ISSN: 2519-5670

VOLUME 17 (1) / 2022

THE INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Formerly *The Journal of Independent Teaching and Learning*

THE INDEPENDENT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (Pty) Ltd. Reg No. 1987/004754/07

A publication of The Independent Institute of Education

The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning

The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning (IJTL) is an education-focused journal, published twice a year, online and open access [ISSN 2519-5670 (Online)] by The Independent Institute of Education. The aim of the journal is to make a difference to educators at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, providing a scholarly forum for academics and education practitioners to share research on teaching and learning. The journal as well as all submission and publication information can be found at https://ijtl.iie.ac.za/

The IJTL is intended to be a resource for education practitioners and researchers as it aims to provide useful, research-based resources and to provide a scholarly forum for academics and education practitioners to share in research on educational practices and teaching and learning at various levels.

The following contributions are considered for publication:

- Theoretical articles
- Research-based empirical, reflective or synoptic articles that would be of interest to education practitioners
- Review articles that critically examine research carried out in a specific field
- Discussion or advocacy papers
- Book reviews that comprise a clear and concise evaluation of recently published books.

The journal accepts Doctoral Abstracts, which include the link to the full text thesis, from researchers that have graduated with a PhD/Doctorate in Education in the last two years. These are not peer reviewed and are published in a separate section of the journal.

Authors whose articles are published in the IJTL may only publish preprint versions thereof on platforms other than the IJTL.

Publisher
The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning
is published by
The Independent Institute of Education (Pty) Ltd
ADvTECH House, Inanda Greens Business Park
54 Wierda Road West
Wierda Valley, Sandton, South Africa
www.iie.ac.za

Address for correspondence
Professor Dolina Dowling
Editor-in-Chief
The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning
PO Box 2369
Randburg 2125
South Africa
E-mail: editor@iie.ac.za

Contents

Volume 17 (1) ***2022***

1

Notes on contributors

Professor Keshni Bipath is currently an associate professor in the Department of Early Childhood Education (ECE) at the University of Pretoria. She co-ordinates the Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education (PIECCE) and the ECE Post-Graduate programmes. She has also been a Foundation Phase educator, Head of Department, Assessment specialist and E-Learning specialist at the Gauteng Department of Education. She is passionate about the professionalisation of the ECD workforce, policy implementation, transformational pedagogy, literacy development of young children and relationship-building amongst parents and teachers in the Early Childhood Care and Education sector. She has published numerous articles and presented papers at international and national conferences on Early Childhood Care and Education, educational improvement and school effectiveness in South Africa.

Professor Nadia Ferreira is an Associate Professor in the Department of Human Resource Management at UNISA. She is a registered human resource practitioner with the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) and author and co-author of several published articles in accredited journals. She is a section editor for the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*.

Mr Thaabit Ismail was employed as an educator by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) for 10 years and now holds the position as Project Manager in the eLearning Department at the WCED, South Africa. He is primarily responsible for the provisioning of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to schools in the Western Cape province, so that teachers are enabled with technology that can be used for everyday teaching and learning. His passion for teaching and improving the lives of children were his inspiration to study in the field of Education and graduated in 2019 with a Master's Degree in Education from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. His research interests are in the South African Education system, academic motivation, the role of education in impoverished communities, and technology as a means to enhance teaching and learning.

Professor Ina Joubert has more than 35 years' experience in education. She has acted as school principal of an Early Childhood Education school, a senior lecturer in distance education, an associate professor and head of an academic department at the University of Pretoria. She has recently been appointed as the Executive Academic Director of the Private Higher Education Institution, SANTS. She has published numerous books, book chapters and accredited articles in leading academic journals. Many postgraduate students have completed their studies under her supervision over the past 10 years. She was awarded a special achievement award for the promotion of Afrikaans in Early Childhood Education by the Academy for Science and Art in 2018. Professor Joubert's work in literacy in the foundation phase and citizenship education for young children, received several accolades.

Dr Hardson Kwandayi is the Director, Academic and Institutional Audits, Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE)in Zimbabwe. ZIMCHE oversees quality assurance in all universities in Zimbabwe. He also teaches Public Policy Analysis at the same university. He holds a PhD in Higher Education Administration and Geography from the University of Arizona (USA). His other qualifications include: BA Honours (Geography), Graduate Certificate in Education, Postgraduate Diploma in Education, Master of Educational Administration, all from the University of Zimbabwe. After his PhD, he took several courses in Public Management at the University of South Africa. Before joining Lupane State University, Zimbabwe (LSU), he was a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Open University and Africa University. At Africa University, he coordinated a Master's degree in Public Sector Management which covered 15 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. The programme was funded by the African Capacity Building Foundation. His research and consultancy interests are in public policy, leadership, governance, quality assurance and teacher education.

Dr Isolde Lubbe is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Marketing Management, College of Business and Economics at the University of Johannesburg (UJ). She has 12 years' experience in research, teaching and training. Before joining UJ, she lived and worked for seven years in London (UK) where she worked at KPMG's and Mazars' London offices. She left Mazars as their Head, UK Marketing Communications to return to South Africa to join Standard Bank's marketing team to plan and lead the implementation of an internal communication project for Corporate and Investment Banking. She is passionate about Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and works closely with industry to integrate project-based learning on postgraduate and undergraduate level to shape and guide 'work-ready' students.

Dr Nomakhaya Mashiyi is a Senior Researcher at the Teaching Learning Centre at Fort Hare University and is responsible for promoting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and postgraduate supervision. She holds a PhD (Education Policy) from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her research interests are in Language Education (multilingualism/ translanguaging and academic literacies), decolonization of curricula, graduate attributes and academic and psycho-social support for students (tutorial support, e-coaching, ECP scholarship). She has published a number of book chapters and journal articles.

