of History, and its construction as a discipline. In his book, *Metahistory – The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* [1973/2014], White argues that History is marked by narrative, and is akin to literature, in its reliance on narrative for meaning. While History strives to be objective and scientific, its narrativity tries to make history "coherent", using the available evidence. Literary writing, on the other hand, may develop an imagined narrative.

White's discourse on the notion of "metahistory" is an important one, where one looks beyond the visible content of the discipline, to its history, assumptions, and worldview. Crucially, White, who worked in Comparative Literature, stressed the role of the HISTORICAL IMAGINATION in doing History, and the role of the

[2] Visvanathan, who initially studied in New Delhi, went on to read for her PhD at Columbia University, under the well-known postcolonial scholar, Edward Said.

IMAGINATION as fundamental in critical reflection on any subject and is, crucially, dependent on the evidence found. The important effect of his work was a shift in emphasis from History to historiography, in the quest to render History-making more transparent. This "revisionist" turn in History has been welcomed. The other consideration, that a historian might be aware of, is that due to various reasons, some evidence may be suppressed, missing, deleted, or side-lined.

Similarly, Angeliki Spiropoulou, a professor of Modern Literature and Theory in Greece, in her book *Virginia Woolf, Modernity and History – Constellations with Walter Benjamin* [2010], makes important observations from Literature on the politics of History. She considers the representation of history and the workings of the historical memory/imagination in literary spaces, such as Virginia Woolf's writings, to be worth reflecting on, as they question conventional ways of "doing" History. Her drawing on Walter Benjamin, one of the classical theorists on the philosophy of history, provocatively links different nodes of inquiry in an interesting dialogue[3]: 'History' as a term combines the ontological with the epistemological in as much as it refers both to the past and our representations of the past. Since we only have access to the past through its representation, historiographical methodology necessarily evokes questions addressed by the philosophy of history. Such questions concern the nature of historical temporality, crucially coupled with some notion of the possible direction of history and of the appropriate subject of history writing. These in turn determine how a historian conceives the relation between the present and past, the possible meaning of human history, the possibility of objectivity and the role of interpretation in historiography. [Spiropoulou, 2010, pp. 37]

David Boje's [2008] interesting notion of the *antenarrative* offers a counter to the conventional notion of a coherent, linear narrative, usually found in History. Postmodernist story-telling has attempted to subvert certainty and

[3] This kind of dialogue/conversation or new "constellation" [see Rabaté 2012], is that which I am generally prompting in this presentation, where we consider one entity [or discipline] from the vantage point of another.

predictability. How will this "work" in history-telling?

Foucault, who works interdisciplinary, has also argued for a new kind of history - a history that is about discontinuities. Described as an "anti-historical historian" [Poster, 1982, p. 116], Foucault also approaches history subversively, and speaks of a "history of the present", where we consider the genealogy of the present and how it came to manifest itself in the way it does [see Garland, 2014].

Of concern, is how art may also be used in representation of History, a topic to which I will return at the end. [We might also consider the idea of History as art.]

Women Questioning History

How do women in particular, question the terrain of History and how do they "do" history? Hence, the title of my lecture: *WOMEN DOING HISTORY DIFFERENTLY*. I have deliberately included some unusual, "eccentric" [off centre] examples [some figures you are not likely to encounter in the usual History lecture room], to disrupt, question and re-vision the "centre". I think that when you look beyond what the selected women are saying, to the sub-text of what they are doing, you appreciate many things about History that might otherwise elude you. While much of this is not new, and now included in the revisionist History curriculum, some of the examples I have included show that there is scope for other emphases.

In looking at *WOMEN DOING HISTORY DIFFERENTLY*, you also need to look at those who are feminist intellectuals and scholars in general and in other disciplines – Science, Literature, Psychology, Literature, to name a few. What are they saying specifically, but also generally, on matters related to epistemology, ontology, identity, politics and general History? You need to consider coloniality, apartheid, post-coloniality, decoloniality, generally, and how feminist scholars have influenced the direction of discourses in these areas in South Africa. Although this is beyond the scope of this presentation, it is crucial for rethinking History, and any other discipline, for that matter.

Similarly, we should always explore new ways of doing research in relation to women/gender and History and, in the process, make new contributions to teaching and learning

History. Issues of epistemology, ontology, and methodology in research are closely intertwined to teaching and learning in any discipline, the one shaping and determining the course of the other. We often do not realise that every discipline we teach, including subjects like Science, and Architecture, to name a few at random, should be scrutinised from a variety of perspectives. Appropriating the lexicon of critical interrogation of History as a discipline is a fundamental exercise in your development as a historian.

Your approach should include both a broad critical orientation as well as specific, critical approaches to the study of particular historical areas.

Inquiries may take different directions: What have been the broad trends and developments in History over the past century at global, continental, and regional levels? How has the study of History in South Africa been influenced by developments in the discipline elsewhere, or by other disciplines? How has the study of History in South Africa been influenced by developments in History in South Africa? What have been the trends in History in other countries? In India, for example, we saw the development of Subaltern Studies. How has this changed the topography of History as a discipline? What have been the trends among South African women historians, and from elsewhere? There are several ways in which women have changed, modified or questioned History, and I draw on four examples from this broad and exciting field of work. A vast and deep literature exists on women in/and history, and one needs to engage in greater depth on the historiography of women's history.

Making Women Visible

Sheila Rowbotham, a UK-based historian, in her study, *Hidden from History – 300 Years Of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* [1973], shows that the terrain has been broadened to include "women's issues", and social history. Some women scholars proceed to a re-configuration of History, where there is questioning of "mainstream" History to a re-defining of History. Nombonisa Gasa's edited collection *Women in South African History* [2007] is a good example of feminist scholars revisiting South African History, from precolonial to present times, and is a worthy

contribution to South African historiography and feminist literature.

Similarly, the recent work of Enuga S. Reddy and Kalpana Hiralal, *Pioneers of Satyagraha in South Africa* [Reddy and Hiralal, 2017], and my own literary study on Indian Women's Writings in South Africa, *Sister Outsiders* [see Govinden, 2008], which includes a great deal of historical information, are excavatory in intent, in the attempt to respond to the invisibility of women in History and Literary Criticism in South Africa.

In the field of religion and women, our book, *Her-stories*: *Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa*, edited by Isabel Phiri, Sarojini Nadar and myself [2002], is a deliberate attempt to foreground women and women's stories, against the background of a mainly patriarchal rendering of the Christian faith in Africa.

Women historians may also engage in important excavatory work, to unearth hidden histories, and to provide corrective histories. For example, Gerda Lerner, another UK-based academic, in her book, *Why History Matters –Life and Thought* [1997], gives a new angle to the history of the idea of Non-violence or Civil Disobedience. She shows that the initial conception of Civil Disobedience was made by women in the Quaker movement [leaders like Mary Dyer], who influenced Thoreau. The role of Quaker women is often eclipsed in the long chain from Thoreau to Tolstoy to Gandhi to Martin Luther King Jr. Part of corrective history may also be undertaken to "rehabilitate" and restore women, who might be the victims of biased portrayals. A good example here is the biography of Emily *Hobhouse – Beloved Traitor* by Elsabe Brits, published in 2016 [see Birch ,2016].

Addressing the invisibility of records of rural Black women in our History, Lauretta Ngcobo chronicles their struggles against apartheid oppression. Her And *They Didn't Die – A Novel* [1990/1999], set against the effects of the 1913 Land Act, and subsequent Land Acts, shows the resilience of the women "who were left behind", during the migration of Black men to the mines on the Witwatersrand in the early to mid-20th Century.

An instructive collaborative project might be to explore the ways in which various women - through different genres of historical work - have

influenced the changing face of History. The women cited here are just a few examples from a larger pantheon, and they would make interesting case studies because of their particularities.

Women Doing History Differently

Against this broad background I should like to consider four case studies, or vignettes, of "women doing history differently" and how the life and death of Winnie Mandela was (man) handled.

SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH - "A NEW KIND OF HISTORY"

Swetlana Alexievich is described in a *New York Times Book Review* of her work as inaugurating a "new kind of history" [2017]. She received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015.[4] She is from Belarus, and has a background in journalism. Alexievich's work comprises oral histories of hundreds of Russian women – ordinary women - who fought in various spaces in World War II, but who have been forgotten or erased. When we read her work, we appreciate that it involved meticulous and unobtrusive listening, with an ear for what lay beneath the surface, to the "seamless flow of voices" in an intimate exchange with her.

What is interesting about her outlandish understanding of History is that it is not a mapping of events, but of the character and emotions of those involved in them [she deliberately eschews telling the macro narrative of the War, or of Chernobyl, for example]. The Nobel citation credited Alexievich with "'inventing a … history of emotions' – a carefully composed collage of human voices recorded during interviews. Her oral histories [for that is what they are] are presented as monologues; they are concerned less with the witnesses' recording of historical events than with their feelings about how their interior lives have been shaped by those events." [Figes, 2016, p.18]

Indeed, this is Oral History at its finest, and it shows, as well, the power of memory – and in particular, a women's memory. Her view is that Art and History have both failed to understand many things about people, and of the history of human feelings. Alexievich is on "a search for eternal man":

[4] What is ironic is that some questioned whether the genre in which she worked was Literature. This is similar to the questions raised last year when Bob Dylan was given the Nobel in Literature for his songs!

I am searching life for observations, nuances, details. Because my interest in life is not the event as such, not war as such, not Chernobyl as such, not suicide as such. What I am interested in is what happens to the human being, what happens to it in our time. How does man behave and react? How much of the biological man is in him, how much of the man of his time, how much man of the men. [Alexievich, 1985]

Alexievich implicitly asks the question: *What constitutes history?* And, she answers it in her own eccentric, inimitable way.

What is exciting for me is the way Alexievich works intuitively in capturing this "history from below" in different senses of the term. While "history from below" has generally been envisaged by revisionist historians and social historians, I want to argue that Alexievich probes even further, to hidden, submerged layers in the palimpsest of women's experiences.

While Urvashi Butalia's The *Other Side of Silence – Voices from the Partition of India* [1998], dealt with the untold private stories of women and other marginalized groups, and foregrounds the "persistence of memory", Alexievich goes even further, to tell of suppressed, very personal feelings and emotions that women experienced during major historical happenings.

ANTOINETTE BURTON – DWELLING IN THE ARCHIVE

The second case study I should like to present is that of Antoinette Burton, a well-known, professional historian, based in the United States, and working in histories of Empire, with particular reference to women. She has written an interesting autobiographical chapter on her journey of becoming a historian of Empire [see Burton 2016].

One of her principal works, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* [2003], shows the "intersection" of British feminism, Indian women and Imperial culture.

Burton's approach is to question History as the site of masculine thinking and grand narratives. Implicitly, through her practice, as with Alexievich, Burton draws attention to questions such as *Who constitutes History?* W*hat constitutes history?* This is an old question,

admittedly, asked by different groups, but Burton seeks new answers.

In his review of Burton's book, Vinay Lal, Professor of History at UCLA, writes of *Dwelling* as "an attempt …to stretch the parameters of what professional historians would ordinarily construe as 'history'," and in particular, the "historical archive". He points out that, "…Burton is working with a more expansive conception of who counts as a "historian" and what counts for "history", just as she seeks to give politics a reach that was always anticipated in feminist theory." [Lal, 2004, p. 673].

Lal draws attention to the influence on History of various theoretical approaches that have influenced History as a discipline – Post-structuralism and Post-colonialism [this is similar to work in Literature and literary criticism], where the "centre" is reconfigured. Indeed, Burton's work includes women, sexual and ethnic minorities, orphans, social 'deviants', those on the margins of history – what Lal refers to as "*additive histories*".

Further, Burton questions what constitutes a historical text, and moves away from dominant understandings; she works with private diaries of working class women, folktales, comics, and public statuary is commendable; and although this is not necessarily new, it emphasises the view that "history" may be found in diverse places. The archive is usually seen as the repository of public and political histories, with no place for private memories. However, "… Burton's intent is to fragment the opposition of public and private, of history and memory…" [Lal, 2004, p. 673], and uses the home as a historical archive.

In *Dwelling in the Archive*, Burton tells the stories of three Indian women, using an ethnographic approach: The first is of Janaki Majumdar, and uses her personal diary, called a "*Family History*." Majumdar's father [W.C. Bonnerjee] was the first president of the Indian National Congress, and Burton points "to the politics of knowledge which inheres in domestic as much as public arrangements", given that the private, "domestic genealogies of Indian nationalism" have been obscured. The other study is of Cornelia Sorabji, the Oxford-educated barrister, who was an expert on the *zenana*, which was the interior quarters of homes, and seen as

the domain of women, and as a sacred space. Sorabji turned the zenana into a museum, an archive, and Burton expounds on this. Burton's third study is on Attia Hossain, and her novel, *Sunlight on a Broken Column,* which deals with the History of Partition [between India and Pakistan], with particular focus on what happened to the women.

GAUITRA BAHADUR – COOLIE WOMAN

The third case study I have chosen is *Coolie Woman – The Odyssey of Indenture* by Gauitra Bahadur [2014]. Bahadur is originally from British Guiana, and is now based in Canada and the United States, and works as a journalist. There are many interesting aspects raised in the book around History, and I summarise the essential points.

Coolie Woman is an individual story, presented as a paradigm case for all Indian indentured women across the Indian Diaspora. It is a personal, family history, with particular details related to the author's great-grandmother, but it is also an expansive and collective biography of an indentured "Everywoman", gleaned and constructed from various sources. The author used diverse and indirect investigative methods, mining indirect records - letters, diaries, statements of colonials – and effectively giving voice to the voiceless, in the face of official history that was guilty of the "stealing of the voices of indentured women".

While the work is excavatory, it is not a case of straightforward, simplistic reclamation and reconstruction, but demonstrates the use of the critical, creative Historical Imagination. What is interesting here is Bahadur's critical use of archives, as she navigates biases, elisions, and absences in official colonial archives. Her recasting indentured women as subjects, by piecing together statements, testimonies [confessions] of colonial men is an impressive accomplishment. While the place of "evidence" is crucial in History, as pointed out earlier, the questioning of "historical evidence" and of representation in History is implicit in her work, as we appreciate that *Coolie Woman* is a reconstructive narrative, in the best tradition of creative non-fiction.

GRADA KILOMBA – SPEAKING THE UNSPEAKABLE

The fourth case study revolves around the interesting work of Grada

Kilomba. The *Mail and Guardian* article by Kwanele Sosibo, "Colouring the white cube", on her last week [Sosibo, *Mail and Guardian,* 7th April 2018] prompted me to consider her here in this presentation. Again, here is another quite eccentric example, deeply challenging of so many assumptions we hold, assumptions about History that we do not question. I know of Kilomba's work and of the way she has inspired other South African artists[5], and was happy to see it featured in our local news, and that her work, *Speaking the Unspeakable*, was featured in the Goodman Gallery in Cape Town early this April.

Kilomba is an artist, educator and writer based in Berlin, with roots in Lusophone Africa [the Angolan, Sao Tome and Principe diasporas]. Her work, combining art, poetry, histories, is very concerned with questioning "History", and how it is done, of addressing the "silencing", "rupture", and exclusionary practices that are pervasive when dealing with histories from the South. What is also instructive of Kilomba's work and approach to History, is her emphasis on how histories inform and are inextricably part of "global collective history", with its "triangulation of 500 years of slavery and colonialism…" [In Sosibo, 2018, p. 3]. As a black feminist artist/historian, Kilomba's work is invaluable and her contribution path-breaking, "…we are redefining policies, politics, language and also artistic language. Which formats, which genres should I work in? We are redefining everything…" [Sosibo, 2018, p. 3].

[5] See the PhD work of Sharlene Khan, one of my old students from the former University of Durban-Westville [before it became the University of KwaZulu-Natal], who is now based at Rhodes University, in Grahamstown.

WINNIE MANDELA – "WRITING A HISTORY OF THE PRESENT"

The recent death of Winnie Mandela, and the numerous and diverse articles on her since her death, is also pertinent to concerns I am highlighting here. There are many challenges that the life of Winnie Mandela poses to us as historians, whether working in the formal academy or on the ground.

In the article "Winnie and the politics of memory" [*Mail and Guardian,* April 13-19, 2018, p. 13], Gugulethu Mhlungu draws attention to the way in which South Africa was "totally unprepared to memorialize her". She suggests that there was a patent failure of the historical project, as

insufficient attention, compared to Nelson Mandela, was given to the archiving, documenting and critical reflection on Winnie Mandela's life. By failing to write Madikizela-Mandela's history, we failed to protect her from the ever-present shadow of white supremacy and patriarchy – both of which would want to see her fire and immense criticism of these systems erased from history. The overwhelming absence of her radical feminist ideas – which still ring true in present-day patriarchal South Africa – is evidence of this…. What does it reveal about a nation that was built on her back, that it failed to do the work, the rituals, the rewriting her name in history that was and still is so necessary for a person of her stature? [Mhlungu, 2018, p. 13]

While the work of "assessing" anyone's life is an on-going process, certainly, in the case of Winnie Mandela, the concern is that not enough attention was given to the diverse and competing elements of her life over the decades, from the apartheid era, through the political transition, to the present time. Professor Njabulo Ndebele has rendered a compelling portrait of women who wait, blurring the boundaries of myth and reality, fact and fiction, biography and History, in his book, *The Cry of Winnie Mandela - A Novel* [2003]. Angelo Fick makes the important point that attempts to "simplify" the woman that she was would be "doing ourselves and this political moment a disservice" [Fick, 2018, p. 19]. The challenge to history remains - how to deal especially with the pervasive "misogynistic gaze of an unsettled patriarchy" [Fick, 2018, p. 19] – and how to render Winnie Mandela in her "infinite variety". While this is true for any figure in history, how circumspect are we in the way we portray women?

CONCLUSION

Against this broad, wide-ranging, introductory overview, one may consider a few challenges. To be fair, many of these innovative approaches to teaching and learning [which include the scholarship around it], and with research in this direction, are actually practised in some of our more creative History Departments. But, would a work such as *Coolie Woman – The Odyssey of Indian Indenture* be accepted as a PhD "dissertation"? We have to question why our formal academic structures do not always conceive of such creative work

as appropriate and "rigorous", and how understandings of knowledge production and representations of knowledge may be broadened. In any event, the challenge is to create spaces, both in the academic world and beyond, where we produce new historical knowledge, creatively and critically.

Against the background of all that I have said, I conclude with two quick creative, tangential [eccentric?] examples [from two eminent men – great human beings, to boot] for your critical consideration and earnest reflection. Consider the spectacular example of one of Africa's greatest intellectuals, Achille Mbembe, and his *On the Post Colony* [2015], which defies narrow categorisation and classification. I wonder where it will be placed on our library shelves! Here is the most creative and critical amalgam of history, cultural politics, music, art, literature, theory, and philosophy - all in a searching and insightful analysis of the constitution of power in its different manifestations in the postcolonial state in Africa. As Mbembe himself reflects [invoking the Muse of History]: "To think is to embark on a voyage of the mind. This is why, in *On the Postcolony*, I wanted to experiment with the sensation that comes from a liberated mind, one that is ready to let things go off in unforeseen directions" [Mbembe, 2015, p. vi].

And then there is Marina Carter and Khal Torabully's *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* [2002]. I met Torabully in person [in Mauritius and France], and he told me that he did extensive historical research to compile his poetic work in *Coolitude*. Torabully is another great historian, from Africa, whose writings Aime Cesaire, the great poet of Negritude himself, described as "containing all my humanity".

What I wish to highlight in Torabully's work is the representation of History in *Coolitude:* the creative and critical weaving of vast swathes of centuries of history, his intertwining of intellectual and theoretical analysis, History/history, documentation, memory, and so much else – all in the most evocative poetry imaginable. Indeed, one finds it hard to know where the History ends and where the poetry begins… I offer you a sliver:

["And If I Choose a Vessel"]

And if I chose a vessel with strange accents of the sea, it's because I want to be at home anywhere else, even in words most removed from my borrowed soul. The doors of the world have been knocked down for me by a current-of-blood, drift-of-flesh navigation.

Coolie, because my lost memory chooses its roots in my truths…

Thank you for this invitation to share my thoughts with you. I wish you well in all your endeavours in "re-writing" History. I LOVE YOU!

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Exploring conference spaces through poetic inquiry: Loving demons and disobedient angels

Michael Anthony Samuel

University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban South Africa

Samuelm@ukzn.ac.za

Abstract

This article foregrounds how educational research conference spaces can be activated to become contested spaces for dialogue, rather than disguised attempts to silence or jettison perspectives. This represents counter-hegemonic contestation. The argument draws on a dialogue between conventional and arts-based poetic depictions through *ex post facto* data production strategies to reflect on two national conferences in which the author was involved. The article argues that conference spaces embed multiple political, social, and historical elements, but are likely to be interpreted as dichotomising arenas between adversaries (angels) and proponents (demons) of dominant worldviews. The poem represents how elements of seeming contradiction and overt conflict embed each other. The two conference agendas are reconstructed discursively as both groups negotiate their relationship with each other. The poetic data displays the potential for conferences to move beyond agendas of self to engage those of the self-in-service for a greater social good. This article's agenda activates disobedience to harmonic co-option.

Key words: Academic educational research conferencing; hegemony and counter-hegemony; poetic inquiry; epistemic disobedience

INTRODUCTION

In this article I consciously choose to challenge the conventions of journal article design, construction and representation. The traditional article headings and sub-headings (separate and bounded categories) are deliberately erased through the deployment of elements drawn from outside academic writing genres which flow into each other, as representational fluidity. While the article indeed draws data from the field, it does not derive from a pre-determined research design process established before the (research) events unfold. Data gathering does not commence with a set of *a priori* questions that the researcher wishes to confirm or negate through field exploration. Freeman (1996) refers to this form of data gathering as an "*ex post facto*" process which, in contrast to the normative methodological approaches to research design, produces data after the event has already occurred. The act of data *gathering* thus reconstitutes itself as an act of data *production*. As a participant within the field, the researcher has the latitude to assemble an in-depth, first-hand subjective account of the social context drawing on his/her experiences, thoughts and actions during past event/s, and uses this critical reflection as a form of analysing moments in the social-historical context (Reddy, 2000). Whilst the retrospective account is an attempt to engage with the researcher's own past, as the author of the report, the researcher uses the past in order to construct interpretations of the present (and perhaps the future). The act of writing constitutes a form of life history inquiry which does not simply provide a narcissistic self-inquiry, but is motivated by the need to generate the process of building a theoretical perspective through narrative construction (Dhunpath and Samuel, 2009).

This article is empirically-grounded in the events of two national conferences at which I presented papers as part of two panels. Both panels focused on social justice considerations, not surprising for an educational research space within post-apartheid South Africa. The first conference, held under the auspices of the *Kenton Association*, took place in 2006 and the second, reconstituted as the *South African Education Research Association (*SAERA) was held in 2017. The Kenton Conference originally attracted mainly educational researchers from historically White advantaged institutions; its character as convening (White) liberal views was well-established. However, in 2006, the conference space was opened to a wider

diversity of perspectives. As an academic from a previously Black South African higher education institution, the decision to present research at this conference was a deliberative and political choice. My Black postgraduate students at the time had, in my view, a body of empirical research that needed to be presented at the doorstep of conventional White liberalism. The propositional content of our Kenton panel drew on alternative interpretations of social justice in the terrain of primary and secondary post-apartheid schooling.