Professor Thobeka Vuyelwa Mda has been Dean of Faculty of Education at Cape Peninsula University of Technology in the Western Cape, from 2012 to 2020. Her total work experience spans over 40 years, in three provinces in South African schooling, higher education, secondary school, teacher training college and universities. At university, her academic areas of specialisation are Curriculum, Instruction Policies in Education and Qualitative Research. She has mentored young teachers and scholars. She is passionate about teaching and research.

Dr Nicholus Tumelo Mollo is an Education Law lecturer in the Faculty of Education at North-West University (NWU), South Africa. He holds a PhD in Education Law. His research interest includes discipline in schools, labour law in education, and schools as learning organisations for educators. He is one of the founders of Besilindile Primary School and the Sinqobile ABET Centre in Emalahleni (Mpumalanga). He was a centre manager of the Sinqobile ABET Centre, and a principal of Ukhwezi Primary School and Emakhazeni Boarding School in Mpumalanga. In 2014, he received a 3rd position in the National Teacher Award at Nkangala District for Excellence in Primary School Leadership. He taught education law at UP and at EDUTEL (part time). He also lectured and moderated at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), on a part-time basis. He has presented papers at conferences and contributed chapters and articles to scientific journals. He is a radio commentator for education law issues.

Dr Shonisani Agnes Mulovhedzi holds a PhD in Early Childhood Education from the University of Pretoria. She is a committee member of South African Research in Early Childhood Education (SARAECE)

and a coordinator of the Univen-Model Preschool. Her research and teaching focus primarily on special issues relating to Early Childhood Education with an emphasis on leadership, Life Skills, inclusive education and Administration and Management in the Foundation Phase. She won Vice-Chancellor's excellence awards in teaching and learning. Shonisani has written and published book chapters and articles in accredited journals. She has authored and co-authored numerous articles. At present, Dr. Mulovhedzi is working as a senior lecturer at the University of Venda.

Dr Tenson Muyambo is a holder of Doctor of Philosophy in Gender and Religion from University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. He teaches a number of modules in the Department of Teacher Development at Great Zimbabwe University in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. He did his MA, BA (Sp. Hons), BA (Gen) in Religious Studies at the University of Zimbabwe. At Zimbabwe Open University, he obtained Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and Master of Educational Administration, Planning and Policy Studies. Before joining Great Zimbabwe University, he taught at Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University as one of the pioneering staff. His research and consultancy work are in Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Religion, African Identity, Education and Gender.

Professor Clever Ndebele is currently the Senior Director of Learning and Teaching at Walter Sisulu University, South Africa. He has extensive experience in higher education studies, with more than 10 years' experience at senior management level in teaching and learning at several universities in South Africa. Has participated in several (NRF) research projects on academic staff development in collaboration with other universities and has also been involved in the Teaching Development Grant National collaborative projects (namely Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education for educational development practitioners and Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education for PGDHE for academics). Prof Ndebele currently oversees academic staff development and student academic support and coordinates the University Capacity Development Programme, the New Generation of Academics Programme and Future Professors Programme at Walter Sisulu University.

Ms Mojaesi Violet Phejane comes from Odendaalsrus, Free State. She obtained qualifications in Social Sciences, Criminology and Gender studies, all from the University of the Free State, South Africa. She is currently registered for a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education at the University of the Free State. She works as an Instructional Developer focusing on curriculum development, research, administration, training, and the use of technology in teaching and learning as well as client relations at the Centre for Teaching and Learning, University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. Her areas of interest include women's emancipation, education of young girls, curriculum design and development, restorative justice, feminism, ODeL and Blended Teaching and learning. She strongly believes in education being the key to transforming poverty in communities and being the key to a successful life. She has published articles in gender and teaching and learning.

Professor Ingrid Potgieter is an Associate Professor in the Department of Human Resource Management at UNISA. She is a registered human resource practitioner with the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) as well as an Industrial Psychologist at the Health Professions Council of South African (HPCSA). She has published several articles in national and international accredited journals and is a section editor for the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*.

Dr Maria Snyman holds a DEd in Curriculum Studies. As a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Specialist, she has extensive experience in conducting RPL training to diverse target groups. She has facilitated portfolio development workshops in different African countries. She assists both universities and industry to implement and manage RPL. The clients include different higher education institutions - both national and international. Her international work included the development of an online RPL assessor training course in collaboration with the DePaul University. She is still involved at UNISA as an independent contractor.

Professor Göran Svensson is Professor at Kristiania University College, Norway. He is the editor of the *European Business Review*. He is also an active and dedicated member of numerous editorial boards and editorial review boards of international research journals. Furthermore, he is a committed member of many international research and scholarly networks and associations. He is a frequent author of international journal articles and international conference contributions. He is also engaged as a book author. Occasionally, he gives speeches in business and writes columns for business magazines and newspapers. During the 1980s he was an industrialist and entrepreneur in South America.

Editorial

Dolina Dowling

In the current system of higher education, there are clear-cut entry criteria for young people wishing to pursue HE study. The paths for those who do not follow the typical matriculation route or for mature learners are often not so clear. Indeed, in the past, there were few if any routes. The advent of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) provided the National Qualification Framework (NQF), which *inter alia* allows for vertical and horizontal articulation within South African HE and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This opened HE study to the population at large. (Sadly, financial constraints remain despite government funding efforts.)

Whilst regulations have been in effect for RPL since the early 2000s, RPL has often been unevenly implemented across institutions. Little research has been conducted to determine (i) the efficacy of the processes adopted by higher education institutions (HEIs), (ii) the success rates of students admitted through RPL, or (iii) the views of the academic assessors and would-be students, in particular for postgraduate studies. It is, therefore, timely that this is being addressed. In this volume of this 2022 edition of the IJTL, the first article investigates the RPL process at an Open and Distance Learning HEI in South Africa as well as the perceptions of the faculty and candidates involved. Critical benefits were found for both parties.