By contrast, SAERA's 2017 conference was organised at a time when the association was seeking to reconfigure previously racially-aligned educational research bodies. I participated in the panel reflecting on the future possibilities of higher education researchers to activate a social justice agenda. In this second temporal context, my positionality with respect to the conference could be said to be different since I was an executive member of the organisation who had been involved in steering the formation of the new organisation. However, my political commitment remained the same: to open up spaces for critical exchange of divergent views. Notably, the Kenton Association had folded and realigned its membership within the new SAERA conference brand.

This article analyses how conference spaces are used to activate or silence critical dialogue. It consciously chooses to assemble multiple vignettes from the events of the two conferences to paint a picture of the textual action of conferencing. Stylistically, the article is represented in two broad formats: the first conventionally reflects *academic dialogues* between data and the extant literature/theoretical field; and the second, a *poetic data representation* of the conference spaces. This representational device is marked with normative line-spacing in the conventional sections, and compressed line-spacing in the poetic inquiry (Miller, 2018). (The choice of "poetic form" is discussed later). The primary audience for this text are those who organise, manage and convene conference planning and programmes, as well as those who constitute presentations and panels within educational research spaces. How are discursive conference spaces being constructed (practically and epistemologically)? How do they reflect the agenda of achieving greater social justice in the (educational) research terrain? The poem constructs a metaphorical thread to promote coherence in the unfolding narrative that explores the phenomenon of the article.

The poem "**Loving Demons and disobedient Angels**" challenges binary dialogue across variant participants; instead, it suggests that conferences' spaces could be active confluences of political and sociological histories, pointing to the need for conscious new disruptions. Drawing on Mignolo's (2011) critique of how the oppressed internalise their oppression, the article suggests that conference participants need to be epistemically vigilant of the forces of hegemonic co-option. Rather than capitulate, as supporters of social justice, educational researchers have a responsibility to be epistemically disobedient (*ibid.*).

Loving demons and disobedient angels

Around 2006,
after more than ten years
of the new heaven of a new legal democracy
I escorted a group of novice researchers,
postgraduate students/newly appointed academics,
naïve angels perhaps
to report their research findings
about their collaborative research project.
"Who sits at the margins of schooling?"
This was
a Department for International Development (DfID-UK) project
reporting back from their empirical fieldwork
looking comparatively across different regions
in South Africa
where race was/is the defining re-organising device in post-apartheid schooling
and in India
where caste has been a historical theoretical marginalisation device.

These student papers eventually became sections in ananthology, "*Inside and outside the school gates"* (Samuel and Sayed, 2003) which argued that marginalisation in post-apartheid South Africa schooling supported (and perhaps still upholds) subtle disguised forms beyond overt racist prejudice. By 2006, (inter)national condemnation of racial apartheid was already well-established and the report critiques naïve hope that the deracialisation of schooling would automatically engender a new spatial democracy. In his commentary on Bozalek, Liebowitz, Carolissen and Boler's (2014) book, Henry Giroux instead endorsed the need for "critical hope" as an action-oriented agenda to theoretically and practically counter the expectation that simply desiring or legislating change will bring about a new utopia, a new heaven (blurb on the back cover of the book). This too, was the underpinning agenda of my 2006 postgraduate students: to activate a discourse on the need to expand beyond heavenly faith in policy alone as a source of deep change in apartheid mentalities. Giroux (*ibid.*) argued that naïve hope policy and governance responses were often complicit with neoliberal agendas disguised as solutions to past injustice. He commented:

"Instead of being bathed in utopian hope, education has become the dumping ground of neoliberal ideology, modes of governance and policy. "*Discerning critical hope in educational practices"* engages, interrogates and affirms the notion that educated hope is the precondition for not only modes of pedagogy and education that are faithful to the precepts of justice and human rights, but also to the primacy of politics and democracy itself. This book…offers a counterpoint to a neoliberal culture in which cynicism and despair have become a permanent feature" (*ibid.*: blurb).

This article suggests a need for critique of how advocates for educational change are being set up in adversarial roles (as "angels and demons") whilst ostensibly embracing an opening up of the discourse of educational theory. This critique is mooted not as a form of despair or cynicism, but as a critical search for how divergent groups dialogue with each other. However, could this search for dialogue be considered another strategy of defending a neoliberalistic agenda ("utopian hope") or is this indeed, a manifestation of "critical hope": conscious action towards social justice?

The Kenton 2006 experience

Our student panel aimed to engage the DfID (UK) project's findings
about how different conceptions of inclusion and exclusion
beyond race and caste
were defining characteristics of social oppression.
Symbolic forms of violence were being meted out
via a host of other alienating factors.
Learners' and teachers' reports of the marginalisation within schools
as reported in the students' studies
took on various forms:
Gendered expectations of performance in certain subjects;
Better academic ability as a recipe for marginalisation
within a largely underperforming school space;
Valuing of sporting prowess
which sometimes negated academic ability.
Black foreign learners being excluded because they did not share the dominant national culture;
Black township teachers' benchmarking of educational quality
in relation to White schooling
where they sent their own children;
Black parents' complicity with the hegemonic conceptions that
"White teachers equate with better teachers";
Culture
Gender, Academic ability,
Sporting prowess, Xenophobia.
Complicity with White normativity[1].
This is the manna that hegemony feeds on.
My naïve but confident students interpreted their role
as casting devilish ideas
amongst a sea of largely White guardians.

[1]These findings are reported in Samuel and Sayed, 2003.

The faithful guardians nodded:
"Apartheid had created a lack of Black academics to think
creatively, empirically or critically".
Heaven and hell were bound to collide.
*
Voices from the conference floor,
mainly the trumpet sounds of the White liberal defenders
deflected the theoretical challenges of a social justice agenda behind the students' work.
The superior angels argued that
"the studies did not speak the language of academic research"
"was clothed in the biases of self-pity"
"was disrespectful of the dominant (heavenly) theorists in the field"
"was not adopting the vocabulary of academic research".
Above all, the students' reports were seen to undervalue
the attempts of the angels
to rescue the down-trodden miscreants from the oppressions of apartheid.
The neoliberal agenda fluttered in the spreading of paternalistic wings.

It is expected that conference spaces will be infused with contestations of perspectives and worldviews, paradigms and methodologies, and arguments about representations and epistemology. However, this reaction to the attempt to raise social justice considerations was contested within the framed belief that the White schooling of apartheid was indeed the target that all South Africans should aspire to. The preferred theorists that had become the gods of the White historically-advantaged institutions expected the naïve demons to be the vanguards of old educational research quality. Bloch (2009) and Jansen and Black (2015) suggest that this discourse continues to dominate the landscape of South African schooling twenty years after democracy. External rather than localised culturally relevant knowledge epistemes were paraded as targets, sustaining Black educators' continued beliefs of deficiency. And another internal colonial agenda thrives. No wonder decolonisation and critiques of alienation of the marginalised within the higher education landscape have flared up in national public contestations (Habib, 2014).

I spent most of the time thereafter,
counselling my masters students:
"your worldviews are acceptable";
"your perspectives are equally valid";
"your academic research practices indeed do have merit."

But, they were not completely convinced.
They had been demoralised to believe that
their reading of their research worlds
were not acceptable interpretations of "educational research".
They believed they were indeed devils.

The following section draws on a personal reflective account of my invitation to and presentation at a panel discussion at a national SAERA conference (SAERA, 2017). I was keen to understand how social justice in educational research was being interpreted more than twenty years after the new democracy. The conference theme was "*Education in an era of decolonisation and transformation*" (October 2017) and the specific panel title was "*Is sociology of education pluralised or polarised? Reflecting on debates about education and social justice in South Africa*". My role was to serve as a respondent to a framing paper which was circulated before the conference. The panel arose out of an earlier colloquium held in June 2017 which aimed to explore divergent views on how to define, research and address matters of social justice within the educational landscape. The panel was expected to respond to the draft paper developed by the convenors of the panel to reflect the multiple interpretations of what and how social justice was understood and practised by higher education academics, non-governmental institutions and other research participants (students and supervisors of postgraduate research). It is not my intention to engage with the specific propositional content of the arguments presented in that orienting paper *per se*, as it is still being reformulated based on the input of the colloquium and conference inputs. My commentary below explores how the relationships of divergent partners are being brought together in the post-apartheid educational research landscape, and how

voices are heard or read. Like my students who presented at the earlier Kenton conference in 2006 more than ten years ago, I began questioning whether the space for educational dialogue is indeed being opened up. How do participants experience the conference dialogical space? Are we resorting to new or old framings of angels and demons?

These reflections and the poetic device adopted aim to show that this contestation is not a simple matter of presentations of dichotomies. The positions adopted by the divergent participants infuse recurring images that colour the theoretical space. The poetic device shows that despite colouring from different paint boxes, new portraits of conferencing and research explorations are emerging. In reflecting on the potential of "poetic inquiry" as an arts-based methodology, Miller's (2018) work in the field of care for the aged published in the *Journal of Qualitative Research in Psychology* comments that poetic inquiry, "is an emotional engaging way to interpret, represent and communicate research data…The poems provide an engaging, evocative and almost visceral experience of life in an aged care". This arts-based approach thus challenges notions that research work should be confined to rationalistic, evidence-based empirical data. Indeed, the data drawn for this paper has been extracted from field engagement, but is filtered artistically through the visceral dimension as a worthy source to interpret, present and communicate research findings that are simultaneously emotional, relational and theoretical. Miller (ibid.) comments that the emotive dimension of research and psychological practice is not yet fully harnessed as tools for building alternative ways of reading and experiencing the world. Narrativising is not a narcissistic indulgence, but a means to explore how we live storied lives that are fraught with recurring patterns as well as contesting paradoxes (Samuel, 2015).

The SAERA 2017 experience

Today, I am again feeling a reckoning forum:
I am expected to give account of my reading
of others' reading
of what social justice means.
I know that I must embrace the opportunity

to share my worldview.
But I am afraid that this agenda is merely
to position me into a pigeon-hole.
I am feeling
(and yes, my feelings matter)
that I am being asked to make choices between two options:
a "social realist position" and a "social constructionist position".
The framing paper frames me to respond to make these choices.

Despite the invitation to "open up the space to find common ground",
I feel boxed in.
The very choices are interpretations of the field.
I noted the orienting paper and conveners commenting that
they themselves do not necessarily agree with any of these positions.
So whose reading of the debate are we dealing with in this panel?

I am not a sociologist.
Nor am I a member of the academic tribe of the discipline of the "Sociology of Education".
Does this mean that I am excluded from presenting
my view
about what is social justice
and whether education can achieve this?

*

The framing paper argued that the **social realists (SR)** believe
that providing access to those who have been excluded from "*powerful knowledge*"
constitutes what is "social justice".
But: whose "powerful knowledge" is being referred to?
Can this "powerful knowledge" be neutral?
Or universal?

The framing authors argue the social realist position
is not equivalent to "*knowledge of the powerful*".
Knowledge should be delinked from its producers.

So too, perhaps, it assumes that
Knowledge should be delinked from the targeted
consumers of that knowledge.

This is a cop-out:
This suggests that knowledge can exist independent of those who produce or consume it.

So does this mean that I adhere to the "other camp"?
The framing paper calls this a **"social constructivist"** position
which argues that one cannot separate the "knower" from the "known":
What knowledge is, is deeply entwined with whose knowledge it is,
and how it functions to regulate
ways of knowing, seeing and being in the world.
*
A more radical version of a social constructivist view would argue
that the knowledge cannot be separated from the organs of *power* within the society.
Powerful forces include religious, social, cultural or economic forces:
those who seek to regulate the kind of knowledge/ knowing that are deemed accepted
/acceptable.
Knowledge is deeply implicated in
matters of marginalisation
silencing
privileging
excluding.

The organs of hegemonic control
ensure that those who challenge the edifices of the "powerful knowledge"
are constructed as antagonistic to the harmonious world order.
Organs of power are about instituting the angels and demons.
Its regulative potency is co-optive.
And many remain silenced,
subjugated
or are ex-communicated, if not be-headed.

And the holy war between angels and demons unleashes itself.
Romanticisation, stereotyping and essentialisings of "the other" dominate.
Buildings of barricades become the daily pursuit.

While concerns to uphold, defend and guard the citadels of powerful knowledge are complicit with epistemological marginalisation, genocide, alienation: "epistemicide" (Mignolo, 2011), they nevertheless, parade their worldviews as neutral and in the best interests of the oppressed. They offer incentives to accept its worldviews because they are showcased as the benchmarks of quality. Those who contest hegemonic worldviews are left feeling unheard, not up to scratch or simply not sufficiently academically rigorous.

These hegemonic forces not only exist *transnationally* (often depicted as a global north and south contestation) (see Samuel and Mariaye, 2017; Bozaleck, Leibowitz, Carolissen and Boler, 2014), but are also orchestrated *internally* (within nation states, and/or within tribal academic communities) (Becher and Trowler, 2001) especially by those who seek access to the power of cultural definition in a social system.

This raises for me the following broader concerns
about the agenda of this session:
on whose behalf
are we having this debate about the way education
can or cannot achieve/contribute towards social justice?

Who sets the terms of reference of how this debate is to be held?
Who /which forces of power chose to define?
Who is likely to benefit from this exploration of these concerns?
What is the agenda?
It is not about "what is the question?"
but about "what lies behind the question?"

While the (dominant) hegemonic forces often declare that the terrain is open to diverse perspectives, the underlying agenda becomes a co-optive force. Individuals who differ from powerful worldviews are being asked to display their perspective, not necessarily to be listened to, but simply to be heard. Space is offered to the outsider to reveal their divergence from normative values. This serves to silence rather than celebrate counter hegemonic worldviews. It could be understood as a byproduct of the performativity and accountability regimes that are supported by the neoliberal agenda. Increasingly, education decision-makers look to acknowledge the voices of those who mimic globalised knowledge systems and discourses. Therefore, "quality assurance systems" become systems to perpetuate these declared hegemonic benchmarks (Berkhout, 2006). Localised knowledges recede into oblivion and the powerful retain their ascendancy. Knowledge exchanges are thus infused with an agenda of negotiating power. I too, saw myself as wielding my own powerful positioning to define and critique the academic arguments in the panel. Whose knowledge was I jettisoning?

The above representation might incorrectly suggest that the matter of negotiating knowledge systems is a confined agenda within disciplines in higher education conferences. However, the agenda of centralising and peripheralising knowledges is also at play in how professionals choose to interpret their roles in the practice of their work. For example, some teachers within oppressive regimes interpret their responsibilities as limited to being "technicians of the state". Onwu and Sehoole (2011) critique those who increasingly choose to be dictated to about the hallmarks of educational quality. This further contributes to capitulation to a performativity culture which celebrates superficial rather than in-depth engagement with the kinds of knowledges they mediate with their learners. Technicians become complicit in the de-professionalisation of the teaching profession by their choice to be concerned only with measurement and control of learners' performance (Jansen, 2004). Test scores and examination systems become driven by displays of performance rather than deep engagement with knowledge.

Education quality and action

New marginalisations emerge in dichotomous spaces:

Some believe

educational quality is about providing access

to knowledge currencies to assist one to succeed in the globalising hegemony.

Others believe

education quality is about contesting epistemological supremacy, imposition and control.

Some prefer

educational action which celebrates achievements of "**the self**".

Others prefer

educational action which mandates the "**self in service of the wider social system**".

The self in service of humanity.

Some believe "All of the above".

Who are the angels and who are the demons?

However, binary options of beliefs and preferences of education quality and action tend to create more "cocooned states" and the borders of their worldviews increasingly become policed (Hargreaves, 1994; Lather, 1997). This is a recipe for inclusion and exclusion that does not open up dialogical spaces for disrupting each other, but sows more hostility.

Disruptions ought to acknowledge the value of "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2011), which is a conscious attempt to recognise the puppet strings by which we are being manipulated. It is an opportunity to re-question in whose interests advocates propagate "chosen" worldviews about education quality (Hooks, 1994; Spivak, 2017). Who benefits from the worldviews that are professed (Samuel, Dhunpath &Amin, 2016)? What persons, paradigms, perspectives and privileges are we complicit in upholding or rejecting? And whom do we alienate in the process?

This opening-up is NOT a relativistic pluralism. It is a conscious effort to question the deeply embedded hegemonic agenda behind all forms of knowledge development. Pursuit of knowledge will always generate those who are included and those who are excluded.

Our responsibility in disrupting all forms of knowledge-making is to question whose agendas we are serving. This includes debates around caricaturing and stereotyping that accompany, for example, many agendas around the "decolonisation debate". Such agendas (given the consequences of the suppression and oppression of the past) often tend to polarise "us" against "them", or "us without them", which further undermines any future possibilities of collaborative solutions (Jansen, 2017). In these instances, the coloniser and the colonised are often inaccurately conceptualised as homogenous entities with definitive redemptive or demonising caricatures. Deeply pained by the histories of injustice, the oppressed understandably dream of a utopia where one can rid oneself of the oppressor. This could justify obliterating the oppressor if not through overt violence (and fire), but in more enduring symbolic patterns of exclusion, which exoticise or demonise "the other".

However, both the oppressed and the oppressor are already deeply intertwined in each other's existence. ***"Us is already embedded with them"*** and *"**them within us**" (ibid.)*. This suggests that the contestation between angels and demons is unlikely to yield a productive future. Elements of our personal identities already infuse elements of those whom we critique. We simultaneously bear characteristics of both angels and demons. We are both loving and demonising as both angels and demons; we are complex, intersected and unable to be untangled. Furthermore, it is recognised that as individual selves, we cannot be disconnected from a broader collective of other selves. Olivier (2017) suggests the need to transcend our selfish tendencies to privilege our personal, pleasure and profit agenda. He cautions that we have a constitutive responsibility to the next generation to guard the planet from our complicity in self-destruction.

Our research agendas can infuse social justice
when we abandon our need to canonise and demonise opposites.
We are loving demons and disobedient angels simultaneously.

Listen carefully to the wind.
It whispers loud noises which could implode our world.
Our agenda must save ourselves not for just ourselves

But to save the world.

Conference spaces must be for the demons and angels in us to flutter our wings.

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'Parental choice in the learning of Mauritian Kreol at school: the motivational factors'[1]

Pascal Sylvain Nadal

Diocesan Service of Catholic Education and Mauritius Institute of Education

Email: nadalmauritius@gmail.com/headtps@sedec.mu

Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen

Mauritius Institute of Education

Email: a.ankiah@mieonline.org

ABSTRACT

Against a backdrop of doubt, fear[2] and contestation regarding language dynamics, we studied the motivational forces underpinning the decision of about 20% of Mauritian parents to enrol their children for the study of Mauritian Kreol (KM) as an optional subject for six years. A narrative methodology was used. The deployment of narrative inquiry allowed us to obtain rich, textured data from 11 participants and afforded us deep insights into the factors underlying their decision-making process. Biographical interviews conducted over a period of three months brought to the fore a plethora of individual experiences that had influenced the parents' decisions. The findings revealed that, even though the collective factors pertaining to ancestry, ethnicity, identity, culture and religion could not be negated, the choice of KM as optional language subject was notably influenced by personal factors. The first of these wasthe degree of academic support or coaching parents felt they could provide to their children. Second,parents' own language experiences and notions of language learningplayed a role. Third,parents felt they could attempt to reverse adverse patterns and representations that they had internalised during adolescence.

Keywords: Mauritian Kreol; Creole; parent choice, narrative inquiry, motivational factors.

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[2]The fear pertained, for example, to the fact that the learning of Mauritian Kreol (a French-lexified Kreol) would affect the learning of French, a compulsory subject at school until Grade 11.

INTRODUCTION

In January 2012, the Mauritian educational landscape was marked by a revolutionary development: KM was introduced as an optional language subject with similar status as the heritage languages in Mauritian schools like Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, and Modern Chinese[3]. Through this decision, the then government was fulfilling one of its electoral promises made to Creole[4]speakers (Nadal & Anacoura, 2014). Presumably this was also a victory for all the individuals (writers, political activists, academics) and associations that had been agitating for decades for the recognition of the KM language in education and for its promotion in the cultural and political spheres of the Mauritian landscape.

Six years after the introduction of KM as an optional subject in the formal educational curriculum, and upon completion of the cycle of primary education[5] by the first batch of pupils who studied the subject, we sought to examine, retrospectively, the decision exercised by some parents. These pioneers in the area had an extremely influential role since they had chosen the subject on behalf of their children, and thereby set up the possibility for subsequent generations of learners to opt for KM. This article provides insights into the factors that motivated the parents' decision. As the import of such a decision is best understood against a complex local linguistic backdrop, we proceed to delineate this.

'KREOL' WITHIN A COMPLEX MAURITIAN LANGUAGE ECOLOGY

Notwithstanding that Mauritian literature in Kreol dates back to the early 19th century (with the publication of François Chrestien's 'Les Essais d'un Bobre Africain' in 1822), the use of the language in writing for the whole of the

[3]The 2010 electoral campaign in Mauritius witnessed an unprecedented political pressure by Afro-Mauritian lobbyists vis-à-vis the two major competing blocks in favour of the recognition of KM as the ancestral language of the local Creole (Afro-Mauritian) ethnic group. The lobbyists founded their claim on the fact that the Kreol language (a vernacular form that was developed during the colonisation period) had been bequeathed to the nation as a legacy of the days of slavery during the 17th& 18th centuries. KM was eventually inscribed as the heritage language of Afro-Mauritians in the addendum to the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for primary education, even though the NCF does acknowledge that the language holds relevance for the population at large as the mother tongue of an overwhelming portion of the Mauritian population (Mauritius Institute of Education, 2012). As such, it was a simultaneous recognition that the language transcends all ethnic considerations.

[4] Note 'Creole', denotes an ethnic group, while 'Kreol' refers to the most popular language spoken in Mauritius.

[5] The Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) examinations in Mauritius were organised for the first time in 2017 as replacement for the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examinations, which mark the end of the six years of primary schooling.

20th century was limited to individuals, for example, the linguist and writer Dev Virahsawmy, or to a few cultural, political and preschool organisations, for example, Ledikasyon Pu Travayer, Lalit and Playgroup. At the start of the 21st century, the local Catholic church also became a prominent advocate of the Creole cause, even though in this particular case, the focus was not only on the promotion of the language, but also on the upliftment of the Creole ethnic group. Nonetheless, a marked turn was effected in the celebration of the liturgy, for instance, with the translation of prayers in Kreol, the composition of religious hymns in Kreol, and the translation of the Bible, with the collaboration of the Bible Society of Mauritius.

Throughout the 20th century, the growth of Kreol as a language was not only curtailed by the absence of political will to promote the language on the part of successive governmental regimes, but also by the absence of concerted actions by those militating for the language. For example, different orthographies were used for the writing of the language, which added to the confusion and public perception that Kreol was a difficult language in which to read and write. In 2004, however, a great step was made for the harmonisation of existing writing systems, with the publication of the 'Grafi Larmoni' report (Hookoomsing, 2004). The long-awaited and much-needed harmonised writing system was instrumental in allowing a number of subsequent significant steps in the valorisation of the language. The first was the monolingual Kreol dictionary, produced in 2009, followed by the revised orthography of Mauritian Kreol, and its grammar codified by the *Akademi Kreol Morisien (AKM)* in 2011. All of these endeavours culminated in the writing of textbooks for the introduction of the language for education in 2012.

KREOL AND/IN LOCAL EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

Prior to the introduction of KM as school subject, some moves had already been initiated by the relevant authorities, for example, making explicit references to the multilingual profile of the Mauritian learner in policy documents, such as the Strategy Plan 2008-2020 (Ministry of Education & Human Resources, 2009). Indirectly, The Pre-Primary National Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2009) mentioned the importance of "home and environmental languages" (p. 42), without explicitly making a claim for mother-tongue-based instruction. There was also in 2014, the implementation of the Foundation Programme, a bilingual

(English & French) curriculum[6] for literacy and numeracy development aiming at creating a smooth transition from the pre-primary to the primary level (Nadal et al., 2017). At secondary level, a mother tongue-based curriculum was introduced for students facing learning difficulties and enrolled in the Pre-Vocational[7] sector. Still concerning this sector, a bilingual (Kreol and English) literacy and numeracy programme was offered in some Catholic colleges as from 2004. Known as the PrevokBEK, this programme featured among the finalists for the 2012 Commonwealth Education Good Practice Awards (Diocese of Port-Louis, 2012).

Even though the new policy offered as a non-compulsory subject, it was not yet a fully-fledged course of action towards the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction (MOI) as it was still considered a consequential move by even the most optimistic and fervent supporters of the language (Groëme-Harmon, 2018). As is the case in many postcolonial societies, the resistance to a mother tongue-based education in Mauritius had grown over the years, despite ample evidence from the literature about problems associated with learning in mediums of instruction other than the mother tongue (Bruthiaux, 2002; Chimbutane, 2011; Cummins, 2007; Kyeyune, 2003; Mashiya, 2011; Msila, 2011; Setati et al., 2002 & Smitherman, 2004).

Moreover, the idiosyncrasy of the Mauritian situation is that policy makers somehow managed to conveniently ignore the fact that spoken Kreol is largely used for academic pursuits in most schools of Mauritius, from the pre-primary to the secondary level. This situation was observed both in low-performing and in elite schools over a number of years (Bissoonauth & Offord, 2001; Foley, 1995; Rajah-Carrim, 2007), with Mauritian teachers copiously making use of French and/or Kreol in their classes as a strategy to render their instruction more inclusive. The dual language strategy was in a sense, in defiance of the archaic provision of the 1957 Education Act stipulating that all classroom instruction should be carried out in English only from the upper primary level onwards. Particularly witnessed during the explanation of complex and technical concepts and theories, this phenomenon occurred in various degrees, depending on the linguistic capacities of learners (Sonck,

[6] The programme also encouraged the recourse to the mother tongue as support language.

[7] The Pre-Vocational stream catered for secondary school students who face learning difficulties and who twice failed at the end of primary cycle exams. With the adoption of the Nine-Year Schooling programme as from 2018, the Pre-Vocational stream will gradually phase out and will progressively be replaced by another curriculum, known as the Extended Programme.

2005) and the profiles of teachers and schools.

REPRESENTATIONS OF KREOL LANGUAGES

A study carried out by Bavoux (2002), from the nearby island of Reunion, helps to better understand some of the representations and attitudes expressed vis-à-vis languages in Creole contexts. Bavoux effectively sums up some of the most frequent manifestations towards Kreol languages around the following six axes:

- Representations of Kreol languages will differ depending on whether their speakers are monolingual Kreol speakers or bilinguals.
- The discourse on social representation of Kreol languages is often articulated around three poles: the academic, the militant, and the popular.
- There is still an ongoing debate on the status of Kreol languages: are they (and should they be/become) fully-fledged languages?
- Representations vis-à-vis Kreol languages are strongly linked with ideologies.
- There is a thin margin between 'creolophilia' (sympathetic manifestations towards Kreol languages) and 'creolophobia' (fear of Kreol languages).
- Representations towards Kreol languages are related to people's perceptions about the languages' use and relevance to day-to-day situations.

Whilst all of the above observations are relevant to the Mauritian situation, two dimensions stand out. First, the ideological dimension is quite strong, given the language-ethnicity associations. Also, the last observation about representations of the language being linked to its perceived usefulness calls for attention. As long as there was no real and no formal engagement for the introduction of Kreol as an academic subject in Mauritian schools, the social representations with regard to the language were rather dispassionate. But the announced decision to give a different status to Kreol through its introduction in schools literally ignited a series of forceful and often unfavourable reactions vis-à-vis Kreol, for example, in the media (Nadal, 2014; Florigny, 2015).

It is therefore against such a background intermingling expectations, doubt and contestation that KM made its formal entry at school in 2012, with 3400 parents opting for their children to study the subject. This figure made of KM the

second most popular optional language (quantitatively speaking) after Hindi. Nonetheless, the decision to give the status of optional 'ancestral' language to the mother tongue of an overwhelming portion of the Mauritian population brought about a one-of-a kind situation that differs from the use of Kreol in other contexts (Mahadeo-Doorgakant, 2017). Citing Siegel's three-tier categorisation of Kreol languages (1999) used in education[8], Mahadeo-Doorgakant argues that offering a Kreol language as an optional language subject "at par with Asian languages/Arabic" (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 2014, p. 2)constituted an uncharacteristic case in point.

Language, heritage, and ethnicity

As evidenced above, it is virtually impossible to dissociate Kreol from any ethnic bearing in Mauritius, but this intricate link between culture and ethnicity is not limited to the local context. Despite being popularly used as and understood to be primarily a tool for communication, language is in fact a crucial determinant in the way we perceive ourselves in society. As Lee (2002, p. 119) opines,

Language has been noted as one of the most prominent factors in the competency of a culture since it is always used within a cultural environment, acts as a salient indicator of a group's identity that is transmitted from generation to generation, and serves as the main tool to internalise culture.

Several studies focus "on the important role that a separate language tied to ethnic identity can play in defining an ethnic group" (Fought, 2006, p. 21). For instance, studies dealing with immigrant people highlight the importance attributed to learning or preserving the heritage language. The latter is, amongst others, viewed as a unifying factor and a medium to transmit the values of the heritage culture in a foreign land (Kim& Chao, 2009; Blackledge & Creese, 2008; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Lee, 2002; Phinney et al., 2001). These studies reveal that, even though learning the lingua franca is necessary to integrate effectively into the country of adoption, being conversant in the heritage language allows, especially the younger generation, to feel closer to their community (Phinney et al., 2001). They are also better able to maintain links with their grandparents and cultural roots. Interestingly, Lee (2002, p. 132) even found that "…those who were more proficient in the heritage language tended to be more bicultural". This prompted him

[8]As i) initial mediums of instruction; ii) support languages, and iii) language subjects taught for comparative purposes.

to conclude that "in order to enable individuals to experience the benefits of their bicultural identities, it is imperative that we also make provisions to promote the teaching of heritage languages" (Lee, 2002, p. 132).

The significance of language in the construction of group identity is even more striking in multilingual and multicultural postcolonial contexts, where languages are inextricably linked with ethnicity and culture. Though the advent of colonisation propelled, in most cases, English to a privileged status, native or ancestral languages still serve to demonstrate affiliation to particular communities. They also indicate ethnic appurtenance, as can be seen in a number of African and Asian countries. While this is to an extent, also true in Mauritius, the island harbours a particularity that reflects how intricate language ecologies can be, with ethnic bound to demarcated areas and languages being highly 'ethnicised'. Though "the Creole language is an emblem of the Mauritian nation because nearly all Mauritians use it and because KM symbolises a mixing of peoples and traditions that one day might yield a unified Mauritian nation" (Eisenlohr, 2007, p. 983), it reflects a salient element for the awakening of a consciousness for the Afro-Mauritian/Creole community in particular (Harmon, 2017). In such a context where language is a key consideration in all attempts to define the individual and his or her place in society, examining the role of parents in gearing their children towards the study of KM was insightful, as revealed in the next few sections.

PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION/MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING

The nature of parental involvement in their children's education is quite varied, one of the most common forms being the parent-school partnership. This comprises "volunteering at school, communicating with teachers and other school personnel, assisting in academic activities at home, and attending school events, meetings of parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and parent-teacher conferences" (Hill & Taylor, 2004, p. 161). Studies have revealed that this type of collaboration allows both parents and schools to benefit. This is because parents become better empowered to support their children while schools can rely on the support of parents to promote appropriate behaviour and expectations. The social capital that this collaboration constitutes has led to an increasing number of schools upholding policies that encourage such partnerships. The phenomenon of parental involvement in their children's education has long been under the lens of researchers

(Tsurkan, 2016; Domina, 2005; Perna & Titus, 2005; Steinberg, 1992). According to research findings, parental involvement is not only a strong precursor to academic attainment (Wilder, 2014; Lee & Bowen, 2006) and educational aspirations (Pagliarulo McCarron & Kurotsuchi Inkelas, 2006), but also has wide-ranging positive effects that include the development of self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation (Fan & Williams, 2010). It even counters the impact of deficient schools and broken homes on children (Jeyne, 2003).

While the impact of parental involvement is well-documented in the literature, it can be noted that the role of parents in the subject choice of their children has not gained as much attention. It is also on this account that the present study investigates the motivational factors behind the choice of KM as an optional language subject by parents on behalf of their children studying at primary level. As discussed above, given the peculiar circumstances in which the most used language in Mauritius was introduced as a language of teaching and learning, it became important for us to find out whether the language, identified along socio-historical and ethnic lines, constituted a potent agent for parents who opted for their children to study KM.

Also, the literature about parental involvement in education does not shed much light on the process of subject choice. Instead, parental involvement in educational matters seems to have been researched mainly in relation to aspects like career guidance or the establishment of the school-home link for smoother and more concerted actions between these two spheres. Whenever it has been done, the discussion of the connection between parental influence and language choice has mostly related to the experience of migrant communities settling in new geographical and linguistic environments (for example, Chumak-Horbatsch, 2008; Kheirkhah, 2016 & Yu, 2014), but not to 'regular' situations involving parents and the school community.

Moreover, research carried out until now on the study of KM has not focused thoroughly on parents, but mostly on the use of the language in the school context (see Mahadeo-Doorgakant, 2017) or on heritage language and identity construction (see Harmon, 2017), even if in the latter case parents did feature among the respondents. We, therefore, believe that this research could contribute to better understanding some of the dynamics that come into play in the decision-making process of either opting – or not – for the study of the language.

Also, the debate surrounding MK is often marked by the discourse of dismissal, deficiency and repression (see Bartens, 2001; Bissoonauth & Offord, 2001; Florigny, 2015; Harmon, 2015; Mahadeo-Doorgakant, 2012; Rajah-Carrim, 2007; Sambajee, 2016; Sauzier-Uchida, 2009; Sonck, 2005; Tirvassen, 1999). Our survey of the literature revealed that research in this area tended to focus on the different ways in which the indigenous language is pitted against western languages such as English and French, which are viewed in the domestic context as being more prestigious and more useful for formal pursuits(Frank, 2007; Mühleisen, 2001).We, therefore, wanted to adopt a different stance, by focusing instead on people who had, through the act of opting for Kreol, expressed faith in the policy decision to introduce the dominant Mauritian vernacular[9], despite the atmosphere of doubt and fear prevailing at the outset. For the purposes of the research at hand, we selected parents who had taken the decision to enrol their children for KM in the very first batch of pupils who studied the subject when it was introduced in 2012 and who adhered to the decision until the end of the primary school cycle in 2017.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this study, undertaken in collaboration with the Service Diocésain de l'Education Catholique (SeDEC), we focused on five primary schools respectively located in the capital city Port-Louis, in three other major towns (Rose-Hill, Vacoas and Curepipe), and finally in a small coastal village in the South West region of Mauritius. These five research sites are indicated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Like the other 41 RCA[10] schools of Mauritius, the selected five are public, in the sense that they: i) align themselves to the national education programme; ii) are non-fee paying, as they are subsidised by the government; iii) are attended by

[9]Bhojpuri is the other vernacular language of Mauritius. Compared to Kreol (whose number of speakers has risen from 70% to 85% between the last two national population censuses), the number of Bhojpuri users is declining steadily: from 12% of the population according to the 2000 population census to 5% in 2011.

[10] The abbreviation for 'Roman Catholic Aided', referring to primary schools owned by the Catholic Church but subsidised by the government.

children of all religious and ethnic backgrounds; and iv) are served by a mixed staff that is representative of the Mauritian population at large. Whilst the Catholic primary schools welcome some 18,000 pupils (representing about 20% of the total primary school population of the island), the study of KM is notably popular in these schools. In 2012, for instance, 36% of the total number of pupils who opted to study KM came from Catholic schools. This is very probably due to the fact that these schools welcome in their midst a majority of children of Christian faith, and these children are mostly Creoles, the ethnic group that identifies itself the most with KM for socio-historical and politico-cultural reasons.

We would also like to point out here that, as heads of schools and teachers had been enlisted as research collaborators for this research[11], great care was taken in negotiating power relations between them and the parents they were researching. In the eyes of most parents, the Headmaster and/or the teacher conveys an image of authority, and in the qualitative research tradition, inconveniences inherent to these vertical power relations should be minimised (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009; Mitchell, 2010; Riley et al., 2010). Co-researchers from the school context, therefore, were trained to subtly negotiate their rapport with parents, for instance, by refraining from carrying out interviews in settings that connote too strongly the image of authority associated with school resource persons, such as the classroom or the Headmaster's office. Instead, they were encouraged to meet and talk with the parents in more 'neutral' spaces, such as the school yard, a public space, or – if the participants so agreed – at the parents' residence.

Prior to starting the research, the participants' informed consent was sought. The nature and implications of the research were explained in Kreol and/or French, and participants were requested to sign a consent letter written in one of the two above-mentioned languages, depending on their language proficiency and preference.

Twenty-three parents from the different research sites were initially selected for this narrative production exercise on circumstances that led to the choice of KM as optional language subject for their children. However, due to various reasons (ranging from the absence of sustained commitment on the part of certain respondents and research collaborators to the hollowness of certain insights shared), we ended up with a sample of eleven respondents. The latter were requested to share stories related to

[11] This was done with an objective of capacity building in mind, in accordance with the agreement worked out with the Diocesan Service of Catholic Education.

the decision-making process as well as anecdotes about their experience of and involvement in their children's learning of this new subject. These stories and anecdotes constituted the raw data that was eventually processed into individual narratives. Eventually, common themes were extracted for the organisation of the 'Findings and discussion' part. Table 1 provides some background information about six parents from whose narratives extracts have been drawn for this paper.

Table 1

Name	Age	Place of Residence	Family Situation	Profession
Patricia	45	Port-Louis (capital city)	Mother of two children; married to a ship captain of 49 years	Housewife
Chantal	51	Vacoas (normally referred-to as a town, but presents certain 'urban' features, mostly because of its green landscapes)	Mother of four children; divorced	Company Manager
Priscilla	39	Roche Bois (suburban region of the capital city)	Mother of two children; married to a welder of 41 years	Housewife
Hélène	41	Baie du Cap (coastal village)	Mother of three children; married to a mason of 47 years	Maid
Patrick	44	Vacoas	Father of four children; married to Arielle (see below)	Laboratory Attendant
Arielle	41	Vacoas	Mother of four children; married to Patrick (see above)	Typist

We would here like to point out that for the writing of this article, the narratives of participants (Fig 1) were selected, as they offered varied perspectives in terms of geographical location, gender, age and occupation.

To gain deeper insights about the parents' decisions and their involvement in their children's learning of KM, we chose to conduct life history research, as it allowed us to access the world of the participants as they perceived it. Guided by the fact that there is no single truth, it was important to allow for breadth of experiences and realities, as decision-making is often based on an individual's personal experiences. Life history research thus provided our participants with the scope to shape their stories to reflect the interpretation of their lived experiences.

As Sosulski, Butchanan and Donnell (2010, p.37) asserted, "(l)ife story techniques introduce the opportunity to collect rich data textured by respondents' own interpretations of their experiences and the social circumstances in which their story has unfolded, and the ways in which they continue to be active agents".

In addition, with subjectivity and positionality being privileged in life history research (Reissman, 2000), the focus was not merely on the events, but on the participants' understandings of these (Kouritzin, 2000). Following this choice of approach, we opted for narrative inquiry as the research methodology, since it provided our participants with the discursive space to interpret and explain their choice in the context of their lived experiences in a particular social, political and historical setting. Given the laden history behind the inclusion of KM in the school curriculum, the emotionally-charged nature of the experience could not be sanitised and a mere factual account would have been hollow. We deemed that the participants needed the liberty to tell their story from their vantage point. It was important for them to retain their individuality as "human actions are unique" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7) and experiences subjective.

Further, since human beings lead "storied lives" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 145), we were of the view that through narrative inquiry, biographical experiences that may have –consciously or unconsciously – motivated the parents' decision would be more easily evoked, and distant memories would resurface. The use of biographical interviews allowed us to foster parameters like interactivity, subjectivity and structure (Bornat, 2008). Respondents were invited to broadly 'tell us the story of how [they] came to opt for the study of KM on behalf of their ward', and every effort was made to preserve the natural flow of insights shared by them, in their own words, at their own pace, and according to the structure that seemed the most pertinent to them. However, in some few cases, such as when parents were invited to share perspectives about the nature of academic support provided to

their children in the learning of KM, artefacts like the KM textbooks were used as prompts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present and discuss findings by grouping under six different headings the common themes that emanated from the narratives of the six parents.

Language ideology and subject choice

One of the most prominent findings was that language ideology underpinned parental decision with respect to their choice. In the case of this study, since the 'subject' was a language that had an overt ethnic affiliation, it was not surprising to note that ancestry mattered in the choice of KM as optional language by parents of Afro-Mauritian origin. Whilst it cannot be averred that all parents interviewed showed a systematic ideological inclination towards ethnicity and ancestry, such an affinity did surface on a few occasions, as in the case of Hélène:

> I learned about KM as a school subject on TV, and I said to myself that our language is worth something [...] This language has been created and passed on to us by our slave ancestors […] It's my roots [...] The miseries endured by slaves are reflected in this language […] I am proud of it. It's a good thing that it's being valorised at school […] I try to convince others to opt for it, even if they sometimes laugh off the suggestion. (Extract from Hélène's narrative)

What is particularly striking in Hélène's words is the strong emotional undertone as she mentions the suffering of her slave ancestors. Hélène's thinking appears to be aligned with the cause of the lobbyists who fought for the official recognition and valorisation of Kreol, as she mentions that she even attempts to convince other parents to follow her example and opt for the language on behalf of their children.

On the other hand, ancestry and heritage did not constitute the initial drive for Patrick and Arielle's decision to choose KM. However, the realisation that the subject afforded the possibility of better discovering certain features of their ancestors' life in Mauritius provided an impetus to make the child stick to the study of KM till the end of their primary schooling.

For other parents, the link between KM, ethnicity and religion was unequivocal and justified the decision to opt for the language:

> We're Catholics, and at church we sing songs in Kreol. I don't think this is the case for other religions in Mauritius. So, it makes sense that my child learns this language, in the same way as children of other religious faiths learn the language in

which they pray. (Extract from Patricia's narrative).

The religious dimension was even more evident in Hélène's justification:

I've always felt that when I recite the psalms in Kreol, it's as if I'm talking directly to God, and now there's a book of psalms translated in Kreol, as well as the New Testament [...] I took all these things into consideration while making out whether my child should study KM or not [...] My daughter who's in Grade 6 can read the psalms in Kreol at the altar […] The priest encourages her a lot.

Her words reveal that Kreol is not merely a medium to transmit religious knowledge and values but rather, a means of experiencing these.

Language ideology concerning ancestry/heritage/ethnicity has emerged as a significant shaper of the parents' decision. This finding, which is in line with studies that bring out the strong connect between language, ancestry/heritage/ethnicity and identity (See Fought, 2006; & Harmon, 2017), gains an added dimension with the inclusion of the religious element that also served as a motivating factor. It draws our attention to the fact that in multicultural settings like Mauritius, religion cannot be dissociated from identity.

PARENTAL SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

While the literature survey had revealed that parental involvement in their children's education was mostly evidenced through the links they established with the school, this study brought out another level of parental commitment to their children's education, namely, the need to be able to support them in the learning process, for instance, by assisting with homework. Priscilla confided that:

I grew up in a rural area and picked a few words of Hindi, but these will hardly suffice for me to assist my daughter with her homework… I was encouraged in my decision upon learning that a dictionary of Mauritian Kreol exists. This meant that I would be able to help my daughter learn KM.

Some parents went to the extent of learning components of KM that they were not conversant with, such as the orthography, so that they could help their children. Two participants, namely Patrick and Arielle, revealed that they had initially found it difficult to help their child, as they themselves did not know the orthography of Mauritian Kreol. However, after having learnt it from their child's textbook, or from the child herself – as in the case of Hélène ("Mo tifi fer Miss ar mwa!") – they were better able to guide them. Interestingly, this led the parents to

develop their own proficiency in KM, so much so that Patrick and Arielle can now detect language mistakes on posters or official government notices written in Kreol!

Parental commitment to the education of their children is by no means a new finding, even less so in a context such as Mauritius, where a highly competitive spirit prevails in the educational sphere and where academic achievement is crucial for a successful career path. What is striking, however, is the fact that such commitment is noticeable with respect to Kreol, a language that is generally perceived as carrying little or no weight as far as career options are concerned. From this perspective, it became interesting to observe parents displaying the same fervour they would show for other subjects. In doing so, they revealed that they valued the subject KM no less.

ACADEMIC BENEFITS OF MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

Another key finding in this study, which is in line with the plethora of research on mother tongue education, is that "children taught in their mother tongue are likely to develop literacy more easily" (World Education Blog, 2018). Patrick and Arielle commented on how the ease and progress displayed by their child in the learning of KM was unparalleled in other subjects:

Our son struggles to reach 150 words for an English or French composition, but in Kreol, he goes up to 300 words […] We are proud of his achievements in KM; of the way in which he can read texts fluently [...] He scored A+ for the second term internal exams! We hope that one day he can write a book in Kreol or that he even becomes a KM teacher…

The pride in Patrick and Arielle's voices could also be detected in that of Priscilla who, talking about her daughter, revealed that:

With her teacher's help, she did something I would have never thought or dreamt of: she wrote a small book in KM as a birthday gift for her brother. I feel proud to hear my 9-year old child read fluently in a language that even highly educated adults sometimes struggle to read!

The sense of achievement that these parents experienced at the taste of success undoubtedly acted as an impetus for their child to pursue learning KM. The advantage of mother tongue education, however, was not restricted to literacy development, but spanned across the curriculum, as brought out by Priscilla: "The KM book contains reading texts about how life was in the past; and so, this

helps my daughter better understand topics that she comes across in her History & Geography class."

This observation – reiterated by Hélène, Patrick and Arielle – becomes especially significant in the light of CPE examinations'[12] reports, which, more often than not, attribute poor performance in subjects like Maths, History, Geography and Science at primary level to the fact that they are taught in English. Here, it can be noted that the cross curricular approach adopted by KM curriculum developers was considered to have provided the children with some grounding in History and Geography before they were taught the concepts in English.

Notions of language learning

It was interesting to note that the participants, who came from diverse walks of life, demonstrated a sound understanding of factors that support language learning. Indeed, a salient finding that emanated from the study was that the parents' decision was driven by the understanding that the language had to be meaningful for their children. Before the introduction of KM in the school curriculum, parents sometimes chose one of the other languages being offered, even though it was not their ancestral language. Also, the fact that their children hardly encountered or used that language in their daily life impacted negatively on the learning process. As Patricia revealed, having witnessed the struggle of her two older children, she was not willing to make her third child undergo the same experience:

My eldest daughter had chosen Urdu and was able to write a few sentences after a few years, but the language is not present at all around us, and when she left school she forgot everything she had learnt in Urdu [...] I saw the same pattern with my second daughter, who had studied Tamil [...] So, when the class teacher advised me to opt for the new subject KM for my third child, as this would help him, I said 'Why not'?

The fact that KM is commonly used on an everyday basis not only makes learning purposeful, but also facilitates the process. Unknowingly, Patricia echoes Vygotsky's constructivist theory of learning which highlights the role of social interaction.