Also, it has long been the case that, to teach in an HEI, the qualification criteria are academic awards, in particular doctorates. However, since the massification of HE with its emphasis on inclusion and diversity, old methods of teaching are no longer sufficient. Pedagogy has moved from teacher- to student-centred. To ensure that students have a positive and successful learning journey, academics need to have a teaching toolbox which can be used in the various disciplinary areas and to meet the needs of students' different learning styles. As a consequence, the professionalisation of teaching is well underway across the globe as can be seen in initiatives like HE Advance in the UK and its uptake in other countries, as well as the proliferation of postgraduate diplomas and certification in HE pedagogy. In the second article, the author, using a qualitative approach, conducted a study at the end of their first year of a two-year postgraduate diploma in higher education (PGDHE) to determine lecturers' experiences on the programme and any effects on their teaching. It was found that there were both a shift in academics' identity and an uptake on different and varied teaching methods in their courses. The author recommends that professional training in pedagogy be a requirement for newly appointed lecturers.

Another important aspect in making learning meaningful, impactful and contributes to student success is employability of graduates. Business and industry officials typically do not wish to employ graduates with no prior work experience and in whom they would have to invest heavily at the start of their employment.

In short, employers want work-ready graduates. Having Work Integrated Learning (WIL) embedded in programmes so that students graduate with the appropriate employability skills for their chosen career are important. In the third article, the authors used a qualitative and inductive longitudinal study to assess the efficacy of WIL of a postgraduate business programme. It yielded positive results.

In the next article, the authors conducted a case study on block release student learning in a public policy course in a Zimbabwean institution and recommend ways to support deeper learning through continuous lecturer-student interactions on programme contact and the use of Bloom's taxonomy in practice questions.

The following article deals with the important topic of retaining female academics at HEIs. The authors, using quantitative methodology, examined the relationship between self-esteem and job-embeddedness (psychosocial career meta-capacities) in retention. Their findings indicate that human resource professionals need to give much more attention to this area. A number of recommendations are made.

The next cluster of four articles, whilst dealing with aspects of education in schools, is just as pertinent to further and higher education: (i) providers as learning organisations, (ii) motivation in learning, (iii) development of leadership skills, and (iv) mentorship of educators. The first article deals with schools as learning organisations from an education law and policy perspective. It was found that while policies and regulations are sufficient, the problem lies with uneven to poor implementation in schools. Recommendations to support educators and officials in this endeavour are made. The following article reports on a phenomenological approach that was used to determine what motivates learners in the senior year in a 3rd quintile South African secondary school. Using semi-structured interviews, the authors found a range of factors that teachers and parents can use as interventions to support learner achievement.

The development of leadership skills is important for success in the workplace. However, this is not merely the task of HEIs. It is important for all learners and students as it builds self-confidence, creativity and good communications skills. The following article shows how such skills can be developed in Foundation Phase learners. The final article in this cluster used a case study to investigate the mentoring needs of teachers in an Early Childhood Development setting to enhance their professional identity.

Lastly, in Practitioners' Corner, the author used a case study to investigate the use of Blackboard Collaborate in supporting online learning. She found a number of benefits for students ranging from an improvement on grades to greater student engagement. Recommendations are also made.

7

An exploration of students' and academics' experiences of the Recognition of Prior Learning process for admission to postgraduate studies[1]

Maria Snyman, University of South Africa, South Africa

ABSTRACT

In the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process that is completed for access to undergraduate studies, students and academics are the key participants. Their experience of the process appears to be under-investigated, given the limited number of these studies that have been conducted at distance learning institutions. Therefore, it is important to explore the perceptions and experiences of academics and students of the RPL process, in order to make meaningful suggestions for improving the process. This research explored the RPL experiences of students and academics in the postgraduate context, at an open distance learning (ODL) institution. Research participants who were directly involved in the RPL process, as applicants and as academic assessors, were involved. It was established that, apart from granting them admission to postgraduate studies, RPL candidates also benefited from the process on personal, as well as academic levels. The main aspect of RPL, preparation of evidence for assessment, similar to those of sustainable assessment, contributes to students becoming aware of their learning potential. Aspects of the RPL process, that both candidates and academics found beneficial, were illuminated during this research project. The academics gained insight into the candidate learner profile, while candidates experienced the process as beneficial; both for gaining admission and the postgraduate context.

Keywords: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), access to postgraduate studies, sustainable assessment

INTRODUCTION

The following quotations of RPL candidates and academics denote some of the perceptions of the RPL process as a means of achieving access to postgraduate studies:

> RPL unleashed my potential.
>
> An opportunity … acknowledgement.
>
> Overall, I found the RPL process rewarding and helpful.
>
> The preparation of the RPL assessment makes them realise the value of their work experiences in adding to readiness to study.

1 Date of submission: 16 March 2020
Date of review outcome: 16 September 2020
Date of acceptance: 7 January 2021

RPL has been entrenched in South African education policies and legislation since 1994, addressing the purposes of access, transformation, lifelong learning, and flow among the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels. The RPL process provides RPL candidates access opportunities to postgraduate studies. The candidates do not meet the conventional admission requirements, but claim that they have obtained the relevant knowledge, research experience and coupled with an undergraduate qualification will be able to meet the demands of a postgraduate qualification. The RPL access process means that the opportunity to pursue the relevant postgraduate qualification is available to students and implies that 'advanced standing' (SAQA, 2019: 4) has been granted. Granting 'advanced standing' does not entitle the learner to claim achievement of the exempted qualification, but an opportunity to be granted admission to studies at a higher level than the prior formal studies would have allowed. As a tool for lifelong learning, RPL recognises that learning occurs in all contexts of life and includes attitudes and competencies for personal growth within the context of the National Qualifications Framework. When considering RPL as a relevant tool for access, it is necessary to highlight the benefits of RPL as a process, within the context of teaching and learning in the higher education context.