Chantal was another parent whose choice was driven by pragmatism. The fact that other languages being offered were

[12]CPE examinations: Until 2016, the Certificate of Primary Education examinations assessed pupils at the end of primary schooling. A secondary school was then allocated to them on the basis of grades obtained at the CPE exams. In 2017, the CPE was replaced by the PSAC (Primary Schooling Achievement Certificate), but the modus operandi regarding secondary school allocation remained more or less the same.

unknown to her prompted her to move off the beaten track and opt for KM:

At the RCA school where my child was enrolled, I had the choice between the study of KM and Modern Chinese, but as I don't know anything about Modern Chinese, I didn't opt for it. So, on admission day, when we had to communicate our choice to the office, it was a straightforward and instantaneous decision for me. *Pa ti ena nanye pou reflesi*[13] *[...]* As often in the Creole community, a cousin of mine had chosen Modern Chinese for his son, but this did not influence my decision.

Both Patricia and Chantal show us that functional considerations regarding language learning and language use are key in decision-making. It must be pointed out that their practical approach offsets the more affective motives underlying choices related to ancestry/heritage.

Language interference was another feature that came under the spotlight. Due to the obvious level of lexical similarity between KM and French, the possibility of KM impacting negatively (Migge et al., 2010) on the learning of French, a language that connotes prestige in Mauritius, did feature in various narratives. Some parents admitted that this fear had occurred to them while deciding whether they should enrol their children for the study of KM or not. Others pointed out that when they observed instances of confusion or negative transfer from KM to French[14], they wondered whether they should deregister their children from the KM class. However, these behaviourist notions did not hold the parents back as opinions concurred about the fact that confusion and negative transfers are short-lived, especially if they are systematically corrected. It may be said that the parents' experiences of language learning as bilinguals have led them to develop constructivist understandings of the process.

On the other hand, Patrick's comment concerning the issue of confusion and negative transfer was rather interesting. According to him, though confusion between Kreol and French does occur, its impact remains minimal in the local context given the dearth of print in Kreol. The textbook is one of the rare books in KM that children come across in their study of the language. It is noteworthy that Patrick views an adverse feature of language learning, namely the absence of corpus, as an asset! At one

[13] "There was nothing to reflect about."

[14] Even though the two languages 'sound' rather similar, there are some marked differences in the writing. For instance, French makes use of accented characters, while Mauritian Kreol doesn't. Moreover, all letters are pronounced in Mauritian Kreol, which is not the case in French.

level, this could be construed as evidence of parental decision being based on misconceptions regarding language learning since exposure to print is but one of several factors that lead to language interference (Lekova, 2010). At another level, however, Patrick's words may be indicative of the fact that when parents are convinced of the benefits of the language for their children, obstacles are overlooked and hurdles minimised.

FIGHTING INNER DEMONS…

As the parents dwelt upon reasons that prompted them to choose KM for their ward, it emerged that, at times, they could be combatting their own demons or the prospective demons their children may have to face. Arielle explained how a necessity she felt for herself drove the choice that she made for her son:

I work in the typing pool of a secondary school, and once I had to type a questionnaire in KM… Since there is no spellchecker for this language, I found it really hard to type the texts. The fact that I struggled a lot somehow reinforced my conviction that knowing a language – whether local or international and whether prestigious or not – is always a good thing. I can say that this incident has partly prompted me in encouraging my son to study KM.

As yet another illustration that opting for KM on behalf of one's child may be motivated by very personal factors, Hélène explains how the process of enrolling her daughter for the KM class was a means for her to reverse language patterns and representations that she had internalised as a result of what she had seen and heard her own mother do and say about the relative worthlessness of the mother tongue:

I remember that my mother didn't like it when we used certain words, like 'dilo' or 'douri'[15]. She used to scold us and said it's an unrefined language [...] But now she sees that I behave differently with my children and she's starting to understand my point […]

By assertively exercising this choice vis-à-vis herself, her children and her relatives, Hélène is indirectly combating the creolophobia (Bavoux, 2002) that she had witnessed and had, to a certain extent, imbibed.

Through Arielle and Hélène, we realise that personal motivations emanating from biographic experiences of a language exert substantial force on current day decisions. The parents, through the decision taken, wish to protect their children from similar experiences and hence, learning Kreol is viewed as a means of empowering their offspring.

[15] In Mauritian Kreol, these words are considered as being rather unrefined versions of 'delo' (water) and 'diri' (rice).

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we set out to investigate the motivational forces behind the choice of Mauritian Kreol as an optional school subject at primary level. To that end, we focused on parents, as they are the ones who effect this decision on behalf of their children. Whilst we did not proceed from any assumption or hypothesis, we were conscious that such an endeavour would necessarily bring us in contact with a discourse that is heavily marked by the ethnic rhetoric, given the peculiar socio-political circumstances surrounding the introduction of the subject in the official school curriculum. Indeed, to an extent, the findings echoed the discourse prevalent in the literature, namely, concerning language ideologies and their link with ancestry, ethnicity and heritage. It therefore was not surprising to hear the participants speak of the need to recognise, valorise and promote Kreol. By choosing to make their children study this language, they contributed to a cause they espoused. Similarly, parental commitment was another finding that resonated with studies in the area of parental involvement in the education of their children. Further, the study also reaffirmed the benefits of Mother Tongue education.

However, a plethora of findings allowed us to go beyond what the extant literature has brought out concerning parental involvement in education and educational choices made by parents on behalf of their children. When it comes to language study, this literature tends to relate mostly to choices and decisions made by parents who have migrated to other countries and who therefore are concerned by issues of acculturation and heritage preservation. This study helped to widen the debate by considering the case of a majority language enjoying relatively low prestige in a small island context. If on the one end, we saw the 'discourse of ethnic appurtenance' as a motivating factor, it was interesting to observe that some parents broke away from emotional reasoning and adopted a more practical stance, considering instead the benefits of learning Kreol in the present (as opposed to reasons related to the past).

At another level, we noticed how the past of the parents and the present of their children became enmeshed, with parents taking steps to remedy what they had lived through earlier. As such, we learnt how, in a context where the use of KM is often regulated, forbidden or looked down upon, signing up for the study of Kreol became both an affirming and a liberating act from painful linguistic experiences from the past. This cathartic element brings out how deeply language experiences are embedded within the self. Along the same line of thought, the

connection made between language and religion in a context of parental decision for subject choices is a powerful commentary on how language permeates different dimensions of our lives.

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Shifting the Language Policy Gaze: from Debates on Policy to a Dialogue on Practices

Rubby Dhunpath
University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), RSA

ABSTRACT
There appears to be growing consensus among policy analysts and language practitioners that there is little, if any, substantive attempt at institutionalising the conditions necessary to promote and sustain multilingualism in South African schools. In shifting the gaze from debates on policy, to a dialogue on practices, the research informing this article focussed on schools that had, or were receiving support from NGOs for language policy development and language curriculum innovation. The article explores schooling sites that demonstrate attempts to move their language practices closer to official policy and may, therefore, be regarded as exemplary. An analysis of practices shows that the majority of schools in this study were left largely to their own devices. However, schools supported by the Home Language Project (HLP) exemplify the benefits to be derived from a community-initiated impetus for multilingual teaching and learning. In evincing a move towards additive multilingualism as a resource, this NGO intervention underscores the reality that the imperative for multilingual implementation can no longer be left solely to the discretion of government. Instead, the hope for a multilingual future lies in individual schooling communities assuming leadership, using beacons such as those explored in this article.

Key words: Multilingualism, policy intervention, policy advocacy, exemplary multilingual practices, NGOs

INTRODUCTION

Conceived within a pedagogy of hope and possibility rather than a pedagogy of deficit and despair, this article is the second in a series that focuses on language policy and practice in South African schools. In the first article, (Dhunpath & Joseph, 2014) we explored the perceived phenomenon of policy failure and argued that a more productive approach to policy analysis was to ask whether policy can learn from practice. We argued that if government policy recognised and rewarded schools with exemplary practices, "policy from below could contribute to an evolving multilingualism to complement multilingual policies from above" (ibid, p. 14).

In this article, I probe the policy phenomenon further, focusing on 'exemplary' sites of multilingual[1] activity. The schooling sites selected for this study were purposively sampled and confined to those serviced by three providers[2] that provided language policy intervention and support in South Africa, namely, the English Language Teaching Centre, (ELTIC) a well-known language development NGO which ceased operations on account of curtailed funding; the Home Language Project (HLP), a relatively unknown service provider in Johannesburg, which was active at the time of data collection; and the English Language Education Trust (ELET), a reputed NGO that has been involved in language teacher development for more than 35 years.

The research cited in this article was conducted in 2004 while I was a Senior Research Specialist at the Human Sciences Research Council, to investigate at the time, what progress South Africa was making in implementing its ambitious multilingual Language in Education Policy (LiEP, 1997). We contended then that "South African schools continue to face challenges in implementing the official bilingual policy at the level of policy development, teacher training, materials development, language pedagogy and assessment" (Dhunpath & Joseph, 2014, p. 1). We noted further that in general, "there is a growing sense of policy failure and a resignation that English will inevitably maintain its hegemony over African languages" (ibid, 2014, p. 1). However, in an attempt to resist submitting to the deficit discourse, we deliberately sampled

[1] A multilingual speaker is one who can communicate in more than one language, either actively (through speaking, writing, or signing) or passively (through listening, reading, or perceiving). These speakers will typically have acquired and maintained at least one language during childhood, without formal education called the so-called first language or mother tongue.

[2] These sites were chosen for cost and pragmatic reasons based on their accessibility to the research team. The research team acknowledges that there are other intervention programmes in the country which might provide richer insights into alternative practices.

schooling sites that were likely to challenge the dominant narrative of policy failure. The data was produced through document analysis, school visits and interviews with project leaders.

Many of the concerns and challenges emanating from that study continue to pervade the language policy landscape. Such debates also continue to occupy the global consciousness, (Alexander & Bloch, 2003; Granville et al., 1998; Heugh, 2003; Hornberger, 2010; Kamwangamalu, 2010; McGroarty, 2010; Phillipson, & Skuttnab-Kangas, 2012; Taylor, & Coetzee, 2013; van der Worp, Cenoz, & Gorter, 2016; Forman, 2016). It is therefore prudent at this time, to revisit the earlier study to establish what lessons might be learnt in re-envisioning a policy approach that draws on school practices that have made attempts to move their practices closer to official policy and may therefore be regarded as exemplary.

In this article, a discussion of NGO interventions in school policy implementation begins with an explication of each programme model, followed by an analysis of how these programmes have been received, and their influence on policy development and practice. A total of 19 schools were selected from three service providers. The researched schools ranged from urban to rural and farm schools, from primary to secondary schools, and from all-male to mixed-gender schools. While the data and analysis in this article are generalised from all three projects, for the purpose of this article, the Home Language Project (HLP) will be the focus of attention because it exemplifies the benefits to be derived from a community-initiated impetus for multilingual teaching and learning.

THEORETICAL LENSES

A heuristic framework based on four quadrants was used to understand schools' language practices in terms of typologies of multilingualism ranging from weak to strong practices (Figure 1). The yardstick used was based on how closely they approximate an additive bilingual[3] approach of multilingual learning of African languages as required by official policy. The heuristic model was progressively refined to reflect multilingualism *as practiced in schools*, with a special focus on exemplary practices. Exemplary practices were identified under selected categories: exemplary management of multilingual resources; exemplary school Language in Education texts; exemplary curricular design, exemplary classroom pedagogies, exemplary co-curricular activities, and exemplary school environments.

[3] Additive Bilingualism refers to the learning of a second language by individuals or groups without compromising the development of the first language, which results in the acquisition of a second language without replacing the first language.

Schools were classified into four major typologies ranging from the weaker "Assimilationist" quadrant; the dominant "Transitional" Quadrant; the "Towards Multilingualism" quadrant and finally the utopian "Strongly Additive Multilingualism" quadrant.

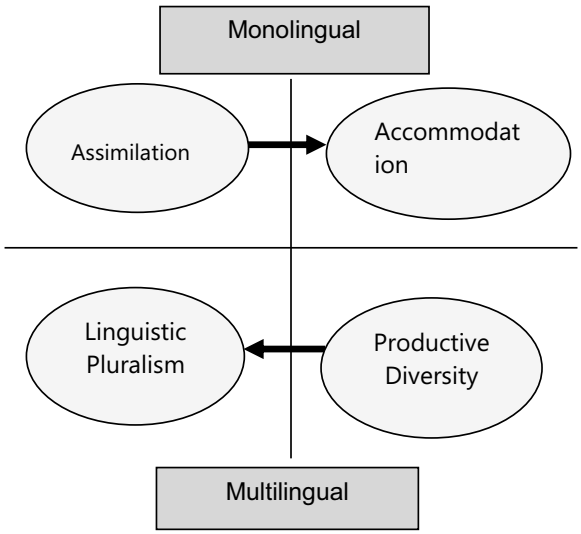

Figure 1. Typology of multilingual practices

The theoretical lenses are borrowed from Jim Cummins's Interdependence Hypothesis (1992) and his 4 quadrant clines of linguistic and cognitive complexity, to examine the levels of proficiency in African languages and English - actually used as resources for learning content subjects. Cummins's 4 quadrants, I believe, represent an advance over his earlier BICS (Basic Interpersonal Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) theory[4]. The Cummins model was a valuable tool in mapping schools onto our own heuristic Typologies of Multilingualism quadrants. The Typologies quadrant thus constructed on the basis of 19 schools, provides a referent to enable other schools to locate their current practices. It also provides a vision for the direction schools could be taking in their multilingual trajectories, based on alternative exemplars.

It must be emphasised here that my conception of 'exemplary practices' is not one that is utopian and idealised, but is understood to be vivid descriptions of noteworthy episodes of teaching, learning, curricular design, or strategies for managing multilingual resources (see Dhunpath & Joseph, 2014). Exemplars, I believe, have the capacity to provoke practitioners to question their practices, or affirm them. Exemplars also help to reconceptualise or illustrate abstract policy formulations in context. In pursuit of this outcome, the research sought to arrive at an exemplar-driven approach to policy reconstruction rather than a policy-driven approach to practices. Such an approach

[4] Jim Cummins clarifies the distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in order to introduce practitioners' attention to second language learners' experiences as they engage in academic aspects of the school language. BICS refers to conversational fluency in a language while CALP refers to students' ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school (see Cummins, 2008).

was open from the start to the possibility that some school practices might not just conform to, but possibly be richer than official policy.

EXEMPLAR 1: THE HOME LANGUAGE PROJECT (HLP)

Conceived in 2001, the Home Language Project (HLP- was introduced to selected schools in Gauteng to provide home-language support in a group of schools that use English as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). The project targets seven languages at a first-language level (HL) – the Nguni group (isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele) and the Sotho group (Sesotho, Sepedi, Setswana). It also offers a library service in all nine official African languages as well as a base for 'in-service educator training' (INSET).

The HLP project acknowledges, as a foundational principle, that the marginalisation of home languages results in significant cognitive and cultural deficits for learners and their families. Additive multilingualism, on the other hand, has significant cognitive, psychological, social and cultural advantages, but this implies ongoing maintenance and development of the home-language foundation. The project initiators argued that the practice in Gauteng of encouraging the selection of one African language to be added to the curriculum as an 'additional language' (AL) subject, but doing nothing about the other eight official African languages, will not achieve the goals of additive multilingualism in schools wherein learners have a wide range of primary languages.

The HLP also acknowledges that teaching all nine languages as first-language subjects in these schools is simply not feasible, given the present deployment of limited human and physical resources. The programme aims instead, at providing sufficient support, through a minimal intervention strategy, to achieve a sound base for multilingualism. It seeks to do this in a cost-effective and practical way, by sharing itinerant language teachers among clusters of schools and grouping languages into language families.

As its Operating Strategy the HLP supports home languages in five ways:

- Providing one special, intra-mural, home-language period per week to learners in Grades 1 to 9, teaching the home language as a subject;
- Setting up a library of African-language books, magazines and newspapers and encouraging reading for pleasure in the home language;
- Assisting the in-house teachers of an African language as an AL

subject to maximise the value of their classes for HL learners (via multi-level teaching and using peer-group 'helpers');

- Encouraging parents to support the home language at home;
- Influencing the whole-school language philosophy, particularly by encouraging teachers of other subjects, who use English as the LOLT, to support the home language in their classes.

THE SOCIAL MILIEU IN WHICH THE PROJECT OPERATES

The six Johannesburg schools, which initiated the project, are all historically advantaged former 'white' schools. The project is managed by a coalition of governing bodies (SGBs) of the participating schools, through their representatives on the HLP management committee. Most of the learners in these schools, however, are from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. Most do not reside in the vicinity of the schools, commuting to school by taxi or bus, while the majority of those living in the area are children of domestic employees. A significant proportion of the learners concerned have been granted either a full or partial remission of fees in terms of state legislation.

Another school, which has been added to the original six for research purposes, is a poorly resourced school in a high-density inner-city area notorious for its social problems and its high immigrant population (particularly from other parts of Africa). This school presented the project with an opportunity to test the effectiveness of the HLP model in a less-resourced, historically disadvantaged school facing an especially complex language situation.

The HLP was initiated by the parents and governing bodies of the original six Johannesburg schools with the primary aim of assisting their own pupils to enjoy all the advantages of additive bilingualism and, in particular, with the explicit aim of avoiding the educational disadvantages of home-language loss. However, the HLP also envisaged that all role players in the sector should be able to learn from the development and testing of an innovative model designed to achieve what they consider an important element of National Language and Cultural Policy. The intervention responds to the Department of Education's (2001) preamble to the National Language in Education Policy 14 July 1997 (4.1.5), which states that "an underlying principle is to maintain home languages while providing access to and the acquisition of

additional languages". The main aims of this policy are, amongst others, "to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to education" (4.3.2) and "to counter disadvantages resulting from…mismatches between home languages and LOLTs" (languages of learning and teaching) (4.3.5).

In addition to its 'leadership in innovation' role to assist the development and implementation of representative Language in Education Policy (LiEP), the HLP also seeks to develop institutional capacity by offering an ongoing support role via the provision of in-service teaching support (INSET), as well as guidance to administrators and schools to promote the maintenance and development of African home languages. This is grounded in the principle that an intervention in the status quo should be constitutionally defensible, promote social justice, and be practical and cost-effective.

THE BROADER AIMS OF THE HOME LANGUAGE PROJECT

The aims are articulated as:

- To develop a sustainable model which is replicable in other schools with multilingual learners;
- To develop a sound methodology for African home-language instruction at a first-language level;
- To convince teachers and parents that the neglect of the home language has serious drawbacks and that its promotion will advance, not retard the development of competence in English;
- To set up a base to provide in-service teacher training (INSET) to African-language teachers dealing with multi-lingual situations in historically disadvantaged schools;
- To create opportunities for research around the controversial issue of choice of 'language of instruction'.

MAIN ACTIVITIES AND INPUTS

Apart from the (irregular) payment of the teachers' salaries by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), the project depends on donor funding and will continue to do so until the GDE takes on the responsibility for implementing national policy. The HLP teachers, who rotate between the schools, providing one special HL lesson per week (intra-mural) to Grades 1 to 9 in each school, are employed by the GDE on temporary contracts. A project coordinator handles ongoing liaison with the schools, in the design and day-to-day management of each school's programme and the supervision of the teachers. Their original training in the HLP methodology was

provided by an education consultant with many years of experience in teacher training. He contributes to the continuous development of the model and gives ongoing feedback to the teachers.

The HLP project coordinator emphasises the need for high quality learning materials in all the languages being taught. Hence, preparing and organising seven sets of materials makes the assistance of a materials-developer necessary. Smith, the project initiator and leader, comments on the challenges faced by both learners and teachers:

> The task is made more difficult by the scarcity of good up-to-date dictionaries and the fluid state of languages which are experiencing major socio-cultural shifts. The lack of complete sets of classroom readers for all the languages at all levels – either because they have not yet been published or because they are out of print – is another problem. With cost-effectiveness in mind, the readers (textbooks) we have shared between learners and carried by the teachers between the schools. (Personal Communication, October 2003)

The HLP has been instrumental in developing a library of African-language books. These libraries are controlled in conjunction with the media centre supervisors in each school and are rotated between the schools every six months, to maximise usage of the limited resource. Each school currently has about 100 books in nine languages including Xitsonga and Tshivenda – the two official African languages that are not taught directly by the project. The ultimate aim of the project is to have 50 library books in each language in each school (that is, 450 per school), as well as every school carrying the cost of African-language newspapers and magazines (where they exist) and being motivated to develop their own supplementary set of African-language books. Smith (2003) explains further: To get the TV-generation learners to read is problematic, whatever the language, particularly where there is not a strong culture of reading in the home. But, we believe that for African languages to hold their own in the modern world, it is vital for them to become reading as well as spoken languages. The dearth of published books reflects a broader educational/cultural problem facing our African-language heritage; pressure from readers themselves, together with pressure from institutions requiring people to read, is needed before publishers will produce the books to underpin language heritage (Personal Communication, October, 2003)

An additional challenge impeding multilingualism is that many parents,

convinced that learning English is a priority for their children, deliberately suppress the use of African languages in the home. To counter this tendency, the HLP uses letters to parents and face-to-face meetings to inform parents and guardians of research which demonstrates that a strong home-language base assists the acquisition of English; and to discuss ways to support the home language at home. The HLP strategy involves not just the provision of books, but also a voluntary extra-mural African-language reading period in the afternoons; cajoling parents into encouraging their children to read in the home language in addition to English and to use their language in reading and telling stories to their children; and inter-school reading competitions between children of the same language group. The HLP has found that this low-level advocacy campaign has been pivotal in changing attitudes to African languages. Parents from these communities are now strongly in favour of home-language support and, in fact, regard it as a constitutional right.

Building a whole-school supportive environment is crucial in promoting multilingualism. This involves influencing the development of the school's language policy (based on the Gauteng Language Bill 1998) including, for example, the selection of languages for additional-language teaching, the provision of books in media centres and the approach to home languages. The existence of such a policy and the operation of the HLP in the school are intended to influence the attitude of the staff towards home languages, as Smith, (2003) points out: We encourage teachers of all subjects to consider other-language pupils as having an extra tool for thinking which can be used in a number of ways to handle difficult new concepts. We also encourage the use of posters in classrooms displaying vocabulary in all the African languages. And as with the provision of library books in their languages, the two which are not taught (Xitsonga and Tshivenda), also benefit from the development of a genuinely supportive environment for all languages. This is a further example of the project assisting in the implementation of what is, in fact, GDE policy (Personal Communication, October, 2003)

EFFICACY OF THE HOME LANGUAGE PROJECT

The HLP model is cost-effective and, where the school has been an enthusiastic partner in the process, it has also proved to be practical. It has demonstrated that providing home-language support as a base for additive multilingualism, in the face of nine official African languages, is not insurmountable.

The project has provided such support to approximately 650 learners each year for the preceding three years and, in the process, has focused the attention of the staff at these schools on the meaning and significance of the concept of additive multilingualism.

Its effect on the self-image of the learners and their attitude to their language has been significant. According to Smith, (2003), external evaluator Herman Kotze had this to say after an intensive evaluation of the Project in 2002: It was clear that the learners enjoy the lessons and they patently demonstrate high levels of performance in all aspects of language learning. Most notably, the high levels of productive skills in the home language attest to the learners' pride and joy in being able to express themselves with confidence in their home language. A common refrain from the learners' interviews was that they now feel personally empowered … have developed a pride and a passion for their home language and … see it as their right and responsibility to speak and write (it) with excellence … The overwhelming desire from the learners is to be granted the continuing opportunity to grow in competence and performance in their home language. They also expressed a desire to see this opportunity extended to many other learners. They also feel it is through their home language that their associated culture will be preserved and said that this is essential for their own identity and development, (Personal Communication, October, 2003).

The project has a mandatory evaluation component as well as a strategy to provide an ongoing theoretical basis for the intervention. In general, the HLP arguably represents one of the more sophisticated models of language intervention in the country in that it targets not just the language learners, but schooling communities more broadly. It is not clear why the Department of Education has not paid adequate attention to the possibility of replicating and up-scaling this model in other contexts.

The next section focuses on a retrospective analysis of the residual effects of the intervention programmes of the English Language Teaching Information Centre (ELTIC) which ceased to exist in 1990.

EXEMPLAR 2: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING INFORMATION CENTRE (ELTIC)

The founding director of the project, Dr Paul Musker, reflected on the purpose of ELTIC, which was primarily to support teachers during the era of Bantu Education when African languages were relegated to

the level of 'vernaculars'. The programme comprised three broad areas:

- The first as the information phase aimed at conscientisation of school governing bodies. This involved information dissemination and advocacy around issues of bilingual and multilingual education.
- The second phase involved research skills development among teachers. The programme focused on how to analyse and interpret data, and how to use the data to draft a language policy.
- The third phase involved the drafting and redrafting of a language policy. This phase also considered curriculum, governance and deployment of teachers and resources.

The ELTIC's programme was essentially in-service distance education with an emphasis on open learning with a significant allocation of contact hours. The teacher trainees had to produce assignments based on observations and methodological changes to their teaching. ELTIC staff would occasionally visit their classrooms to observe lessons. Teachers offering the diploma were not only 'language' teachers but also 'content' teachers. They were drawn from primary and high schools drawn from all parts of South Africa. Musker (2004) explains: That was the big shift – not just the teaching of languages but the teaching of content subjects – a language across the curriculum approach … Distance education couldn't be done as distance education in the old sense… ELTIC was a pilot – with the idea of offering this programme in other parts of the country once it was stabilized. (Personal Communication, January, 2004)

The ELTIC did not try to advocate particular methods of multilingualism, but rather tried to make teachers aware of the multilingual practices already in practice. Attention was paid to code-switching[5], as indicated by Musker (2004): "As code-switching was the most common practice, we did not prescribe any approach." At the time, two attitudes to code-switching prevailed. The first – by African teachers (who used it anyway), the second by white, Indian or coloured teachers "who were afraid of code-switching because they couldn't understand the language" (Personal Communication: Musker, 2004).

The ELTIC believed it succeeded in changing these teachers' attitudes to code-switching from rejecting it to respecting and allowing it. In this sense,

[5] Code-switching is the practice of moving back and forth between two languages or between two dialects or registers of the same language in the same conversation.

ELTIC was promoting greater awareness of existing multilingual practices (code-switching) and deliberate 'pedagogical engineering' of code-switching for learning purposes through the Action Research model that teachers would implement. Musker (2004) contends that:

> ELTIC represented a strong form of intervention compared to conventional distance education models, though not as strongly interventionist as the Home Language Project. In this matter the HLP – ELTIC differences are interesting and a new model of intervention can be constructed by taking the differing strengths of both yet avoiding their weaknesses. (Personal Communication, January, 2004)

Musker (2004) also explains the value of ELTIC staff engaging in classroom observation: The observations were not only to support them, but also for triangulation. We had to see if their assignments matched what was happening (in their classrooms). Teachers were encouraged to 'change' their practices and write about them. ELTIC deliberately promoted action research and actively taught this concept to the teachers, encouraging them to find methods appropriate to their classroom contexts. (Personal Communication, January, 2004)

Although the project ceased to exist as a consequence of curtailed funding, it was interesting to learn that teachers from schools that participated in the project still had vivid memories of the programme. Teachers in the ELTIC schools recall the support to schools in the form of workshops that promoted code-switching as a teaching strategy used by teachers who used English as the medium of instruction. Teachers emphasised that their schools LiEP policies can be attributed to the work of the ELTIC programme: … as with the language policy the people who gave us real background were the ELTIC people … I think they gave us a little background because guideline alone cannot really make you to maintain what is expected of you. So I think they laid a foundation. Because with them I still remember something that we could see that it was really important … that the child must learn his mother tongue, must read books in his mother tongue because before he can master another language and as we did that I could see that it was really true. (Teacher interview 2004).

While the presence of ELTIC made a difference to this teacher and many others who endorsed its positive influence, this data cannot be generalised due to the time lapse in the history of participating schools. What is apparent from those who

did remember ELTIC, is that the project did not only help them with language policy interpretation, but also helped to raise awareness of the importance of the mother tongue in cognitive development.

The third service provider surveyed in this study is the English Language Education Trust (ELET), an NGO which has been involved in language development for more than 35 years.

EXEMPLAR 3: ENVIRONMENT AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION TRUST (ELET)

The ELET Language for Learning Project arose out of a concern around under-achievement in many Kwa-Zulu Natal schools, the key factor in this under-achievement being the language of learning and teaching (LOLT). Various reasons such as parental illiteracy, poor resourcing of schools, high learner-teacher ratios and poor school management have been cited for the low achievement. Increasingly educational disadvantage, as a consequence of language ability, is being acknowledged as a key contributor (Dominey, 2013; Perlovsky, 2009). This factor has become especially significant in schools comprising a linguistically diverse learner population where second language (L2) learners in English-medium schools are required to learn through an insufficiently acquired second language, (Hammarström, 2016).

The ELET project is informed by research by Cummins (1985) on the distinction between two types of language skills: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) which we use in everyday, face-to-face interactions, and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), which is language used for learning; that is, language proficiency used in context-reduced, cognitively demanding situations. Since many L2 learners have not developed CALP adequately in their L2 and perhaps even in their First Language (L1) because it is not maintained, these learners find it extremely demanding to perform context-reduced, cognitively demanding tasks. Hence these learners, in particular, are in need of language support. The Language for Learning Project attempted to provide such support.

The project aimed to enable teachers to improve learning in Science, Mathematics and English by improving the use of language in these subjects in Grades 4 to 7. The specific objectives of the project were:

- to make teachers aware of the language demands of lessons in English, Science and Mathematics;
- to enable teachers to analyse the language demands associated with tasks, and

- to enable teachers to use different forms of support for reading, writing, listening and speaking in English, Science and Mathematics.

Using the workshop format, the project exposed participating teachers to five modules, namely Reading, Writing, Listening, and Talk. The workshops, supported by relevant guides, introduced teachers to key principles and concepts and provided guidance in the generation of language support materials using both visual and verbal texts for English, Science and Mathematics. The workshops were followed by school support visits and lesson observations of participating teachers to assist them in the effective implementation of the support programme and to evaluate the extent to which teachers and learners were benefiting from the project.

According to ELET trainers there are several factors hampering the full objectives of the support programme from being realised. Among these are:

- limited support from some school principals for the ELET project;
- poor attendance of some teachers that left significant gaps in their learning;
- opposition of some teachers to the classroom observations and general school visits of the trainer; and
- diminished funding for the project, which resulted in its premature termination.

Despite the barriers to the programme outlined above, various teachers who participated in the programme attested to its value. According to teachers in the ELET sample, the only real support for the implementation of multilingual education that the schools received was from ELET. They claim that the support they received was useful in sensitising teachers to the language challenges facing African learners in English-dominant school contexts. The programme encouraged teachers to implement various teaching and learning strategies and learning support materials to assist learners (both L1 and L2 speakers) to negotiate learning in a LOLT in which they had limited proficiency. A more enduring benefit of the ELET initiative was that it generated and cultivated agents of change at school level. The data clearly reflected that in the face of limited policy support, individual change agents exist in schools and can initiate and sustain the process of implementing multilingual education. The challenge, therefore, is to harness these pockets of energy and diffuse them into other schooling communities. Regrettably, the South African Department of Education is still to capitalise on this valuable resource.

An exemplary practice by an innovative teacher

Exemplary practices that encouraged the use of the learners' languages for learning, though rare, offer in embryonic form, the kind of practice that could be replicated and developed to a fully-fledged model of additive multilingualism.

The most innovative practice discovered during the course of the research was observed in one of the HLP schools in a Foundation Phase Information technology (IT) class. It should be noted that language and technology was at the time of this project still in an embryonic stage in South African Schools and was mainstreamed much later, (Wu, 2014). Three IT lessons were held each week, conducted by a teacher who uses the audiovisual computer software in the Media Centre of the school to teach Mathematics. The Mathematics software consists of a wide repertoire of learning materials offered in five different languages: English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, Sesotho and Setswana. The teacher makes selective use of this software by first investigating the teaching content of the week from the teachers of the three learning areas (numeracy, literacy and life skills). The teacher then tries to match these contents to what is offered by the computer software. For example, in solving a mathematical (numeracy) problem, the learners are given the option of reading and listening on the computer to the instructions/questions in five different languages related to a theme that is being taught in the content class.

The learning of the content can be done in any of the five languages. Learners are allowed to pick the language or languages that best clarify the problem. The learners can start with English and later switch to Afrikaans, Setswana or isiZulu and vice versa. They may finally decide to stay with their home language. This in effect means that the learners are able to have multilingual education and use their IT skills for cognitive development within the three learning areas and at the same time develop proficiency in both English and any of the other languages.

The teacher works cooperatively with the other teachers within the school to ensure that, whatever the learners are working with in their respective classes is actually being reinforced in the computer lessons. The researchers observed the enthusiasm of the learners during the lessons and found that many learners recorded significant improvements especially in numeracy. Learners showed improvements of between 28% and 52% as recorded in subsequent assessments.

According to the teacher, a primary motivating factor with the IT multilingual approach is its inbuilt self-assessment facility. The software programme allows learners to solve problems and then awards a mark, so that learners know how well they are doing. This innovation, spearheaded by a teacher, locates multilingualism as a resource at the highest level of academic literacy, within multimodal, multi-genre, self-access learner-centred resources with provisions for self-assessment and integrated with mainstream content areas (see Chapelle & Voss, 2017). The innovation is relatively low-cost (using an established media centre through an existing budget), and except for the initial costs of the software, uses computers already present in the centre. It is low-risk in that it plays a supportive role in facilitating mainstream learning areas.

One shortcoming is that since mainstream assessments are not done in the languages of the learners, home languages are being used only for support and not for full-fledged additive multilingualism. A second shortcoming is that the teacher seems to be unaware of the significance and value of this innovation and it thus remains in the domain of private knowledge. Such innovations need to be identified by researchers and brought to the notice of the principal and other teachers, as well as of other schools, so that successful practices can be disseminated and replicated.

EMERGING TRENDS, ENDURING ATTRIBUTES

How do the de-facto practices in schools measure up to the prescripts of the typology of multilingual practices represented in Figure 1 of this article? Overall, the evidence from all three projects indicates that most schools surveyed fall in the 'transitional' quadrant where symbolic support for African languages is strong, but substantive support is limited to African languages as subjects. These schools affirm African languages as a 'Right'. The seven schools related to the Home Language Project alone fall into the typology 'towards additive multilingualism'. These schools indicate a move towards affirming African languages as resources. No school could be found to represent the highest level of additive multilingualism in quadrant D, but some educators' practices (in the HLP sampled schools) are moving in that direction. Quadrant D therefore represents a utopian typology towards which schools can strive.

The categorisation of Richard Ruiz (2013) of 'problem', 'rights' and 'resources' as applied to indigenous languages is useful in the South African context. The Typologies of

Multilingualism constructed on the basis of the data from this research, could enable language policy makers and practitioners to shift from seeing African languages as a 'Problem and a Right', to seeing them as a 'Right and a Resource'.

Intervention and advocacy: drivers of multilingualism

An enduring theme in all three projects is that even a little intervention goes a long way in raising consciousness and changing attitudes. It must be emphasised that all the projects analysed in this study are no more than symbolic interventions. Yet, their impact has been significant and in some instances - profound. Several studies (see Webb 1996; Granville, et.al, 1998; Williams, & Stroud, 2013; Kelly, 2018) have highlighted the consequences of uninformed language in education policy choices. It needs to be acknowledged that decades of apartheid education have succeeded in socialising South African society into seemingly indelible ideological views of language. Given the 'Bantu' stigma that continues to be attached to African languages, the politically uninformed will tend to adopt instrumental pragmatism in language choice and African languages will continue to be marginalised. The challenge is to be rid the 'Bantu' stigma in African languages in tandem with systematically challenging the hegemony of English, while at the same time guaranteeing access to it, through dual-medium education programmes.

Such a process of de-stigmatisation will not happen without deliberate and sustained intervention. To begin with, there are insufficient numbers of visible and influential champions for the preservation and promotion of African languages. Championing multilingualism needs to be supported by an advocacy campaign initiated from the highest levels of government directed at all levels of society, but in particular, a concerted campaign needs to be directed at schooling communities and school governing boards (Granville, et.al., 1998).

This study has signalled the value of advocacy campaigns represented by the HLP project. Notwithstanding its limited scope and reach, such interventions should not be underestimated as such campaigns can show-case exemplary practices elicited from schools through official surveys and researches. The HLP experience also reveals that the low-level, seemingly benign campaign conducted by an education consultant with school governing bodies and teachers had a profound effect in changing attitudes to home languages and largely underlies the success and sustainability of the HLP.

From a moral to an active role

Repeatedly, in our engagement with respondents, schools expressed the need for the DBE to play more than a moral role, and to transcend what they perceive to be the role of ritualised distributor of school funding. There was, however, a sympathetic recognition of the need for new expertise to emerge within district official circles. A network of partnerships between the school, the community, the Department of Education and higher education is seen as a possibility to alleviate the problems caused by the dearth of experts. This could be achieved by expanding the pool to draw teachers involved in innovative teaching practices. Training programmes can be conceptualised to mediate between multilingual LiEP and school practices. This has emerged as the key to the future of a viable multilingualism in schools.

A serious impediment to self-motivated teacher development, repeated ad nauseam in other studies, (Samuel, 2008; Heystek, & Terhoven, 2014) is the (in)competency syndrome, in the absence of incentives for teachers to improve their levels of competence in managing multilingual environments. This obstacle is often a source of de-motivation for teachers. Teachers express gross dissatisfaction with the Department's refusal to acknowledge academic achievements for career mobility, as indicated below:

> *I do not feel motivated because there are no incentives. Whether you study or not, will remain a foundation phase teacher, earning the same salary all the way. (Teacher interview, January 2004)*

Compensatory Multilingualism

The official language in education policy documents does make a demand for an additive multilingual education, that is, the use of African languages as media of instruction, referred to as bilingualism, as well as the teaching and learning of additional languages. In this study however, schools have diverged from this policy and implemented the weaker form of multilingualism, namely the tendency towards compensatory multilingualism by offering African languages as additional subjects.

While the additional subject route might be seen from a historical point of view as progressive - in allowing schools to move away from Afrikaans to African languages - it does little to disrupt the hegemony of English and the marginal status of African languages. Part of the problem may be ascribed to the relative freedom accorded to school governing bodies in determining language policies. A semantic analysis of the 1996 South

African Schools Act reveals a potential ambiguity, as it does not oblige schools to comply with official policy. The word "may" in the first line confers discretion. The discretionary latitude here poses a somewhat paradoxical and potentially paralysing bind for policy development. In the first instance, the discretionary powers accorded to schooling communities are in themselves consistent with democratic principles of the constitution, since over-regulation is perceived as a form of social control. In addition, the latitude accorded to schools provides spaces for schooling communities to tailor their policies to their peculiar needs and conditions.

By implication therefore, whether or not a school adopts a democratic route to policy formulation, it does not constitute a de-jure violation of the Act. Although additive multilingualism is advocated, implementation is morally obligatory rather than legally enforceable. In this context, the latitude accorded to schooling communities may be construed as inordinate and inappropriate, since schools reserve the right to preserve their conservative practices. However, if one adopts a more pragmatic view, then one has to admit the possibility that schools do not change because they lack the capacity to change, particularly since the management of change is extremely complex for institutions that have been socialised into valuing monolingual environments. This became apparent as all schools in the survey bemoaned the adequacy of support in the interpretation and translation of the official LiEP into school policies. An enduring complaint was that the national language policy expects schools to deliver democratic language policies in the absence of policy support.

Can Practice inform policy?

Policy is often seen as a top-down phenomenon whose primary purpose is to regulate practice. Yet, if the prospect of practice informing policy is acknowledged, then classroom pedagogy can be eminently useful in driving policy, (Dhunpath & Joseph, 2014). Some of the exemplars identified in this research show practice that is richer than policy (either in the policy texts or actual practices). These exemplars have the potential to instil fresh vigour into basic and higher education and lead to exemplar-driven teacher development.

The HLP has also demonstrated the value of collaboration between external stakeholders in education, the DBE, higher education, NGOs, freelance language consultants, and private companies with an educational vision. The education ministry has acknowledged that the task of instituting a multilingual education is

beyond its limited capacity. Yet, the HLP has demonstrated that the capacity for collaborative activity exists, lies dormant and waits to be enacted in terms of the management of multilingual human and material resources, as well as the design and implementation of innovative pedagogic practices, especially in the use of African languages in texts and assessment practices. Pioneering service providers like the HLP and ELET should be targeted for specific support, both materially and intellectually, so that they do not suffer the fate of ELTIC, one of the pioneers of multilingual education that had to close down due to lack of support in the mid-90s. Such practices could drive processes of change by re-writing policy texts to incorporate the principles behind these practices, infuse training programmes, and motivate further research, especially by postgraduate students, who could adopt participating schools as research sites.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The research from which this paper derives, confirms the widespread assertion that multilingualism in South African schools exists at the level of policy rhetoric (as expressed in policy as text). Attitudes to English as a medium and African languages as medium showed the highest divergence among the various respondents. Overall, English was supported for instrumental/pragmatic purposes and African languages for social solidarity purposes, while there is strong support for English as a Resource, and for African languages as a Right. In relation to educational domains, English dominates the instrumental domains, namely the medium of instruction for content subjects, whereas African languages are supported in the domains of additional languages as subjects and on the playgrounds and staff rooms. Wherever respondents' attitudes to the instrumental domains, namely content learning areas, were sought in terms of the medium of instruction, African languages were seen as a problem.

Actual practices show that the schools sampled were left to their own devices, with the principals and the heads of the learning areas providing leadership. The success of the interventions by service providers was also shown to depend on how receptive and cooperative school principals were. Principals with a clear vision and commitment proved to be decisive agents in determining whether the school had a progressive language policy. Symbolic support for African languages is strong, but substantive support is limited to African languages as subjects. These schools affirm African languages as a 'right'.

In content classes, however, these schools symbolically devalue code-switching in content classes, but for pragmatic reasons tolerate it. The HLP schools alone fall into the typology 'towards additive multilingualism'. These schools evince a move towards affirming African languages as resources. No school could be found to represent the highest level of additive multilingualism, but some teachers' practices (in the HLP-sampled schools) are moving in that direction.

Finally, meaningful policy implementation requires a combination of persuasive and cohesive pressure, especially from government agencies. Apart from political rhetoric, government has failed to provide substantive leadership to date, with the possible exception of the recent exhortation by the former Minister of Education that African languages are to be made compulsory at higher education universities. The prospect of meaningful government intervention in general schooling in the immediate future is, in our view, remote. This places the onus on individual schooling communities to assume leadership, drawing lessons from beacons such as those surveyed in this article, which signal the value of shifting the policy gaze from debates on policy to dialogues on practices.

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Engendering University Curricula in Zimbabwe: Barriers and Challenges in the Zimbabwean Government Universities

Lilian Chaminuka and Leoba T. Gunduza

Zimbabwe Open University, Harare Province, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that women constitute the majority of the population the world over, they have continued to be undermined in their quest to access education. This points to the rationale for gender responsive pedagogy in the higher education system in Zimbabwe. However, there continues to be barriers and challenges that impinge on the learning and teaching of women in tertiary institutions in the country, hence university curricula should be responsive to the gendered needs of society. The study made use of the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative methodology. Under the qualitative methodology, a descriptive survey research design was adopted under which data collection for the study was done through in-depth interviews with key informants, particularly those from the educational policy department. A purposively selected sample of fifteen participants was utilised. The findings of the study indicated that though inroads have been made towards engendering university curricula, numerous barriers and challenges continue to hamper its implementation. Such barriers were found to include poverty, inadequate availability of resources and socio-cultural values such as patriarchy. The study, therefore, recommended that while the provision of gender inclusivity is provided for under the current Zimbabwe constitution, there is need for inclusivity in the implementation of gender responsive university curricula in Zimbabwe.

Key words: curricula, gender responsive, barriers, women

INTRODUCTION

The topic of gender and education has been one of the most topical as well as problematic issues in the contemporary milieu. This is because over the years, women have padded behind men in educational attainment as epitomised by more boys going to college (Kadaba, 2013). This view is complimented by Vincent-Lancrin (2008) who observes that for many years, men have received a better education than women and in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries, more men than women went on to higher education and obtained more degrees. This is despite the fact that 49.55% of the global population are women (United Nations, 2017). In the same vein, Kadaba (2013) highlights that one of the most talked about issues in education, the widening achievement difference between boys and girls, has been debated vociferously for more than a decade. Larrondo and Rivero (2017) argue that issues relating to access to higher education; college experiences; and post-collegiate outcomes facilitate the gendering of university curricula. The degree to which women and men fare in these distinguishing areas, however, show different trends.

While Koda and Kabahamba (2011) acknowledge that university education is a catalyst for gender equality, and is capable of changing gender discriminatory norms, values and practices through a curriculum that provides gendered knowledge relevant to life in a gendered world, gender gaps still exist in institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe. This implies bringing gender equality into the mainstream of the higher education sector, by means of an adjustment of the educational issues, which are influential in society (Larrondo and Rivero, 2017). In the same vein, gender inequality has been argued to be a major factor influencing low female literacy (Dejia and Teherani- Kronner, 2010). Contextually, this paper's aim, therefore, was to advance the rationale for gender responsive pedagogy in the higher education systems in Zimbabwe. The paper argues that the continued existence of barriers and challenges that impinge on the learning and teaching of women in tertiary institutions in the country requires a responsive university curricula aimed towards addressing the gendered needs of society. Although the number of women accessing higher education in Zimbabwe has increased to become more than that of males, they have been lagging in science,

technology, engineering and mathematical disciplines.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although women represent a substantial majority of the world's population with over 52% (United Nations Population Division, 2017), the existence of numerous barriers continue to undermine their ability to access education. In Zimbabwe, curricula in higher education institutions continue to reflect gender biases and discriminatory norms that affect women's endeavours to learn. This has further impacted negatively on the women's experiences (that is, treatment by male lecturers which could lead to their abuse) at university as well as their performance in the same fora (Grunberg, 2011). Within this background, the study sought to explore the barriers and challenges that affect the learning of women in higher education institutions.

STUDY QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the impact of gender discrimination on learning and teaching in higher education in Zimbabwe and how effective are legal frameworks for achieving gender equality in the country?
2. What suggestions would be proffered towards the development of gendered curricula in Zimbabwe`s higher education system?