Since the implementation of RPL at the University of South Africa (Unisa), which is an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) institution, it was predominantly applied to obtain credits within undergraduate qualifications and only to a lesser extent to gain access to postgraduate studies. Considering the academic demands involved in completing a postgraduate qualification and Unisa's commitment to success after access (Unisa, 2016c), it is important to evaluate the RPL process. It is a comprehensive and demanding process. Experiences of students and academics of the RPL process need to be explored as this might provide significant information on first-hand, personal experiences and perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of the process. Furthermore, it could determine whether an RPL process contributes to the key intention of RPL in South African, namely to 'facilitate the change in the lives of RPL candidates' (SAQA, 2019: 3).

The University invests time and academic involvement in assessing students for direct access to postgraduate studies and in supervising successful RPL candidates during postgraduate studies. RPL assessors and academics draw on their evaluative expertise to participate in the process of assessing RPL applications. An assessment panel is formed, members are experienced academics in the field of the application, as well as experienced assessment specialists. These investments warrant certain requirements with academic merit for an RPL process (Singh, 2011.) It becomes particularly significant considering the institutional plan of the ODL institution (Unisa, 2016c), which advocates student centredness, the removal of access barriers and RPL, in order to facilitate access and academic success.

The South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA, 2019: 11) defines RPL as a 'process through which non-formal and formal learning are measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in formal education'. Candidates are made aware that the main purpose of the process is to gain access or alternative admission to a qualification. This definition foregrounds mediation for making prior learning visible for assessment. Therefore, the RPL process makes provision for extended assessment preparation. Preparation for the RPL assessment facilitates mediation from one type of knowledge context to another. Assessment, which is central to all RPL processes, does not occur in isolation, but allows for different forms of learning and extended assessment preparation, which engages the intrinsic development of knowledge, skills, and competencies (SAQA, 2013). The preparation includes activities that are required as a means of producing evidence for assessment. As an integral feature of all forms of RPL, the preparation can include strategies that allow for different forms of learning to be compared and judged (SAQA, 2019: 11.) Assessment means the process used to identify, gather, and interpret information and evidence against the required competencies in a qualification (SAQA, 2019). Furthermore, one of the the important elements of the approach is, that it is a multi-dimensional process (SAQA, 2019: 11) within a specific context.

It is often highlighted in research that RPL, as a process to obtain or grant access to postgraduate studies, such as that of Cooper and Harris (2013), includes different aspects of a multi-dimensional process. The differentiation of knowledge means that RPL practitioners need to provide appropriate support for candidates to navigate their way into different academic discourses at postgraduate levels of study. Further to this, the implementation of an RPL process requires the involvement of the key stakeholders with clear roles and responsibilities. These stakeholders would include students and RPL assessors who could inform policy amendments and instruction of multi-modal pedagogy within the context of adult learning, by sharing their experiences and reflecting on their competencies. As per policy principle, Unisa's strategy allows for a developmental approach, where decisions are based on student needs and profiles (Unisa, 2016).

Students confirm that their experiences of the RPL process, for access to postgraduate studies, were positive and empowering experiences (Cooper 2011). In exploring the benefits associated with RPL, Cleary et al. (2002: 20) argue that participation in the RPL process creates an awareness within the students of their own learning potential, which contributes to greater self-confidence, as well as provides an 'important bridge' between informal and formal learning. In addition, several authors refer to RPL as a process of building bridges between different cultures and contexts of knowledge (Cameron, 2006; Gallacher & Feutrie, 2003). This includes the role of RPL in providing 'a bridge between academia and prior learning, in order to support future learning' (Pokorny & Whittaker, 2014: 270).

One of the principles of the Unisa RPL policy refers to RPL as a process supporting candidates to enable them to bridge the gap between informal or non-formal prior learning as well as formal learning (Unisa 2016a). It can be argued that the skills gained during assessment preparation assist students in their postgraduate studies; hence the need to evaluate the RPL process against this background.

RPL in a particular context involves certain requirements, such as clear admission guidelines and supportive guidance to prepare candidates (Singh 2011). This entails details on the process, the assessment tools, the evidence required and the available support. At Unisa, a comprehensive RPL application process includes advice to candidates as to the required documents and assessment evidence (Unisa 2016a). The application includes a motivation for access and an outline of a research proposal, based on work and research experience. Academics assess the evidence to determine whether direct access can be granted, and to identify learning gaps (Unisa, 2016b). The assessment panel is required to ensure that all RPL assessments are carried out as per the guidelines (Unisa, 2016b) and should furnish proof by completing an assessment report that the assessment has been properly carried out and moderated and that all assessment reports will stand up to scrutiny at an external audit. This process is coordinated by an RPL specialist as per policy requirements (Unisa, 2016a).

Within the ODL framework, the role of the RPL specialist, as RPL practitioner, includes promoting RPL within the university context, train academics as RPL assessors and evaluators, advise and support RPL candidates, facilitate the application and assessment process, as well as ensure the quality of the process. The RPL application, with supporting evidence as per guidelines explained in the application brochure, should be assessed by the Assessment Panel. This panel comprises academics who are involved as supervisors and who have expert knowledge in the academic field of a specific application. Evaluative expertise implies deep subject matter and understanding of knowledge about the outcomes being assessed at a theoretical and practical level. Implications of this is that the RPL application includes practical experience in diverse contexts of learning. To ensure the quality and standard of the process, clear guidelines are included in the Procedures Manual for academics (Unisa, 2016a).

Candidates are expected to interpret the level outcomes for the masters' or doctorate qualification they wish to be admitted into, in the articulation of the motivation — an activity that provides an opportunity

to develop a wide range of useful transferable cognitive and behavioural skills. The level descriptors hold the advantage of being used as a mediating device (Pokorny & Whittaker, 2014) between prior learning and academic requirements, where personal learning should be described within the disciplinary framework of the intended qualification. The challenge is that candidates are expected to compile this academic motivation as self-directed adult students; only with the instruction to match learning based on self-assessment and reflection. Candidates should be able to identify their skills and competence relative to the entry requirements for postgraduate study. If there is further need, they may contact the RPL specialist for individual guidance. However, the research will guide the need for more focused pedagogic support.