METHODOLOGY

For the study, an interpretive research paradigm which attempts to understand the viewpoint of the subject being observed, rather than the viewpoint of the observer, was adopted. In line with this paradigm, a qualitative research methodology was used. This methodology was favoured given its recognition that understanding a social or human problem, is based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducting the study in a natural setting. A descriptive survey design was further used for the study with selection of study participants being done through purposive sampling, which according to Mason (2002) allowed the researcher to select individuals who exhibited characteristics that suited the specific needs of the study. A sample of 15 key participants was chosen for this study. The collection of data was done through in-depth interviews with the chosen key informants, given their relative experience in gender equality and education. The informants included those from the educational policy department in the Ministry of Higher Education and Tertiary Education, officials

from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, the Gender Commission, International and local Non-Governmental Organisations in gender and education programming, civil society organisations in education, Academics and Educational Rights and Gender activists. Apart from the in-depth interviews, document analysis was used as a complementary data collection tool. Using documentary review, data were also collected from books, journal articles, policy documents and archives as well as reports and articles from the internet. For analysis and presentation of findings, thematic analysis was utilised.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by the theories of Feminism and Liberal feminism as detailed below:

FEMINISM

Lorber (2009) argues that Feminism is a theory that purports that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially. It aims to promote an understanding of the nature of gender inequality in societies. Lorber (2009) also notes that, the main point feminists have stressed about gender inequality is that it is not an individual matter, but is deeply rooted in the structure of societies. Inequality based on gender, she argues, is constructed into the institution of marriage and families, work and the economy, politics, religions, the arts, education and other cultural productions. Making women and men equal, therefore, necessitates social and not individual solutions. Such arguments guided this study in coming up with views to engender university curricula in Zimbabwe.

LIBERAL FEMINISM

According to Samkange (2015), liberal feminism asserts that gender differences are not based in biology, and therefore that women and men are not all that different - their common humanity supersedes their procreative differentiation. Central to the theory of liberal feminism is the notion that the main source of gender inequality is the "process of socialisation" (learning process by which you acquire the knowledge, skill, and motivations required to participate in social life). Within this context, Liberal Feminist Theory can be explained as an individualistic form which concentrates on women having their equality through being responsible for their actions and choices (Brookes, 2008). The circumstances that shaped women's lives were the laws and prejudices (shared by men and women) that excluded them from the public sphere

and from the right to earn their own living on an equal footing with men. Women struggled for the right to higher education, entrance into the professions, the right to own property and hold public office, and for suffrage, the right that came to symbolise full citizenship. From the above views, it can be argued that the liberal feminist theory recognises the presence of inequalities in society that are gender related, but the onus is on the individuals affected to improve their situation hence auguring well with the purposes of this study.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptualising Gender

From the outset, it is imperative to conceptualise the term 'gender', as it is significant in contextualising the study, as well as to set the parameters for this paper. Over the years, there have been diverse conceptualisations of gender. Gender refers to the attributes associated with being male or female and the relationship between women and men and girls and boys. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes. They are context- or time-specific and changeable… (UN Women, 2013). Similarly, UNESCO (2003) points to gender as referring to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in families, societies and cultures. Other conceptions of gender refer to it as the economic, social, political, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being women and men (The Jhpiego Gender Analysis Toolkit, 2016). As such, the societal characterisations of what it implies to be a woman or a man differ among cultures and transform over time. Therefore, gender should be viewed as a socio-cultural notion epitomising certain characteristics and roles connected to different sets of persons with regard to their sex and sexuality. In this regard, the terms "gender" and "gender relations" were originated in the 1970's by American and English feminists (Bisilliat, 2001).

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned definitions of gender, caution has to be exercised as most often, the concept is habitually used as a synonym for woman, or the female sex. It can, therefore, be reasonably assumed that it is this watered-down, almost "dulled" meaning of the word, which, by removing much of its epistemological and ideological force, vindicates its excessive use (Bisilliat, 2001). Furthermore, the afore-given definitions of the concept of gender indicate it is more than the biological differences between males and females. (Fung, 2017). Further, the

definitions imply the collection of all the acknowledged variances between men and women that are socially determined. In addition, the term *gender* indicates the presence of some rudimentary asymmetry and hierarchy between both, groups, sexes and genders - one of them dominating and the other dominated - which is the basis of male power (Bisilliat, 2001) and ultimately the overarching requirement to view men in relation to women, even though these relations are harmonious or skirmish. Bosch (2002) and Mazurana (2013) also agree that gender is a power dynamic which allocates roles, power and resources available to females and males in any culture. Thus, there exists uneven power relations in gender and as such, power becomes an essential factor for determining access, participation and grades in the higher education institutions. Such views facilitate an understanding of the intricacies surrounding the tertiary education sector.

Perhaps more significantly and in the context of this study, the concept of gender implies knowledge of the difference between the sexes. This, however, does not mean knowledge is static, but rather is a variable that is subject to change over time. As is with knowledge, gender is conceptually dynamic as social roles transform over time. Hence, this could be a feature that gives credence to the transformation of university curricula towards gender responsiveness.

GENDER IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

Flowing from the above-discussed conceptions of gender, the place of gender in education has always been precarious. This is perhaps what inclined Grünberg (2011) to assert that at its best, gender is marginalised within the area of Gender Studies – quite developed and institutionalised in the majority of the countries – but is rarely included in the higher curricula of other disciplines. International trends in gender inequalities in higher education can be determined by examining the changes in the composition of the student population in higher education, the relative share of degrees awarded to women each year, the levels of education attained by men and women and, lastly, the differences between the subjects studied by men and women (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008).

Amid the argument by Hooks (1994) that teaching gender within a mainstreamed paradigm is "teaching students to 'transgress' against racial, sexual, and class boundaries in order to

achieve the gift of freedom, is to educate as the practice of freedom," Grünberg (2011) posits that 'Why study gender?' and, 'What is gender?' should no longer be the questions. Focus, should now be shifted towards finding answers with regard to the question of 'How to study gender?' Answers to this question facilitate the development of a gender-inclusive curriculum in tertiary education (Grünberg, 2011). Pandelejmoni (2011) holds a similar view arguing that in terms of higher education studies, interest should be manifest in modernising the curricula. Since a (higher) education curriculum mirrors a certain structure of reality, a particular way of selecting and organising the vast universe of possible knowledge, gender is an important ingredient of any of these particular stories (Grünberg, 2011).

KIT (n.d.) puts emphasis on gender analysis in higher education aimed at making visible and explaining inequities in enrolment, completion and transition as well as a rights analysis to understand what lies at the root of these rights failures. This is founded on the perspective that activities and practices in the classroom, in educational establishments and in the broader community are entirely interconnected and they provide the basis for the ontological standpoint of students, as well as offer instruction in modes of interacting for the future (KIT, nd). Hence, focusing and changing university curricula engenders the basis for a more equitable economy and society.

Subsequently though, higher education still reflects areas of learning within which women are under-represented. The very few women that are fortunate enough to join higher institutions are characterised by lower academic performance and higher forced withdrawal (Atinaf and Petros, 2016). Effectively and more significantly, the existence of such inequalities affects the future lives of women in relation to their greater participation in the labour market, politics and other positions of decision-making.

The Zimbabwe education system is composed of numerous tiers that include primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. The tertiary education commonly offers qualifications at the following levels: certificate, diploma, post-graduate diploma and degree offered in polytechnics, universities and other institutions of higher learning. According to ZIMSTAT (2014), an overview of the structure of the Zimbabwe education system shows that each stage has objectives that should be met, but on the whole, each level serves to prepare a person for the levels beyond it.

At the time of Zimbabwe's independence, the University of Zimbabwe was the only national university in the country. Nevertheless, over the years, there have been numerous other universities that have been instituted as reflected by the 22 recognised universities, 9 recognised polytechnics and 12 recognised teacher education colleges that are present to date (ZIMSTAT, 2014). The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education oversees the activities within the higher education sector in the country. At university level, both academic higher education and higher professional education are offered. The universities offer both degree programmes and non-degree programmes. In university education, degrees such as Bachelors (General) undergraduate, postgraduate degrees and diplomas, Masters' degrees and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) are offered. The minimum requirement of EP-Nuffic (2015) for admission to a university bachelor's programme, is that the student should hold a Zimbabwe General Certificate of Education at Ordinary Level with at least 5 passes, or the Zimbabwe General Certificate of Education at Advanced Level with at least 2 passes. Higher requirements can be set depending on the degree programme. Most universities conduct a selective admissions policy, which means in practice, good results should be achieved.

Given the foregoing, and while there has been an affirmative action policy in place in relation to the admission of students to universities, the number of female students that have been enrolled is still way below the expected. Data from ZIMSTAT (2014) confirm that figures of enrolment in universities between the period 1997 and 2012 show fewer females being enrolled as compared to males. For instance, in 1997 there were 13 489 males enrolled as compared to 5 796 females. In 2002 there were 22 811 males compared to 12 795 females. In 2007 there were 32 977 males compared to 21 867 females, and in 2012 there were 33 264 males compared to 26 891 females. However, Madzimure (2016) notes that in recent years, the number of women in universities has surged to surpass that of men by 12 %.

GENDER EQUALITY FRAMEWORK IN ZIMBABWE

As the gender concept developed through the early 1980's (Nairobi Conference, 1985), in English-speaking and Latin American countries and also within all international organisations, its usage would be facilitated by the holding of a succession of important conferences such as the Cairo Conference (1994) and

the Beijing Conference (1995) during which the term definitively established itself (Bisilliat, 2001). Such an expansion in the usage of the term gave rise to a multiplicity of frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality. The existence of legal and policy frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality in all spheres is an essential facet of a rule of law system. While gender-sensitive public policies are an essential complement to this legal framework, it is national and international-level laws that are enforceable in a court of law and against which any actor (individuals, corporations, organisations and governments) can be charged (Organisation of American States (OAS), 2017). Zimbabwe is, therefore, guided by numerous legal and policy frameworks, which are detailed in the ensuing discussion.

Internationally, Zimbabwe is party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979. As a framework, CEDAW offers a broad structure to direct all rights-based action for gender equality. The underlying basis for this convention is its emphasis on the notion that gender inequality is an upshot of discrimination against women. In the light of this, CEDAW advocates for equality in outcomes rather than simply equality in opportunities. Focus should be placed not only on crafting anti-discrimination, but also on the effectiveness towards guaranteeing equality.

Furthermore, Zimbabwe recognises the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and its twelve points. As an international equality framework, the Beijing Platform for Action sets out "an agenda for women's empowerment" signed by all governments that is seen as a "necessary and fundamental pre-requisite for equality, development and peace." The Platform provides a blueprint for women's empowerment that is exceptionally clear, straightforward and actionable. In addition, the Platform provides the first global commitment to gender mainstreaming as the methodology by which women's empowerment will be achieved.

Other instruments aimed at enabling gender equality include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), (Mutasa and Paterson, 2015). These help in consolidating previous agreements, including those on women's rights, women's empowerment and gender equality, into a single set of core goals, targets and benchmarks for the

development community. They emphasise that gender equality is equally a right in itself and an enabler of development. Specifically, MDG 3 reflected this emphasis on gender equality. This is further reflected in the subsequent SDG's which also underscore the need for issues relating to gender to be addressed across all facets of life.

Noted as the first international human rights instrument to exclusively and explicitly address the issue of violence against women, the 1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women is a significant instrument for the promotion of gender equality. Essentially, it renders support to the view that violence prejudices the fundamental human rights of women as well as their enjoyment of the same. For this study, it is significant to end violence against women as it impacts on their access and enjoyment of higher education. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo weighs in by asserting and globally prioritising the equality and empowerment of women both from the perspective of universal human rights and as an essential step towards eradicating poverty and stabilising population growth. Hence, a woman's capability to access education and rights is a cornerstone of her empowerment. It is also critical to sustainable development.

Regionally, Zimbabwe has acceded to the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa in 2008. It is also part of the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender and Equality in Africa, the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development (2008) and its addendum on the Prevention of Violence against Women and Children. Zimbabwe is also part of the COMESA Gender Policy which fosters gender equality and equity at all levels of regional integration and cooperation (NGP, 2013).

These international and regional instruments have largely been domesticated in the country through the enactment of laws that promote gender equality and equity. The laws encompass Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) of 1982, the Labour Relations Act (1985).

The government has also put in place the National Gender Policy (2004) (revised version (2013-2017) which perpetuates the vision of having a society in Zimbabwe where there is economic, political, religious and social equality and equity among women and men in all spheres of life and at all levels. A national Gender Commission has also been

instituted to enhance gender equality in Zimbabwe. Additionally, the Zimbabwe government has created the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development with the chief mandate to front, in particular, the coordination of the country's gender programmes. This is all capped by the provisions of the 2013 Zimbabwe Constitution, which unequivocally discerns between the rights of men and women to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres.

Zimbabwe has further put in place several other measures to address gender inequalities such as the use of Affirmative Action in several sectors, higher education included. Affirmative action is thus aimed at promoting female participation given their prior marginalised position in society. According to Malaba (2006), while affirmative action has been used to bring about some degree of progress in addressing gender inequalities in accessing higher education and employment, a mammoth challenge still exists in these two areas. This affirmative action has only worked in as far as access is concerned, but has not dealt with issues of engendering curricula which impact on academic performance.

While Zimbabwe (as with most countries of the region) has embraced international and regional legal and policy frameworks that uphold gender equality in all spheres, significant gaps continue to exist in the higher education sector in terms of access and quality. These stem from barriers and challenges that hinder the participation of women in particular, in higher education in the country.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of the study indicate that issues of access, participation and college experience and outcomes of higher education in Zimbabwe are affected by numerous barriers that largely impinge on the female sex. For the purposes of presentation, these barriers have been grouped into demographic, socio-cultural, economic and political factors.

Demographic factors

Among the demographic issues, the lack of fecundity management and women marrying early and having children early, have impinged negatively on the participation of women in higher education. In an interview with the director from the Ministry of Higher Education, it was revealed that these factors have largely increased the rate of college dropouts in the tertiary institutions. The Director said:

> *...the fact that the majority of women in the country marry early and have children thereafter, has*

> *led to reduced numbers of women participating in higher education. In fact, it has also led to an increased number of college students dropping out of university.*

The size of the family in Zimbabwe has also influenced the narrowing of participation of women in higher education. In an interview with an academic from the University of Zimbabwe, it was said that,

> *In big family sizes, parents tend to prefer to educate boys at the expense of girls as they would say that women will marry and leave the family, but the boys will stay and take care of the family.*

Thus, in terms of access to higher education, the size of the family and culture both impact on women and men. This resonates well with the views from literature where it was found that in the United States, particularly in past decades, the chances of women participating in higher education were narrowed by the larger family, and the more masculine the family was (Averett and Burton, 1996). This is also true of what transpired in Japan and Turkey as noted in studies by (Ono, 2004; Tansel, 2002). Essentially therefore, demographic factors stemming from the age at marriage and the family size have been a challenging factor that has impacted negatively on the access and participation of women in higher education in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, it must be realised that these demographic factors are not universal and, therefore, vary from one culture to the other.

Sociocultural factors

From the study findings it also emerged that there are socio-cultural factors that impact negatively on gendering the higher education curricula. These factors range from the continued discrimination of women in higher education to the decision of parents to invest in boys rather than girls and to the inferiority complex of women with regard to the choice of university disciplines. All these attributes stem from the continued existence of patriarchy in the Zimbabwean society. A programmes officer with a United Nations organisation argued that,

> *What I have noted is that the Zimbabwe social environment is reflective of male dominance given the prevalence of patriarchal values in society. This leads to discriminatory norms that tend to favour men at the expense of their women counterparts.*

In concurring with these views, an officer from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development said that,

> *…in Zimbabwe, patriarchy hinders the participation of women in higher education as families tend to prefer educating their sons as compared to daughters.*

The major struggles of female students in higher education were also found to be stemming from the current economic situation persistent in the country. An official from the Ministry of Higher Education said that,

> *From the perspective of the Ministry, we have noted with concern that the economic situation in the country has constrained female students' access and performance in higher education as they are unable to acquire learning materials and sanitary ware. They end up being uncomfortable and therefore are forced to indulge in immoral activities for them to earn a living.*

In agreement with these views, a Programme Manager with a local NGO focusing on women and education said:

> *These young women's study time is consumed by these immoral activities and so affect their performance.*

Such notions are corroborated in literature, particularly by Atinaf and Petros (2016) who noted that economic constraints seriously affect female students' academic performance; such constraints span from the very limitation of purchasing the necessary educational materials to those involving behaviours which can affect their health. As a result, to get away from such traps, female students may get engaged in different immoral and risky behaviours, such as engaging in sexual affairs and exposing themselves to irreversible problems. These may include HIV, AIDS and unwanted pregnancies. As a result, they drop out of university and have extended consequences in their future life (Atinaf and Petros 2016). These arise because they get disowned by their parents and so find themselves with no resources to educate themselves. However, it must be noted that the Zimbabwe government position is that no student should be expelled from university or school for having fallen pregnant and the onus will be on the parents to support their girl child.

Political factors

The political factors affecting the advancement of gendered curricula in university education have been revealed to encompass the lack of political will from the top management of the universities and government. This is despite the existence of multiple frameworks for the promotion of gender equality in the higher education sector as highlighted in the preceding sections of the paper. This is supported by Kittilson (2016) who opined that inequalities in political involvement undermine the quality of deliberation, representation, and legitimacy in the processes. A confluence of several interrelated factors (resources, economy, socialization, political context) works together to account for these differences (Kittilson, 2016). Thus, while there can be a certain level of political willingness to support this endeavour, the fiscal space is also a hindrance because of the current economic standing of the country.

CONCLUSIONS

The rationale for this study was to consider the barriers and challenges that hinder the participation and academic performance of female students in higher education. This was done with a view to suggesting possible solutions that may help to promote female students' access, experience and academic performance in higher education. It is, therefore, the conclusion of this study that, engendering university curricula in university education is affected by demographic, socio-cultural, economic and political factors all converging in debilitating the access, participation and academic outcomes of women. The study clearly shows that the objective of any gender interventions should not stop at gender equality, but should seek the promotion of positive synergies that will act throughout the educational system as generators of development, in which all actors become stakeholders and all actors benefit. Acquiring equality in educational spheres should be seen within a dynamic system of relations embedded in a development process that seeks to empower both women and men. There remains a great deal of work to be done as it appears that it is taking time to get to that stage due to the various challenges that confront women in public spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the study findings and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are proposed to facilitate the increased participation and academic performance of women in higher education:

1. There should be attempts to get rid of barriers and challenges that affect the access, participation and academic outcomes of women through effective policy implementation.
2. There is need for inclusivity in the implementation of gender responsive university curricula in Zimbabwe, and its neighbouring countries. Thus, both males and females should exert their influence in the development of university curricula.
3. The Government in collaboration with the private sector and other donor institutions should introduce scholarships aimed at accommodating both financially poor students and meritorious students. This strategy can enhance greater participation of female students in higher education as well as reduce dropout rates. Additionally,

engendering university curricula can effectively be done through the establishment of non-patriarchal curricula for women. Only this can help improve women's understanding of issues at least from a non-masculine perspective, but a gender-neutral one.

These suggestions compounded, will certainly facilitate increased participation of females in higher education.

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TOWARDS AN ATTRACTIVE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION: AN ASSESSMENT OF PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE.

Mtezo, Justina Z
Alumni Relations, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe
tinamtezo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
This paper examined the determinants of service quality in universities in Zimbabwe with a view to understanding why the affluent choose to send their children to universities outside the country. This is despite the current effort to promote Zimbabwean brands through the Buy Zimbabwe Campaign. The study was further aimed at determining ways of making the Zimbabwean university education more attractive and competitive. For the study, the interpretivist paradigm which facilitates the understanding of the subjective world of human experience was used. In line with the interpretive paradigm, a qualitative research methodology, utilising a descriptive survey design was adopted to solicit the perceptions of service quality in universities. Purposive sampling was utilised to select participants for the study, while in-depth interviews were employed in data collection. The subsequent collected data were analysed through thematic analysis. The findings of the study indicated the existence of numerous dimensions to service quality in Zimbabwe such as infrastructure, programmes on offer, academic expertise, extracurricular activities, parents' level of education, prior results, university prestige and prominence of alumni, and the universities' assessment techniques. Findings also revealed that these factors have a substantial effect on service quality perceptions in university learning. The study concluded that service quality is indeed a critical component to students when selecting a university to attend. The study recommended that there is need for feedback on quality assessments as well as the adoption of integrity in recruitment of lecturers and admission of students.

Keywords: service quality, assessment, satisfaction, feedback, perception.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that universities have not conventionally been regarded as business organisations and probably will never be considered fully as such, they are increasingly operating in a business-like way (Teeroovengadum, Kamalanabhan, and Seebaluck, 2016). Numerous aspects, including globalisation, reduced financing by government as well as the numerical increase in tertiary institutions, have compelled universities to assume apt strategies that enhance their competitive advantage (Quinn, Lemay, Larsen, and Johnson, 2009; Harvey and Williams, 2010; Halai, 2013). The growth of higher education has increased competition among universities globally and has drawn many universities in the world to continually focus on assessing their service quality in order to enhance student recruitment satisfaction and retention. Service quality has, therefore, been identified as a key attribute aimed at ensuring that universities have a competitive edge over others. In the light of this perspective, service quality is an idea based on what is referred to as the "quality gap" – the difference between what customers expect of a service and what they perceive about the service received (Campos, Dos Santos, and Castro, 2017).

In higher education settings, the student is viewed as the main customer. The scholars cited above, have added that the two variables on which service quality depends are the expected service and the service quality received. Universities have not been spared from adopting such views, hence they ought to focus on realising them. Within the purview of tertiary institutions, it means a marketing approach to examine students' perceptions of service quality may improve service functions, attract and retain students (Sultan and Wong, 2012). This is because when making an indeterminate and high-risk decision of selecting a university, students look for evidence of quality of services (Angell, Heffernan, and Megicks, 2008). To this end, Sultan and Wong (2012) conclude that discounting the nature and significance of service quality may not be expedient for universities in the higher education sector. For this study, therefore, an assessment of the perceptions of service quality in universities in Zimbabwe was made. This was done in an attempt to understand why Zimbabwean students are shunning local universities and going to learn abroad.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The nature of higher education in Zimbabwe is dominated by state universities founded and run by the

government. These universities are set up to promote access to higher education by everyone who has the minimum entry points. Enrolment and graduation of higher education students has increased in recent years due to the existence of these state universities (Chiome and Kurasha, 2011) and the knowledge base has also been enriched. However, questions have continued to be raised with regard the quality of the services offered by these institutions.

Research done prior to this study indicates that improving service quality within a higher education context is often mentioned as an internal goal, without any explicit references to what is meant by service quality in higher education. Discussing service quality without defining what it is, how it is perceived by students, what the antecedents and consequences of quality neglect/improvements are, and how it can be improved and enhanced is of little value (Sultan and Wong, 2012; Teeroovengadum et al., 2016; Campos et al., 2017). Consequently, for universities to remain competitive, it is significant that they enhance the quality of their services to the students. Perhaps the questions to be asked are:

i. What are the determinants of perceived service quality among universities in Zimbabwe?
ii. What drives some parents and students to shun Zimbabwean universities and opt to learn at universities outside the country?

In developing an answer to these questions, universities are thus obligated to appraise the quality of their services so that they can make the requisite changes to advance their mandate and sustainability.