Within the context of higher education, the RPL process is often regarded as complex, where candidates may have negative views about it the process. On the other hand, academics often show resistance against the process due to concerns about the academic standard of the process. The reality is that the process has not been evaluated since the inception of RPL at this institution. An evaluation of the process based on academics and students' experiences of the process can provide information on the value of the process and can be used to help alter negative views. This will meet the requirements of the SAQA unit standard; Develop, Support and Promote RPL practices (SAQA, 2010), that states that RPL should be promoted in a manner to address factors that constitute barriers to effective assessment practices.

With the intention of evaluating the RPL process and determining the perceived benefits of RPL to postgraduate studies, the main research question in this study was:

> Based on their experiences, what are the perceptions of academics and students of the value of the RPL process in the postgraduate context?

To answer the research question, the following sub-questions were considered:

- What are the reflections of RPL candidates about their RPL experiences?
- What is the perceived contribution of the RPL process to postgraduate studies?
- What are the perceptions and experiences of academics of the RPL process?
- What are the experiences of academic staff of RPL candidates as postgraduate students?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The purpose of the theoretical perspective is to support the research questions and to provide a framework for the findings and discussions. Involvement in the process, as an RPL practitioner, and informal feedback from both students and academics, created an awareness of benefits associated with the process, creating the need for empirical research within a theoretical framework. With assessment as being central to the RPL process, the literature explores aspects of assessment as a learning experience. An aspect that can contribute to the lasting effect of RPL assessment as learning is the inclusion of a sustainable assessment approach (Snyman, 2013). In a personal e-mail to the author, Boud (2012) regards research on sustainable assessment as an 'unoccupied niche' because it seems as if no research has been done on this. A sustainable approach has long-term benefits for students, and may be beneficial for both the RPL process and postgraduate studies.

The process and value of RPL

The RPL process sets out to be a demanding individualised process where certain qualities are required from candidates, such as self-knowledge and ability to reflect on their own learning. This has the potential of benefiting students within a learning context.

A convincing body of research (Van Kleef, 2014a, 2014b; Pearson 2000) identified a range of benefits associated with the RPL process, such as its significant role in student success; predicting success; and in contributing to adult learners' persistence to succeed academically. The experiences of RPL students, as in the case study conducted by Aarts et al. (1999) provided sufficient evidence to support the claim that the RPL process could be beneficial to students. On a personal level, the RPL process was also found to enhance learners' self-esteem and their confidence in their ability to learn, and to increase their motivation to complete their studies. Flint (1999) observed that the value of RPL was in encouraging adult learners to bring a rich, complex history of experience to the learning situation that directly related to new learning. Valentine, Bowles and McKinnon (2016) also highlighted students benefiting from RPL, by reframing previous experience into academic contexts. Elements of personal empowerment attained though RPL included personal transformation (Armsby, 2013), which could have a positive impact on adult learners (Van Kleef, 2014a), and enhanced motivation (Donoghue et al., 2002). These findings could guide exploring students' experiences of the process, since RPL has potential implications for a candidate's learning opportunities and self-development.

Van Kleef (2014a) confirmed that a learner-centred approach, embedded in the RPL process, could strengthen adult learners' motivation by connecting their work experiences to learning expectations. This is supported by Donoghue et al. (2002), who observed that RPL motivated adults to continue learning in a formal setting. Additional benefits of RPL include an increased awareness of knowledge and skills and an improved reflective and evaluative ability (Garnett & Cavaye, 2015). From a learners' perspective, Migual, Ornelas and Maroco (2016) perceived that RPL leads to a different narrative of the self and a sense of accomplishment — both key elements of learner identity.

An unquestionable benefit of RPL is that it establishes patterns of performance and success (Donoghue et al., 2002), thereby adding to students' confidence in being admitted to formal studies and confirming their academic ability. The research of Anderson and Fejes (2012) verified prior learning as a starting point for new learning and contribution to students' awareness of their own knowledge. By allowing learning during assessment, RPL often results in new insights into personal and professional goals, which, in turn, contribute to motivation Anderson and Fejes (2012: 37). Also, new learning, resulting from the recognition process, could be 'the basis of new learning'. A real concern is that experiential knowledge does not easily 'translate' into academic knowledge (Cooper, 2011: 53), which is why it is essential for the process to enable students to engage in reflection and self-assessment, in order to articulate their learning through experience (Donoghue et al., 2002).

A better understanding of both academics and students' experiences of the RPL process can inform the scope of advice and support required for preparation of the assessment process. The advice and support are provided in a way to promote the purposes of RPL and ensure student success.

Student preparation for RPL assessment

As RPL assessment preparation, students compile a comprehensive application form with evidence and supporting documents, which requires 'evaluative judgement' (Villaroel et al., 2017: 13) and the ability to draw on work and research experience, in order to transfer learning to the academic context. Writing the motivation as part of the application involves the challenge of aligning prior learning with exit level outcomes of a postgraduate qualification and to provide an appropriate description of learning claimed (Garnett & Cavaye, 2015). The exit level outcomes serve as a framework and as 'signposts' for reframing experience from one context to another (Van Kleef, 2014b: 326). The academic outcomes that are included in the exit level outcomes should be linked to authentic work and life situations, which requires informed judgements of relevant learning gained through experience. This is a demanding task of candidates who may not have contact with the academic context for some time and even more demanding within the ODL framework, where students are required to work independently.

RPL preparation requires pivotal skills, such as reflection, self-assessment, and critical evaluation of relevant evidence (Houston, Hoover and Beer 1997; Joossten-ten Brinke 2008). Reflection is a 'central skill in the RPL process' (Garnett & Cavaye, 2015: 35). By compiling their research evidence, candidates could reflect on prior learning (Stevens, Gerber & Hendra, 2010). As a key aspect of evidence preparation, reflection requires the ability to critique one's own thought (Garnett & Cavaye, 2015), to articulate learning through experience (Donoghue et al., 2002.) The application provides students with an opportunity for self-assessment within the framework of an academic discipline (Singh, 2011). Furthermore, completing the application combines the actions of making evaluative judgements and understanding benchmark standards (Adachi, Hong-Meng Tadi & Dawson, 2017).

As Marienau (2014) confirmed, there are different learning opportunities embedded in the RPL preparation and students often gain new learning from the RPL process, since they are required to identify what they have learned through a process of intense analysis, reflection and meaning making. Exploring the learning associated with RPL, Migual, Ornelas and Maroco (2016) referred to evidence of critical thinking; new interpretations of experience; and the realisation of prior knowledge. Stevens, Gerber and Hendra (2010) supported this notion by observing that RPL participation fosters a new sense of confidence in making meaning of experience.

The RPL process can be 'an important source of new learning' (Fiddler, Marienau & Whitaker, 2006: 27), since it allows candidates to identify their strengths though the reflection process and to develop a new awareness of their personal learning and identify strengths. The skills of self-assessment and reflection are required to ensure that RPL helps 'students to transform and reframe previous experience' (Valentine, Bowles & McKinnon, 2016: 495). When preparing evidence for the RPL process, it is essential that students reflect on own learning, make judgements about their own learning experiences and do self-assessment. In this regard it is worth noting that theorisations of sustainable assessment provide opportunities for an RPL process. Students, as active participants, become central to both the RPL and sustainable assessment learning processes. Through both preparation for RPL assessment as well as sustainable assessment, students are encouraged to become 'self-assessors' (Matthews & Reyes, 2019: 3). This, in turn, requires an understanding of the characteristics of sustainable assessment in the RPL assessment context.

RPL and sustainable assessment

Within the ODL context, an RPL process has the potential to broaden access, but also to ensure success of candidates after access (Letseka et al., 2014). Key elements of sustainable assessment, self-assessment and reflection could be beneficial to RPL, in that these elements prepare students for their 'future learning needs' (Bourke 2017: 8) and therefore the postgraduate context after access. Through sustainable assessment, students develop an awareness of learning and assessment skills as they actively participate in the self-evaluation of evidence. Students become 'self-assessors' (Kun Dai et al., 2019: 1), therefore, the theorisation of sustainable assessment can contribute to students 'lived experiences' of assessment within the learning context.

Boud and Soler (2016: 400) explained sustainable assessment as assessment that meets the 'need of the present', while preparing students for future learning. Sustainable assessment contributes to a changing perspective of assessment and preparation for future learning (Ngyuen & Walker, 2016).

The assessment is aligned with long-term learning to equip students for assessing their future learning, including the notion of 'assessment as double duty' (Boud 2000: 159), which may include assessment as learning; the acquisition of assessment skills; and equipping students to become reflexive learners capable of informed judgement. Boud (2000) argued that preparation for sustainable assessment built on the belief that all students had the capacity to succeed and that it aimed at forming independent, self-regulated and reflexive learners, who were able to make informed judgements.

Sustainable assessment helps to bridge the gap between assessment and learning', which relates to students' judgements about their own work (Boud & Soler 2016: 400). As Adachi, Hong-Meng Tai and Dawson (2017) observed, self-assessment could be an effective assessment approach in higher education since it involves evaluative judgements. Self-assessment contributes to developing an 'ontological awareness' (Bourke, 2017: 1) and, as a pedagogical approach, it supports students' understanding of their learning, enabling them to become familiar with their wealth of learning, personal attributes and strengths. In an RPL preparation process, this awareness of their own learning strengths may contribute to RPL candidate students to gain a sense of confidence about the learning process. Therefore, an exploration of their experiences will shed light on a better understanding of the learning process. When surveying the literature, it became evident that aspects of sustainable assessment dovetail well with RPL in that they align assessment with lifelong learning. However, as Boud and Falchinov (2007) suggested, a more focused approach requires an exploration of the conceptualisation of assessment tasks to promote a sustainable approach that equips students for future studies.

The perspectives on RPL processes and benefits can be used to guide the empirical study of participants' reflections on actual RPL experiences, in order to determine the role and value of RPL and to make recommendations for improvement of the process.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The research was designed to document the reflections on and experiences of academics and students of the RPL process at Unisa. A selection of students and academics in a specific department at the University was identified as the target population.

The students were the cohort, who had been granted admission through RPL and who, at the time, were at different stages of their postgraduate studies. The staff group comprised academic staff who had been involved in RPL assessment for admission to postgraduate studies and, at the time, were supervising RPL students. Since there were only three academics in the department who were involved in RPL assessments, three academics from other departments in the same faculty, who were also involved in RPL assessments, were purposefully selected. These were staff members who met the criteria of exposure to, participation in, and support of the RPL process.

Ethical clearance was obtained by following the guidelines of the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics (Unisa, 2016b). Only respondents who indicated their willingness to participate, were involved in the research. Data were collected by means of two open-ended questionnaires, each comprising 10 questions covering the same components of RPL. The purpose of the questionnaires was to capture participants' authentic perceptions and experiences of RPL. The open-ended questions were structured to cover reflections on their personal experiences and perceptions of the process, the support received during preparation of the process, the post-access context and general reflections on the process. To ensure credibility and exclude bias, both questionnaires were moderated and validated by an independent, external expert and by an academic in the department involved in RPL assessments.

The questionnaires were distributed electronically. Questionnaire 1 was sent to 35 students, who were older than 23 years, with at least five years relevant work experience, as required by the RPL process. Despite electronic reminders being sent out, only nine questionnaires were returned. Questionnaire 2 was sent to six academics and all six were returned.