Given the above, the study identified and assessed the determinants of service quality in universities in Zimbabwe with a view to understanding why the affluent choose to send their children to universities outside the country. This is despite the current efforts to promote Zimbabwean brands through the Buy Zimbabwe Campaign. The investigation further aimed at determining ways of making the Zimbabwean university education more attractive and competitive.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the increase in the number of universities in Zimbabwe and the thrust of the Buy Zimbabwe Campaign, some students continue to shun Zimbabwean universities (Chiome and Kurasha, 2011). This is linked to the student and parents' expectations and perceptions of the service quality in universities. Universities in the

country, seemingly, have not been able to offer higher education services that are of high quality, given that challenges on the quality of service provided persist; these then lead to customer dissatisfaction. Felix (2017) observed that global perceptions of service quality exert a strong influence on global perceptions of customer satisfaction within the institutions. Based on such a problem, the aim of this study was to assess the perceptions of service quality in Zimbabwe's higher education institutions (HEIs) with a view to offering suggestions to improve the competitiveness of Zimbabwean universities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study hopes to establish reasons for choice of University by students and parents; the findings could hopefully assist universities to tailor-make their service quality in order to attract and retain students. This is important for the survival and sustenance of the universities in the face of stiff competition posed by the number of universities on the market and the introduction of online services.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study specifically seeks to achieve the following objectives, namely, to:

i. Identify the parents and students' perceptions of service quality in university education in Zimbabwe.
ii. assess the impact of service quality in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe; and
iii. examine the relationship between service quality and customers' satisfaction in HEIs in Zimbabwe.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by two theories, namely, SERVQUAL and Prospect Theory.

SERVQUAL MODEL

SERVQUAL (service quality) is a model that was established by Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1988, 1991) that comprises five separate dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Parasuraman et al.'s (1988, pp. 30-31) SERVQUAL . . . offers an elementary frame through its expectations and perceptions format, encompassing statements for each of the five service-quality dimensions. According to Burböck (2012, p. 158) the SERVQAUL frame, when necessary, can be adapted or supplemented to fit the characteristics of specific research needs of a particular organisation. Even though SERVQUAL receives substantial empirical support, some critics have difficulties with it. The critical analysis includes the ambiguous definition of expectation, the instability of the dimensions as well as the lack of

applicability across industries (Burböck, 2012, p. 158). This model was fundamental to this study's frame as it provided the necessary framework for the understanding of the impact of service quality on the perceptions of quality in university education in Zimbabwe. This is because it offers five distinct dimensions for understanding service quality which underlie the perceptions of quality in university education in Zimbabwe.

THE PROSPECT THEORY

In addition to the SERVQUAL model, the study was guided by the Prospect Theory by Kahneman and Tversky (1979). According to Kahneman and Tversky (1979), the prospect theory is a descriptive theory in which all of the alternatives an individual faces are reduced to a series of prospects that are evaluated independently of an S-shaped value function. Burböck (2012) shows that the value function of the prospect theory has three characteristics: reference point dependency; loss aversion; and diminishing sensitivity. According to Einhorn and Hogarth (1981), the loss aversion integrated into the prospect theory suggests that losses loom larger than gains. In the satisfaction context, a negative deviation from the reference point, expectations, should carry more weight in the overall-satisfaction judgment than equal amounts of positive outcomes on attribute performance. The diminishing sensitivity in the context of satisfaction means that, at high (low) levels of service quality, positive (negative) performance on a specific item should not affect satisfaction as dramatically as it does at lower levels of performance. For this study, the reference point is built by the expectations of the service quality offered by the universities. The theory was used to determine whether the relationship between service quality and university preference can be explained by the characteristics of the prospect theory.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Defining service quality

A service encounter involves the "dyadic interaction between a customer and a service provider" (Ang et al., 2018, p. 225). On the other hand, the quality concept which is an established phenomenon in the management literature was first suggested by Juran (1974) and Deming and Edwards (1982). Yet, service quality is a comparatively contemporary notion popularised by Gronroos (1984) and Parasuraman et al. (1988). Chong and Ahmed (2014) are of the view that defining quality in the service sector is a considerably difficult task given that quality is a multi-faceted concept which can take up diverse meanings to different

persons. For this reason, Chong and Ahmed (2014, p. 38) opine that "it is therefore worth noting that service quality is fundamentally an experiential state of mind and made in reference to personal experiences or service encounters. "For Erbele et al. (2016, p. 1699), quality in services is the capacity of an experience in services or any other factor related to it, which may satisfy a need or a desire or solve a problem or provide benefits to someone. Service quality, therefore generally refers to individual perceptions about a service owing to the experiences they have encountered. Such a notion guided the study in assessing the perceptions of quality in university education in Zimbabwe.

PARENTS AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY IN UNIVERSITIES

Service quality of a university is generally assessed by using student perception (Sumaedi, Bakti, and Metasari, 2012), an aspect which is critical to this study's framework. The basis of such a premise is that students at universities are the key customers. While several studies have been conducted in relation to perceptions on service quality in universities, these have been conducted within the context of developed countries such as the United States of America (USA) (Ham and Hayduk, 2003; Joseph, Yakhou, and Stone, 2005), UK (Hill, 1995; Cuthbert, 1996; Oldfield and Baron, 2000; Russell, 2005), Australia (Soutar and McNeil, 1996; Athiyaman, 1997), Canada (Le Blanc and Nguyen, 1997) and New Zealand (Kao, 2007). At the same time, those that have been conducted in developing countries have been done outside Africa and Zimbabwe, for example, Indonesia (Sumaedi et al., 2012), Malaysia (Chong and Ahmed, 2014; Shekarchizadeh, 2011), Brazil (Eberle, Milan, and Dorion, 2016; Campos et al., 2017). In Zimbabwe, studies on student perceptions of service quality have been very limited with only a few studies conducted (Chiome and Kurasha, 2011). Such an observation, therefore, gives credibility to this study.

Pragmatically, previous research shows that students with different cultures have different views of university service quality (Lagrossen, Seyyed-Hashemi, and Leitner, 2004; Kao, 2007). In these studies, both parents and students reflected that culture played a significant role in shaping their perceptions of service quality. Additionally, in the study by Sumaedi et al. (2012), it emerged that in the service sector, perceived service quality is also affected by personal or socio-demographic characteristics of customers. Hence, there is a likelihood that

student perceived service quality is also affected by students' socio- demographic characteristics. Regrettably, research discussions on the relationship between student socio-demographic characteristics and student perceived quality in the university context are limited, particularly in Zimbabwe.

What is apparent from the numerous discussions on student perceived service quality in universities is that it is an intangible notion. This is because numerous researchers' attempts at identifying measures of the concept have yielded diverse dimensions. Several researchers have suggested different concepts and acknowledged that there are two kinds of student perceived service quality, which are academic dimensions and non-academic dimensions. Academic dimensions consist of reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, knowledge and communication, while non-academic dimensions consist of tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, knowledge, and system (Sumaedi et al., 2012). In the study by Sumaedi et al. (2012), they found that students and parents had seven perceived service quality dimensions which they considered important, that is, curriculum, facilities, contact personnel, social activities, education counselors, assessment, and instruction medium. For them, the perceived service quality dimensions contributing most towards overall perceived service quality of a state university were facilities. Furthermore, the research also showed that university students from a different study period had a different perceived quality level on the social activities dimension, while university students of a different gender had a different perceived quality level on two dimensions, namely, social activities and facilities.

In another study by Chong and Ahmed (2014), it became clear that students' service quality experiences could be understood as a multi-faceted phenomenon with students expressing context-dependent service expectations and outcomes. The phenomenological study by Chong and Ahmed (2014) found that students ascribed meaning to their university service quality experience according to the perceived quality of academic services, administrative services and general services. Further, premised on broad views conveyed during the phenomenological interviews, students were inclined to view themselves as learners, specifically in the academic setting. The "learner" role, according to Chong and Ahmed, (2014), is associated with the desire to gain new knowledge, to

receive feedback for improvement and to be exposed to stimulating learning methods.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND SERVICE QUALITY

Universities have become increasingly involved in defining service quality and measuring customer satisfaction in ways that are familiar to service marketing specialists (Pereda, Airey, and Bennett, 2007). This triggered the present research considering that, with the rapid changes and development in every aspect of the world in recent years, most universities profess a commitment to the processes of change as they are confronted with formidable challenges. Globalisation, the advancement and convergence of information and communication technology (ICT), diversification of funding sources of higher education, and social and environmental issues are among the major challenges that universities have to address (Neely and Tucker, 2010). Internationalisation of curricula and the advances in e-learning and e-teaching impose great pressure on universities to achieve a breakthrough in the traditional contents and forms of educational delivery (Chiome and Kurasha, 2011). In this regard, it is pertinent to know how service quality conditions in a university heighten or enhance student satisfaction.

Satisfaction of customers has been heightened by the changes in the funding sources of higher education triggered by the decrease in government funding over the years (Felix, 2017). Another prominent trigger from an international perspective is that higher education confronts dual pressures – of rapid growth in participation from a broadened socio-economic mix of students, and of an increasingly severe financial stringency (Moses, 2007). This is notwithstanding challenges of finance that create barriers in the development of higher education infrastructure, academic freedom and institutional autonomy. This, in turn, has a huge bearing on the generation and implementation of customer satisfaction strategies. It, therefore, is important to interrogate practices in state universities' contexts to find the extent to which the prevailing conditions contribute to customer satisfaction.

SERVICE QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Sultan and Wong (2012) observed that improving service quality within a higher education setting is often cited as an internal goal, without any clear references to what is meant by service quality in higher education. In the world of cutthroat

competition, an organization needs some competitive advantage to sustain itself. Thus, as shown by (Dong, Sivakumar, Evans, and Zou,2015), research in services' marketing has consistently identified customers' perceived service quality and satisfaction as the two most important service outcomes. Achieving a high level of service quality and customer satisfaction can lead to crucial consumer behavioural outcomes such as increased repeat purchases, less consumer complaint behavior, higher switching cost and positive word of mouth (Ang, Liou, and Wei, 2018). Nevertheless, there are complexities in managing universities, from a marketing point of view, because the concept of 'customer' has not been clearly defined in the higher education sector. In this regard, Schreiner (2009, p. 1) observes that, "Unlike other service industries, which hold satisfaction as a goal in itself, colleges and universities typically perceive satisfaction as means to an end. Higher education tends to care about student satisfaction because of its potential impact on student recruitment efforts, motivation, retention and fundraising."

However, over the years in several parts of the world, the subject of service quality and student satisfaction in post-secondary education has received increasing attention. This is reflective of the rapid expansion of the higher education sector in the recent education reform and the demand for the sector to respond to the trend of globalisation and to meet the ever-changing expectations of the respective communities in their development into knowledge-based societies (Law, 2010). In this regard, over the past few years, there has been a significant growth in service quality initiatives and customer satisfaction strategies aimed at improving service delivery and increasing customer satisfaction levels at institutional, national, regional and global levels.

Teeroovengadum et al., (2016), outline that within the service quality literature, one of the most accepted and widely used instruments for measuring service quality is the SERVQUAL scale developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, (1988). In the same vein, Narang (2012, p. 359) argues that the SERVQUAL scale and its adaptations have been widely used in various services such as "banking, retail, wholesale, health, education". SERVQUAL has been cited extensively and although it is not flawless and has been criticized by many, its contribution to our understanding of service quality remains significant (Shekarchizadeh, Rasli, and Hon-Tat, 2011). For this reason, Shekarchizadeh et

al., (2011), observe that based on the SERVQUAL paradigm of disconfirmation, the gap between "expected" and "perceived" service quality will determine the customer's overall service evaluation.

Other scholars, such as Chong and Ahmed (2014), have offered to make use of the University Service Quality Model (USQ). The phenomenological findings of their study suggested that USQ is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which is complex in nature and qualitative evidence underscores the relevance of existing theories which posit that perceived quality is derived from the confirmation/disconfirmation of students' expectations. Overall, the findings of their study suggested that students' service quality experiences could be understood as a multi-faceted phenomenon with students expressing context-dependent service expectations and outcomes. The complex nature of USQ evaluation inevitably poses challenges to the university service providers in service quality management (Chong and Ahmed, 2014).

ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY IN UNIVERSITIES

As in other service sectors, the interest in the measurement of quality in higher education has been heightened. Numerous authors have shown that the assessment of service quality in institutions for higher learning has generally been framed from an institutional perspective (Chong and Ahmed, 2014; Narang, 2012). Given that education is an experience, its efficacy can be measured by evaluating its effect on users (students) (Petruzzellis, D'Uggento, and Romanazzi, 2006). Nevertheless, one should not lose sight of the fact that students are not the sole stakeholders of universities as there are others that include staff, employers, government, alumni, society and parents; these stakeholders all have their own perceptions of service quality and assessment mechanisms. In this regard, Teeroovengadum et al. (2016) argue that, notwithstanding the difficulties involved in choosing the customer of higher education as discussed earlier, in studies aiming at assessing quality in higher education, most researchers opt to regard students as the main customer of higher education provision and focus solely on their views while measuring quality. Little and Williams (2010) add weight to this argument noting that the stress on students' perceptions of quality has also taken root in the policy making arena.

Practical studies carried out on the subject of service quality in universities have epitomised the fundamental dimensions underlying the same

(Teeroovengadum et al., 2016). One of the prominent dimensions that have been noted in numerous studies has hinged around the significance of teaching and learning. To this extent, Narang (2012) established that among the dimensions of service quality, aspects including academic and personality development were deemed as being the most prominent. "Although, for all the factors the scores were negative, much effort was needed on the issue of personal development which seems to be an area neglected by the institutions. The findings reveal that higher education institutions need to focus on developing the all-round personalities of students…" (Narang, 2012, p. 359).

Perhaps a significant view noted by Narang (2012) reflects the existent misalignment between the industry needs and academic knowledge offered by the universities. This is corroborated by Wang (2012) whose study revealed outcome quality as one of the major dimensions encompassing two sub-dimensions: Personal Development and Academic Development. Other studies indicated that students placed greater value on the capability of the lecturer to smoothen the progress of their transformation via excellent communication, subject knowledge, enthusiasm among others, at the same time enabling them to participate fully in the learning process (Hill, 2003).

The intrinsic characteristics of the services provided by HEIs are dynamic, unlike the characteristics of the quality of fixed goods, like building infrastructure that essentially remains static (Campos et al., 2017). Such characteristics point towards the most significant dimensions that contribute to high quality in higher education. Perhaps this prompted Subramanian (2017:172) to argue that "…unlike other services, higher education services are long term and continuous, where cognitive participation of students is essential and the needs of the students are fulfilled by different service providers."

As highlighted by Teeroovengadum et al. (2016), the dimensions considered as the most important by students would be those that universities should prioritise. At least seven dynamics were identified to be key to the assessment of quality. In this regard, Eberle et al., (2016), assert that when it comes to quality, several authors have contributed to the original dimensions which reflect the challenges of quality performances perceived established for service providers. They further provide for the technical dimension, which concerns the quality of the results desired by a customer, more specifically, about what a

customer receives through his/her interactions with an organization. It is relevant to mention that the functional dimension of quality is related to the functions of a service provider and to the customer perceptions of the provided service (Eberle et al., 2016). Although a reasonable general correspondence was noted, many differences were found as well, which led Lagrossen et al. (2004, p. 68) to stress the "value of developing specific quality dimensions to facilitate the understanding of the particular situation at hand."

THE BUY ZIMBABWE CAMPAIGN

At this juncture, it is imperative to briefly discuss the Buy Zimbabwe Campaign. The campaign is one of the economic policies that were launched by the Government in 2005 in a bid to resuscitate the performances of the Zimbabwean companies through promoting consumption and spearheading production of locally produced products (Ndlovu, Mafumbate, Mafuka, and Brena, 2016). This was initiated in line with the belief that a 'buy local' campaign, kindles entrepreneurship knowledge and augments the efficient use of a country's resources as well as promotes the growth of the economy, creation of employment while obliging local brands to stand against competition (Davila, 2003).

According to the RBZ (2005), the conceptual framework for the Zimbabwean miracle, Buy Zimbabwean Campaign, is envisaged to create a platform for economic turnaround based on the realignment of consumption patterns with the economy's productive capacities. At the same time, the thrust of this initiative, is not to discourage international trade through restrictive barriers, but is aimed at instilling national pride and a sense of ownership that transforms consumer preferences in favour of their own brands (RBZ, 2005). This is an attempt to plug foreign currency drainage.

In this regard, the campaign is intended to permit market reclamation from imports by local brands in products and services. The campaign, therefore, proposes the belligerent marketing of home-grown products and services that are also aimed at creating a sense of patriotism, nationhood and belonging among locals thereby creating confidence of the locals in their own economy. This campaign, however, has not been aggressively adopted in the higher education sector in the country as there continues to be a host of students enrolling in foreign universities, despite the existence of the Buy Zimbabwe Campaign. In the light of such arguments, Petruzzellis et al. (2006) state that educational systems

are becoming services for people in which global and local levels combine, thus a standardised offer is modified by local specificities. While this is the case, Zimbabwean universities seem to have failed to develop local specificities that reflect best quality in the teaching and learning processes in higher education.

METHODOLOGY

In the endeavour to achieve the objectives of the study, the interpretivist paradigm which facilitated the understanding of the subjective world of human experience was used. In line with the interpretive paradigm, the qualitative research methodology was adopted. According to Scott and Garner (2013), the qualitative research methodology is a strategy of inquiry that is characterised by non-quantifiable written and documented observable data, meaning that such a study is difficult to replicate, few cases are chosen though many variables are studied and the conclusions cannot be deduced from statistical inference. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gain in-depth understanding of service quality in higher education from the perspective of key informants and students who were selected through purposive sampling and data collected through in-depth interviews. The population of the study comprised students currently enrolled in Zimbabwean universities, and those enrolled in universities outside Zimbabwe, alumni from foreign universities as well as parents of both locally enrolled students and those enrolled in foreign universities. For the study, it was approximated that a sample of, at least, 25 participants was adequate. The sample was comprised of 10 parents and 15 students. The subsequent data were analysed using thematic analysis and presented through the same procedure.

STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are presented in line with the objectives of the study mentioned in the earlier sections of the paper.

Objective 1: Identify the parents- and students' perceptions of quality in University education in Zimbabwe.

The findings of the study indicated the existence of numerous dimensions to service quality in the country. Findings also revealed that these factors have a substantial effect on service quality perceptions in university learning. A major finding of the study showed that both parents and students perceive the absence of adequate infrastructure and resources as a deterrent factor from enrolling in Zimbabwean universities, since many were perceived to be wanting in international outlook. Such infrastructure includes accommodation, access to internet services, problems of access to water,

electricity and reliable transport. Infrastructure and resources are key to facilitating the teaching and learning in the universities. One of the key informants interviewed from Rhodes University stated:

> *...the majority of universities in Zimbabwe have limited accommodation and this has led students, coming from other areas other than major cities where the universities are located, to seek alternative accommodation. These universities don't have any arrangement with accommodation providers. It is left to the student to look for accommodation elsewhere.*

A parent whose child is at the University of Pretoria in South Africa concurred:

> *I sent my child to a South African university because in this country the universities do not seem to have enough accommodation. Second year students have to look for their own accommodation. I did not want that hassle where I would have my kid looking for lodgings elsewhere where there is no supervision. This would also add on to existing expenses. I did not want to go through that so I opted for a university where once I pay fees, I'm done.*

An additional dimension of service quality that leads to the preference of foreign universities over Zimbabwean universities is linked to the programmes on offer. In the interviews, it emerged that the universities in Zimbabwe have limited programmes and places that do not tally with the aspirations and goals of students. For instance, the University of Zimbabwe, the oldest and most sought after, does not have some programmes and requires students with points as high as fifteen despite limited places. Therefore, those students who aspire to study those programmes are left with no choice but to enrol in foreign universities that offer those programmes while accepting lower points for admission.

A law student at a South African university and on internship in Zimbabwe said:

> *I wanted to do law at the UZ or the Great Zimbabwe University but could not get a place because they wanted 15 points and I had 11 points. I applied to several South African universities and was offered places. I had to make a choice of which university to attend. I don't understand why universities at home have to pitch the points so high for one to get into these programmes.*

From the study, it further surfaced that an underlying reason for the preference of universities abroad is linked to the quality of academic expertise in Zimbabwean universities. While Zimbabwe boasts of a literacy rate of over ninety percent (Zim Stats 2014), the majority of lecturers do not exhibit such literacy in the teaching and learning process in higher education. A key informant stated that such an aspect stems

from the low remuneration of university lecturers which leads to low morale. Linked to the above finding, it also emerged that the most skilled personnel are going abroad to seek employment, hence, affecting the quality of university teaching.

The findings indicated that some parents and students in Zimbabwe do not perceive Zimbabwean universities as prestigious. From the findings, such universities as Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard were identified as being some of the most prestigious in the world. An alumni interviewed posited:

> *I enrolled at Cambridge largely because it is one of the most prominent universities in the world. If you want prestige, such universities are where you would enrol.*

Other participants interviewed noted that enrolling with foreign universities heightens one's chances of employment both locally and abroad and, as such, they would prefer to learn in universities outside Zimbabwe. In any case, any university in developed countries such as the UK, the USA, Australia, and South Africa is perceived to be more prestigious than any of the best universities in the country. These perceptions might apply to fellow countries in the SADC Region where home-grown graduates are considered less exposed to international culture than their counterparts.

From the study, it emerged that universities in Zimbabwe have poor marketing strategies and customer care in their service delivery. This is against the backdrop that the nature of global competition has heightened the levels of competition among universities. One interviewee said that prospective students find it difficult to acquire information about the programmes on offer and their requirements on the websites of the universities. This was confirmed by slow or even non-responses to applications for admission to the country's universities. The participant said:

> *I applied online for a place to do PhD at one university in Zimbabwe. There was no response at all. I followed up with telephone calls, but to no avail. I eventually resorted to doing my PhD with UNISA. I'm in my second year now. I really wanted to do the programme locally…*

The universities' admission and assessment techniques also emerged as one of the determinants of service quality in Zimbabwe's higher education sector. In the Zimbabwean universities, it was argued that the admission and assessment techniques utilised had loopholes for corruption. Prospective students really deserving places at the universities were

denied such opportunities because of unethical admission and flagrant violation of laid down criteria. Corruption had further impacted on students' assessment leading some employers to doubt the credibility of qualifications and the quality of students churned out by these universities.

The study findings further showed that social factors, such as the family's educational history, gave rise to perceptions that foreign universities are of greater quality when compared to local universities. In the interviews, it emerged that parents that learnt in foreign universities often wanted their children to also learn abroad. Other social factors noted in the study encompassed competition stemming from the parents' social class and peer pressure. Those that were affluent in society preferred their children to enrol in foreign universities which give them a sense of prestige. Furthermore, given their social relations, there was peer pressure among the affluent to send their children to foreign universities.

The absence of wide-ranging extracurricular activities at local universities was also highlighted as affecting service quality perceptions. It was argued that, save for a few universities, the large number of universities in Zimbabwe had limited extra-curricular activities and related infrastructure for such activities. Activities such as swimming, tennis, cricket and hockey were identified as lacking, both in terms of existence and infrastructure. The said activities were perceived to give a university some international flair.

It also surfaced that Zimbabwean universities offered fewer scholarships as compared to foreign universities. In the interviews it was outlined that the majority of students learning outside Zimbabwe are doing so using scholarships awarded to them through bilateral arrangements, donor funding and acculturation. A professor with the Zimbabwe Open University interviewed said:

> *In many instances, we have former colonisers sponsoring education to perpetuate their interests in the former colony.*

Other issues that emerged from the study related to diplomats who had no choice but to have their children enrolled in foreign universities in countries within which they would be placed. One participant was very passionate about the politicisation of higher education institutions where the head of state is the chancellor of state universities. He said:

> *I don't like a situation where party politics are infused into educational systems of the country. I wouldn't want myself or my child*

> *to be capped by a political chancellor. I do not think that is right. I sent my child outside Zimbabwe where she will be capped by an academic chancellor.*

In the light of this objective, it was clear that there were indeed numerous dimensions underlying the parents' and students' perceptions of service quality. The findings affirmed the views from literature where it was shown by Sumaedi et al. (2012) that there are seven perceived service quality dimensions considered important to university students, namely, curriculum, facilities, contact personnel, social activities, education counselors, assessment, and instruction medium. The perceived service quality dimension contributing most towards overall perceived service quality of a state university is facilities.