An inductive and interpretive approach was followed in the thematic analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and the steps proposed by Tesch (1992) served as the data analysis method. This approach allowed the capture of the rich, lived experiences of research participants. As an organising system, topics

were identified and clustered into categories and sub-categories. Acronyms were allocated to categories, e.g., motivation was designated as MOT. In the actual coding process, these acronyms served as labels to analyse and categorise collected data and to identify themes that captured key aspects of the research problem (Braun & Clarke 2006).

In order to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data analysis, intercoder reliability was employed (Peter & Lauf 2002), including criteria set by Thomas (2003). An independent co-coder analysed the raw data in the completed questionnaires; identified categories; and created themes. During a consensus meeting, the themes were discussed and required changes were made.

RESULTS

The research results were unpacked under different sub-sections. The sub-sections were guided by the research questions which included the experiences of the process of candidates and academics alike, as well as the experiences and understanding that academics had of the RPL candidates as postgraduate students.

Students' experiences

Students' reflections on their personal experiences of the RPL process were highlighted, as well as their views on the value of the process. Significant themes related to various aspects of 'acknowledgement' and 'recognition' became evident in responses such as:

> The RPL programme has given me the opportunity to fulfil a life-long dream.

The findings showed students' experience of and appreciation for RPL as a beneficial, motivational, supportive, and empowering process. For example, they expressed their experience of RPL as a 'pleasant' process that motivated them to embark on postgraduate studies:

> It was fantastic, simple process that was efficient and pleasant.
>
> It motivates me to do research.
>
> The RPL process provided me with the way forward.

The themes reflecting students' experiences were:

a. The RPL process as a beneficial process.
b. Preparation as a learning experience.
c. RPL as supportive process?
d. Sense of personal achievement and motivation.
e. Acknowledgement of prior learning.

The five main findings, supported by students' statements, included:

a. RPL was a blessing to me.

   I feel privileged to have the opportunity to have been included into a PhD with Unisa. This opens up so many doors for my academic future.

b. It prepared me emotionally, especially on stress management and the ability to multitask.

c. Overall, I found the RPL process rewarding and helpful.

   I knew at every stage what was required and the status of my application.

   She (the RPL advisor) was the first personal contact in the RPL programme, and she guided me though the process until I was accepted for a doctoral degree.

   I learned that I have actually accomplished much over the last 14 years, and that my knowledge can make a difference in the academic world.

d. A process that allows a student to list all work experience and having them recognised as a gateway to move forward academically.

e. A process that allows a student to list all work experience and having them recognised as gateway to move forward economically

Negative feedback was acknowledged, namely:

Lengthy due to the number of supporting documents

Took some time.

Research findings indicated that students saw the preparation for RPL assessment as a learning opportunity, where they did not only become aware of their own skills, but also regarded the learning as beneficial for postgraduate studies.

Academics' perceptions

The results confirmed academics' acknowledgement of the role and value of RPL in postgraduate studies. Based on their experiences, the following categories, or sub-themes, describing the RPL process were identified:

a. RPL process as an opportunity (personal and academic)

b. The effect of students' prior learning

c. Effective process

d. Source of insight into academic and personal learner profiles

e. Process as acknowledgement and recognition.

As illustrated by the evidence, academics acknowledged the RPL process in the following terms:

a. A possibility for quality postgraduates based on acquired skills
   RPL has made it possible for some quality postgraduates to pursue studies based on acquired skills.

b. Combination of academic qualifications and experience is more valuable than specialisation in one field.

   Provides options of work-related research topics.

c. Great process to pioneer inclusive academic opportunities.

d. There is a fair amount of research, evidence and document correlation that goes into the preparation of an RPL application document.

   The preparation of the RPL assessment makes them realise the value work experiences in adding to their readiness to study.

e. RPL as a 'great intervention' which improves quality, gives hope and pioneers inclusiveness.

The perceptions that academics had of RPL appeared to have resulted in an improved understanding of RPL candidates. They learned that the RPL process was a display of prior learning leading to maturity and creating a better understanding of the learner profile.

RPL contributing to postgraduate studies

Both academics and students' RPL experiences revealed insight into the role of assessment preparation and the contribution of RPL to postgraduate studies. In contrast to one of the students who remarked on the comprehensive nature of the RPL process and the evidence required, academics remarked more favourably on the comprehensive nature of the process. Although this seems contradictory, academics' perception was that the comprehensive nature of the RPL process could contribute to the demands of postgraduate studies.

The following themes surfaced in terms of the perceived benefits of RPL for postgraduate studies:

a. Gained insight into how prior learning contributes to further studies
b. Supports preparation for postgraduate studies
c. Provided new perspective on personal prior learning
d. Opportunity to link experience and academic background to formal studies through reflection and self-assessment
e. Preparation for assessment allows for self-assessment and reflection.

The following evidence supported the themes:

a. The RPL process also involved submitting a research outline – this prepared me well for the research proposal.

   I have learned that being organised and having all your ducks in a row ensures that the process runs smoothly.

b. There are a number of academic fields, which are very much interrelated, and there are resources in each discipline which can be used to enhance knowledge in another field.

   (It) gave me the necessary background knowledge and theoretical foundation that was so essential for my researchers.

   (It) prepare me both academically and morally for the academic task ahead.

   Through the RPL process, I became more familiar with the practical aspects of how the research will be conducted.

   (I) learned to write a scientifically standard proposal.

c. My prior knowledge gave me some of the experimental work and how to solve research problems.
d. I've come to understand that all the knowledge I obtained in the last couple of years can actually be applied in a formal structures study. (reflection)

   My prior knowledge gave me some of the experimental work and (insight into) how to solve research problems.

e. Going through the RPL process required me to review my past experiences, qualifications and achievements, which helped me assess myself in preparation for determining a path towards a doctoral degree.

The reflection of the academics on the process revealed aspects of their experiences of the candidates as both candidates and as postgraduate students. This includes aspects of their learner profile, their knowledge, and the type of learning that they gained. Although the question did not require responses on the ODL context, an academic added the following,

> I believe it helps in removing barriers to learning, thereby adding true meaning to the O in open distance learning.