Objective 2: To assess the impact of service quality in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe

The findings of the study showed that service quality had a far greater impact in higher educational institutions in Zimbabwe than imagined. One former student from the University of Zimbabwe said:

> *I feel that universities in the country have been affected by the lack of service quality. The universities have had negative reputations for failing to offer service quality.*

Such sentiments were further noted by a parent stating that:

> *The reputation of the majority of universities in the country have lost the reputation they had in the past 15 years. I directly link this to the lack of service quality in the institutions.*

Another argument raised in relation to the impact of service quality in HEIs in Zimbabwe was that of enrolment. It was argued by one Professor from the Zimbabwe Open University that:

> *There has been a considerable upsurge in the number of students that are enrolling with foreign universities at the expense of those in the country. This has been linked to the lack of service quality in the country's universities.*

Related to this objective, it could be demonstrated that the study findings were well within the realms of the views from previous literature. For instance, Sultan and Wong (2012) observed that in the world of cutthroat competition, an organization needed some competitive advantage to sustain itself. In as far as the impact of service quality on HEIs was concerned, this study conformed to the findings of other, previous studies such as that conducted by Law (2010) who noted a significant increase in the study of the subject of service quality and student satisfaction in post-secondary education in the world. In this regard, over the past few

years, there has been a significant growth in service quality initiatives and customer satisfaction strategies aimed at improving service delivery and increasing customer satisfaction levels at institutional, national, regional and global levels so as to enhance institutional reputation and competitive advantage.

Objective 3: To examine the relationship between service quality and customers' satisfaction in HEIs in Zimbabwe

On this objective, the study results reflected a greater correlation between parents- and students' perceived service quality and students' satisfaction. All the dimensionsof service quality noted under objective one were shown to have a significantly positive effect on overall user satisfaction. A parent interviewed said:

> *There is a correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction. In Zimbabwe, this is hampered by the quality of academic expertise in Zimbabwean universities.*

Similar sentiments were expressed by one participant who said that:

> *Lecturers in the universities in Zimbabwe have no PhDs hence this impacts on the quality of tuition which affects the ability of such personnel to offer services that satisfy customers.*

Such views are against the evidence that Zimbabwe has one of the highest literacy rates in the world at over ninety percent (Zim Stats 2014). Thus, as shown by Dong, Sivakumar, Evans, and Zou (2015), research in services marketing has consistently identified customers' perceived service quality and satisfaction as the two most important service outcomes. Achieving a high level of service quality and customer satisfaction can lead to crucial consumer behavioral outcomes such as increased repeat purchase, less consumer complaint behaviour, higher switching cost and positive word of mouth (Ang, Liou, and Wei, 2018).

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the study concluded that service quality is indeed a critical component to students when selecting a university to attend. It was also concluded that there are numerous dimensions of higher education service quality in Zimbabwe, and that these dimensions can be categorised into administrative, physical environment quality, mind set and performance of academics, pedagogy and the existence of support facilities. In addition, the study concluded that social factors have an influence on the perceptions of quality in the higher education sector in Zimbabwe. The study findings, therefore, offer a basis for policy implications towards the continuous improvement of higher education service quality in Zimbabwean universities. There

is need for the crafting of policies that enhance service quality among universities in Zimbabwe. Such policies should relate to administrative procedures, infrastructure development, assessment and admission criteria, among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that there be feedback on service quality assessments as well as the adoption of integrity in recruitment of lecturers and admission of students. It is recommended that Zimbabwean universities should train their staff in the administrative sphere with a view to equipping them with skills aimed at meeting the expectations of students. It is suggested that universities in Zimbabwe develop a service quality culture among staff and develop infrastructure that satisfy the students' and parents' expectations. This conscious effort would inevitably lead to a culture of internationalisation, a practice that the neighbouring countries of Zimbabwe could emulate.

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Internationalizing University Culture in the midst of Change and Quality

Etta Roland Daru
Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Cameroon
roland.etta@yahoo.com
Georgina Akuandou Njenwei
Faculty of Education, University of Buea, Cameroon
ginanjenwei1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
The Paper examines the effect of internationalisation on the university culture. Increasingly, universities across the globe are taking the initiative to internationalise university culture in order to produce graduates who can adapt in a changing environment andretain quality. The objectives of the present research are to address: perceptions, challenges of Internationalizing university culture, and addressing change and quality of its services. Although cultural diversity breeds strength, the question is: Have cultural differences become an instrument for destruction or strength? The subject among universities in Cameroon influences development of the economy, adaptation and productivity in a changing environment, as universities strive to improve the quality of their education. The study comprises a web-based survey, analysis of literature, involving an excellent review of relevant articles in addition to deductive content analysis of the data generated; and it examined ways of adapting to change and quality in higher education. In light of the data that have been collected, there is a correlation between addressing change and improving standards. Further, the findings show that Internationalizing university culture evidently has an impact on change and the quality of education; this, thus, influences development of research, students' mobility, teachers' mobility, and competitiveness of the university.

Keywords: Change, Internationalizing University Culture, Quality

INTRODUCTION

This is a concept paper, which notes that internationalizing university culture has become commonplace in contemporary research as more and more universities are under the pressure of matching the changing technological, socio-economic and political forces emanating from the broader postindustrial, external environment. More evidently, the unparalleled growth, complexity and competitiveness of the global economy, with its associated sociopolitical and technological forces, has been creating enormous pressure on higher educational institutions to respond to the changing environment with far reaching institutional adaptations involving "...significant transformation in the organization of adaptations research, training, and administration in higher education" (Cohen, 1997, p.549).It is our view that there is a growing hypothesis which contends that, in order to achieve competitive advantage in both national and international markets, universities have to increasingly adopt strategies for internationalisation. Movement toward the internationalisation of research and development activities, therefore, has expanded considerably during the past decade.

Internationalisation, at the national, sector and institutional levels, is defined by Knight (2003, p. 2) as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education". Hudzik's (2011) definition of *comprehensive internationalisation* expands on Knight's (2004) definition by identifying how internationalisation impacts all aspects of post-secondary institutions. Comprehensive internationalisation "…shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire education enterprise. It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty students and all academic and support units" (Hudzik,2011, p. 6). Hudzik (2011, p. 6) concludes that comprehensive internationalisation is "an institutional imperative" that "impacts all of campus life". In furtherance of the concept of internationalisation, it is understood as the 'process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of post-secondary education' (Knight, 2004, p. 9). As a result of colonialism, African universities have developed with a specific, but rather narrow, international outlook. In concordance with the continent's colonial

history, most African states developed tertiary education structures which were inspired by those of their respective colonial masters, and worked with partners in the relevant former colonial countries. After independence, this focus did not shift fundamentally.

Higher education in Africa is currently in the process of casting off its colonial moorings and embracing internationalisation in the true sense of the word. African universities have, therefore, set sail towards a brave new vision characterised by setting the internationalisation agenda that is founded on globally accepted and theoretically-based principles (Jooste, 2012). As African universities embark on the journey to developing practices that can become the foundation for long-term sustainability of internationalisation, they need to develop and adopt new practices to face the 21st century's challenges (Jooste, 2012). The question which consequently arises is: What should the future foundations of internationalization in Africa be? One possible approach would be to continue on the mainstream trajectory; however, there is a counter argument that the African higher education response to globalisation should be different. Provocatively, De Wit has posed the question whether there is a necessity to deinternationalise African Higher Education to overcome Western hegemony (Jowi, Knight and Sehoole, 2013). While 'de-Internationalizing' would be fallacious, it is important that a particular African process for internationalisation be developed, fully reflective of the African identity. It is impossible to sustain internationalisation processes if they are not based on a sound sense of identity and a cultural foundation.

Generally, internationalisation is understood as the 'process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of post-secondary education' (Knight, 2004, p. 9). As such, different cultural settings have diverse needs and their adaption to a global phenomenon on change and universality is addressed somewhat differently. However, these variations in emphasis and direction tend to share similar characteristics as explained by Altbach (2002) and Knight (1994). Altbach (2002:29) has noted that "internationalisation refers to the specific policies and initiatives of individual institutions, systems, or countries that deal with global trends".

Specific calls for the adaptation of the university through internationalisation come from various sources (Marvin 2003). Adaption is viewed here as an aspect of a process of organisational change and innovation involving openness and responsiveness to changing demands emanating from the external environment. Internationalisation requires organisational adaptation, that is, a process involving "modifications and alterations in the organisation or its components in order to adjust to changes in the external environment" (Cameron, 1984, p. 123). Notwithstanding, the struggle equally involves in the midst of change, quality preservation or disregard of valued education and relevance. This is an important and indispensable ingredient in the internationalisation process.

The internationalisation of higher education is a dynamic process, continuously shaped and reshaped by the international context in which it occurs. As this context changes, so do the purpose, goals, meanings, and strategies of internationalisation. Over the past half century, the world has changed dramatically as a result of the demise of colonial hegemonies, the end of the Cold War, the rise of new economic powers, and new regional alliances(IAU,2012). Globalisation is now the most important contextual factor shaping the internationalisationof higher education. Globalisation is characterised by interdependence among nations and manifested in the economic, political, social, cultural, and knowledge spheres. Central toglobalisation are the increased mobility of goods, services, and people and the accelerating use of information and communication technologies to bridge time and space in unprecedented ways and at continually decreasing costs(IAU,2012). Institutions, countries and regions in different parts of the world and at different times pursue a variety of goals and participate in diverse ways in the higher education internationalisation process. Examples, such as Africa under colonial rule, where access tohigher education meant travelling abroad to attend one of the universities of the colonial power, or more recently the Bologna Process, which is radically changing the higher education landscape in Europe through internationally coordinated reforms, illustrate howinternationalisation fulfils different purposes and brings different rewards and challenges(IAU,2012).

It is generally agreed in the literature, that internationalisation of higher

education is one of the ways countries respond to the impact of globalisation (Huang, 2002; Knight, 1999; Lemasson, 1999). Sometimes these two terms, namely, internationalisation and globalisation, are used interchangeably. Although interrelated, the terms differ in meaning, and serve different purposes. Globalisation is a relatively new concept that has come into common usage since the 1980s, and refers to the development of increasingly integrated economic, technological, political, cultural systems and relationships that transcend national borders and operate in real time (Bloland, 2005; Kellner, 2002; Marginson & Rhoades, 2005). Depending on one's philosophical or political perspective, globalisation has both positive and negative connotations. Supporters of globalisation present it as beneficial, generating fresh economic opportunities, political democratisation, cultural diversity, and the opening to an exciting new world, while its critics see it as harmful, bringing about increased domination and control by the wealthier overdeveloped countries over the poor underdeveloped countries (Kellner, 2002). Regardless of the views, global forces and processes have a major and growing impact on higher education. Globalisation has forced governments and higher education to examine their operations critically, and has presented opportunities for the sharing of ideas among institutions of the world.

The purposes of the present research are to address: perceptions, challenges of Internationalizing university culture, and addressing change and quality of its services. The paper begins with the explication of the process of internationalisation, followed by a brief review for the need for internationalisation: adapting to change and preserving quality, and examination of challenges of internationalisation.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This conceptual paper is significant because it will explore perceptions, challenges of Internationalizing university culture, and will address change and quality of its services and make recommendations for future research.

METHODOLOGY

The method used is literature review. The author has in this research made an effort to describe, summarise, evaluate and clarify literatures that are relevant to this study. According to the University of Australia library guide, in writing literature review, the reviewer aims to pass on to the readers the knowledge and ideas previously

established on a specific topic. He also tries to identify the challenges there are on the established knowledge. The literature review must be defined by a guiding concept like research objective, the problem or issue being discussed or an argumentative thesis. Based on this knowledge, the author critically analysed selected literatures that are relevant to the subject under study, extracting the important information therein and highlighting our areas of dissent.

Articles were identified that focused specifically on the internationalisation of university culture. The following search engines were used to identify relevant articles: Research Gate, Academia, JESTOR, Medline, Embase, ERIC, BEI and Google Scholar.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This conceptual paper integrates Internationalizing university culture and change and quality, which make it necessary to give a theoretical framework on appreciating change and quality. The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the literature on internationalisation of higher education and the literature on higher education associations.

INTERNATIONALIZING UNIVERSITY CULTURE IN CAMEROON

Internationalizing university culture in Cameroon has come with a great deal of imprint and challenges. With the prime objective of making Cameroon's higher institutions competitive on a global scale, the sector has sought new academic policies and programs as they join their cohorts in the realm of Internationalizing university culture. Without doubt, this has come with many nuances, but it has equally brought a face-lift for the different universities. Public universities in Cameroon, like private universities, joined the Bolognal system of education after 2007, and this marked another turning point – the introduction of the Bachelor, Master and PhD/Liscence, Master and Doctorat BMP/LMD System. In 2005, member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (CEMAC), had adopted the Bologna Process, referred to as (Bachelor, Master and PhD) BMP (by Anglophones) or (License, Master et Doctorat) LMD (by Francophones) systems. Member states (CEMAC) had signed the Libreville Declaration of February 2005 (Nnane, Titanji and Tchombe, 2009). In October 2007, the BMP/ LMD system was officially launched within Cameroon's HE system.

Certificates such as Diplome d'Etudes Generales (DEUG), the Maitrise and the Diplome d'Etudes Approfondies (DEA), for Francophones and the Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) for Anglophones, were gradually phased out (Nnane, Titanji and Tchombe, 2009). The essence was to ensure the comparability of degrees or certificates, facilitate student and staff mobility and strengthen quality and relevance of programmes. Lyonga and Endeley (2008) carried out a survey within the University of Buea, involving 118 students who were course delegates. The aim of the survey was to evaluate the extent to which students' experiences dovetailed with their expectations of the BMP process. Strengthening quality of services offered, access, equity at all levels are of strategic importance to the government of Cameroon. Increasingly, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), partly because of resource inadequacies, are being challenged to diversify their sources of funding by reducing their dependence on the government. Emerging concepts such as entrepreneurialism, accountability, good governance require new and demanding management strategies. Managing change, in a globalised knowledge economy, especially within the context of HEIs; as a kind of innovation, is likely to achieve its intended objectives only when the implementation process is closely monitored (Nnane, Titanji and Tchombe, 2009).

NEED FOR INTERNATIONALIZING UNIVERSITY CULTURE

The recent global, competitive forces have created unprecedented challenges for universities: "…the borders of universities have opened in new ways for their services and products" (Gumpor and Sporn, 1999, p. 103). Cross border education, that is, internalisation, with consequent requirements for structural and cultural adaptation, is pervasive and an inescapable reality on a world-wide basis (Gumpor and Spom,1999; Sporn, 1999). Adapting to internal change in organisations is important in meeting the realities of the community, and necessitates the need for internationalisation.

Similarly, it becomes imperative to pursue quality in the process of internationalisation, as the organisation is open to global competition, with the amazing post-industrial challenges. According to (Hayden, Thompson and Williams 2003; Chan and Dimmock, 2008) other key benefits of internationalisation include:

- diversifying and enhancing the learning environment for the benefit of domestic students, the University, and the nation;
- diversifying and enhancing the student population by attracting excellent international undergraduate and graduate students;
- ensuring that research and scholarship are informed by international, as well as national, provincial and local, considerations and issues;
- producing graduates who are internationally knowledgeable and cross-culturally sensitive;
- addressing through scholarship the increasingly interdependent nature of the world, thereby contributing to improved understanding among nations;
- generating resources to enhance other international activities;
- helping to maintain the economic, scientific and technological competitiveness, and promoting the export of educational products and services abroad; and
- raising the international profile of the university.

Generally, international education engenders the "international characteristics" fostered in students that are desirable in a global economy: international-mindedness and open-mindedness, second language competence, flexibility of thinking, tolerance and respect for others (Hayden, Thompson and Williams 2003; Chan and Dimmock, 2008).Students have an understanding of global issues; adopting academic programs and policies in institutions equally serves students as global leaders, since they have a concise comprehension of issues happening across borders. This equally presents them with an opportunity to compete in a global market and such experiences are what employers scout for currently in job markets.

INTERNATIONALIZING UNIVERSITY CULTURE

Adapting to change or pursuing quality

Adapting to change and pursuing quality education have become variables that can be manipulated as state and other private institutions battle their way in the struggle for Internationalizing university culture. Adversely, some institution seems to have lost sight of the value of education, and they concentrate on the commercialisation of programmes and scouting for students at home and abroad as they struggle to establish an international

community. This is so because the courses of different higher institutions are now marketed abroad as they target more students. To some extent, higher institutions try to adapt to technological, social and economic change. In so doing, the state and some institutions have changed academic policies and adapted curricula to meet global standards. Equally, some higher institutions lose or compromise the quality of the education they offer because they do not have adequate human resources and most managers concentrate on aspects other than quality products and services.

In our view, accepting change has exposed both the universities and the students on a global scale to competiveness with other academics and universities elsewhere. Equally, as University raise standards, they improve on the strength of their curricula, including the manner of conducting research, among others, and as such, are encouraged to do more.

Perception of Internationalizing University Culture

There is hardly any unified and universal definition of the concept of internationalisation of university culture. As such, different scholars hold different schools of thought as to what should be considered an all-inclusive definition of internationalisation of university culture. The state and other private institutions have adopted and adapted academic policies and programmes as they battle to meet international university standards. It is worthy of note that universities have two main objectives: to educate students and to generate knowledge. They play a major role in procuring the human and intellectual resources needed for fulfilling human and economic development (Green, 2005). Literature reviewed exposed shared perceptions about the concept of Internationalizing university culture in their various institutions, which included the following: teacher and student mobility, established credit and transfer systems; international student participation; curriculum change; international partnerships; mobilizing financial, human and technological resources for internationalisation; university private sector partnerships; faculty contributions to internationalisation; contribution of research to internationalisation; contribution of university development projects to internationalisation; organisational infrastructure, to name a few instances (Green, 2005). The communication of international opportunities to the university faculty and

student body is critical in internationalisation efforts; such communication could be achieved through efficient and comprehensive university web sites, group e-mail systems, and newsletters (Green, 2005). Universities with international focus will have human resources and facilities dedicated to international education and would have a campus-wide internationalisation task force. In addition, those universities would have an international administration office to follow-up on activities and disburse relevant information to their respective university communities (Green, 2005).

Institutions aggressively pursuing internationalisation must have mechanisms to financially support their faculty and student travel abroad, teaching abroad, programs for meetings and conferences, and study or establish research collaborations. In addition, universities should offer on-campus facilities and organise workshops to help faculty use technology to internationalise their courses (Green, 2005). In addition, universities should provide incentives to junior faculty staff who are not tenured and would like to pursue international collaborations early in their careers.

CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONALIZING UNIVERSITY CULTURE IN BUEA OF CAMEROON

Following the data collected from literature, interesting findings were made, which speak to some of the problems for the most part. This is particularly the case because the content of African education is hardly relevant to its immediate community as much of what is learnt from schools is more easily applicable abroad than in Africa. In this section of the paper, we outline the challenges as observed in higher education in Buea, Cameroon, as well as those from literature. Cameron (1984) draws a distinction between adaptation and organisation development (OD). "Adaptation focuses on changes motivated by the external environment; OD focuses on changes motivated from within the organization" (p. 123). While both kinds of organisational change are germane to internationalisation, the strategic choice approach and more specifically the "strategy-structure" model (Hardy choice approach and, et al., 1983; more specifically, Peterson, and Dill, 1997; Porter, 1980), Keller (1997)in combination with a "planned change" process, focusing on the organisation's culture, provides an underpinning for the conceptual framework

that is proposed to assist in the understanding of a process of internationalisation of universities. Despite these efforts, there are still some nuances accompanying the conceptualisation of internationalisation of university culture:

- Neglect of cultural curricula.I warn against complete Africanisation of knowledge systems but advise that key components of the African heritage should be inclusive in the struggle for internationalisation. For the most part, cultural curricular has been ignored in African knowledge systems.
- Limited funding. Internationalizing university culture demands large amounts of funds to accommodate and pursue international programs that are befitting of the requisite standard. It goes without saying that it demands infrastructural and human resource facilities to establish and run such programs.
- International opportunities are mainly limited to students with financial resources. Pursuing international and/or exchange programs abroad seems only possible for a selected few as most Cameroonians cannot afford the huge tuition fees of such programs, among others.
- Commercialisation of education (societal risk). Internationalizing university culture has become a tool for marketing and propaganda. It invites more students and eventually more money for the institutions. Universities have lost their focus of educating students, but instead use institutions to make more money and enrich their coffers.

CONCLUSION

Internationalizing university culture in Africa in general, and Cameroon in particular, will not reach its transformative potential through the mindless transfer of knowledge, theories and methods from other parts of the world. This will reproduce dependency; as local universities will be training individuals who can fit better in a foreign country. It is, thus, safe to say that a university will be preparing students for emigration as most of the knowledge acquired is of little or no relevance to their present communities.

Instead, empowerment of Africans, Cameroonian youths and sustainable development require that more contextualized knowledge be produced. The power and politics of knowledge must be

analysed. It is necessary to differentiate between dominant knowledge and universal knowledge and, through this process, decolonise the African academy in global stands (such that African education is regarded for its value and what it is) of Internationalizing university culture.

Educational systems are the foundation upon which progress depends and the quality of educational systems heavily impacts the long-term political and economic success of countries. Global competitiveness encompasses educational systems, and thus highlights the importance of quality education systems. The results from the study reveal insights of the nuances in culture and systems' challenges, impact on students' and staffs' perceptions of higher education. Cameroon's higher education competitiveness is being called into question and the results of this study can in part, along with similar studies involving other educational systems, help provide direction for higher education systems.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the literature, the following two recommendations for future research are suggested:

Recommendation 1: Further research should be conducted to evaluate the rewards and challenges of Internationalizing university culture in Cameroon. Recommendation 2: Further research should be conducted to facilitate public understanding of internationalization and African métissage.

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PROOF READING CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I have 42 years' experience in the teaching profession, both at high school and tertiary level. In my last position before retiring in December 2016, I was a Teaching and Learning Consultant employed by the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) of the University of Fort Hare. As such, I facilitated modules on the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education and Training (PGDHET) and also evaluated lecturers' teaching and their courses. My skills set allowed me to focus on management, language, research and student development. Activities which speak to this included coordinating the Language and Writing Advancement Programme for a number of years, being the editor of the TLC's bi-annual newsletter for approximately eight years and being the person responsible for the writing of most TLC's evaluation reports on the East London campus.

I hereby certify that I have acted as the external proof reader of the articles submitted to me by the Editor –in- Chief of APORTAL- Prof. N. Wadesango. I trust that the language used accurately and consistently reflects the intended meaning of the data tabulated by the authors and that the narrative is aligned with the aforementioned. Every effort has been made to enhance clarity of expression and avoid confusion or misunderstanding. The principles of anonymity, confidentiality, accountability and reliability were respected by all parties concerned.

Should there be any questions that arise from this exercise, kindly contact me on lscheckle@gmail.com.

Linda Scheckle (Private Editing Service)
Flat 2 Riverview Heights
6 Riverview,
Terrace
Beacon Bay,
East London
5241
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