Within the context of ODL academics gained a better understanding of RPL candidates as students.

Academic staff's experiences of RPL students as postgraduate students

The following themes emerged in response to the question on RPL candidates as postgraduate students:

a. Students bring maturity and wisdom
b. Possess a range of skills
c. Personal attributes
d. Prior learning gained in diverse contexts of learning
e. Experience relevant to the study field.

The following evidence supported the findings:

a. (They) bring wisdom derived from previous university experience and the ability, therefore, to compare the past academics with their current practical experience.
b. Relevant hands-on experience is a definite imperative for success among postgraduate students who have been admitted through the RPL assessment process.
c. RPL students have experienced diversity of prior research experience, and this provides insight into the advantages of postgraduate research.

   Experience gained in diverse contexts of learning
d. (The) student had an impressive mix of soft skills and academic qualifications and certificates … and has been able to draft a formidable research proposal.

   Untapped potential
e. RPL has made it possible for some quality postgraduates to pursue studies based on acquired skills.

These main themes were supported by categories as sub-themes. Appreciation for RPL was evident in the response of one of the participants, who stated:

> I feel privileged to have the opportunity to have been included into a PhD with Unisa. This opens up so many doors for my academic future.

Another went so far as to say,

> My RPL was a blessing to me.

These findings could enrich both practitioners and academics' knowledge and understanding of the RPL process. The students' experiences and reflections on the process could be used to benefit students in the reflection and self-assessment processes to prepare evidence to support the application.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The participants generally associated the notion of RPL with words such as 'acknowledge' and 'opportunity', which dovetailed well with what RPL sets out to be — i.e., a tool 'to enable potential candidates to attain recognition of the appropriate knowledge and skills required for personal development and the employment market' (SAQA 2013: 4). The relevance of this is that the experiences of both academics and students confirmed RPL as a value-added process within the context of teaching and learning within higher education.

The RPL process succeeds in making prior learning visible and in creating an awareness of the value of prior learning for further study. Both the academics and students' experiences confirmed RPL as a valuable and effective process. The responses confirmed the academic and personal benefits associated with the process, like Cleary et al. (2002: 20) who confirmed that the engagement in the RPL process was 'itself of value'. The findings relating to the personal benefits associated with RPL were supported by similar empirical studies by, among others, Lamoreaux (2005), Pearson (2000) and Miguel, Ornelas and Maroco (2016), who confirmed that adult learners' experienced change and increased self-knowledge related to RPL.

The findings showed RPL served as a means of equipping students for postgraduate studies and to help them navigate the path. This is supported by Cooper's (2011) finding of students' prior experiential knowledge serving as a resource for the acquisition of postgraduate literacies.

Besides offering personal benefits, RPL preparation also constitutes a learning process that helps candidates to reflect on their prior learning and personal attributes that would support them in the pursuit of academic studies. The findings showed that the RPL process helped to validate knowledge and that the self-assessment helped students to understand their own learning, as confirmed by Bourke's findings (2017). Students appreciated the outcome of these processes since they appreciated the contribution of prior learning to further studies and realised the long-term value of preparing for RPL assessment.

The learning involved in the RPL process seemed to result from the assessment preparation, which includes making judgements about suitable evidence, self-assessment, and structured reflection on prior learning. As a process acknowledging all sources of knowledge and learning, RPL acts as motivation for studies. As a means to confirm RPL as a learning process and a way of unlocking possibilities, research participants regarded the preparation process as a useful opportunity to attain the required depth of understanding for academic study; to process information; and to think differently.

This research established that academics focused on the value of RPL in postgraduate students' aspirations. They reported on a positive experience of a viable process that testified to the capabilities of self-driven students and acknowledged students' ability to progress academically. Academics demonstrated respect for RPL candidates' identity as experienced students with valuable knowledge and they valued adult experience and diverse ways of knowing (Fenwick, 2015). This is relevant for a context where academic knowledge enjoys priority.

Students' focus was on the personal benefits of and the learning gained through the RPL process, which enabled them to form realistic expectations of both RPL and postgraduate studies. The RPL experience helped to facilitate a 'new sense of confidence' (Stevens, Gerber & Hendra, 2010: 377) and fostered the ability to create new meaning of experience. The RPL process added to students' confidence in their own academic ability to succeed in postgraduate studies.

It became evident that students unintentionally had to do reflection and self-assessment in the selection of relevant information on and evidence of their prior learning. Reflection and self-assessment ensured a new

acknowledgement of skills and knowledge, which served as preparation for further study. 'Viewed through a sustainable assessment lens' (Bourke, 2017: 4), the feedback confirmed the role of self-assessment in assisting students in prioritising their focus for learning. The process allows for the development of an 'evaluative judgement' (Villarroel et al., 2016: 13), which is highly beneficial in postgraduate studies.

Participants observed that they felt empowered and motivated by being acknowledged on a personal and an academic level. Although the comprehensive aspect of the process was emphasised and there were complaints about the demanding assessment preparation, a possible benefit was that it prepared them for further stringent academic demands of postgraduate study.

The length of the process and the supporting documentation required were necessary to meet the policy requirement of a 'rigorous and transparent process to protect the integrity of academic standards' (Unisa 2016a :2). However, as a student-centred RPL process (SAQA 2013), designed to meet adult learners' needs, aspects of the process could be streamlined, based on these research findings. This should include clearly defined self-assessment criteria and guidelines for reflection. Since RPL aims at preparing students for postgraduate studies, the assessment activities should be clearly conceptualised to promote sustainable assessment. In reflection, I realised that the focus is often on the access opportunity without clear explanation of the concept 'advance standing'. The significance of the study lies in the fact that the findings illuminated the possibility of aspects of a process that benefits candidates on both a personal and an academic level. The research identified aspects of the RPL process as both a learning and empowering process and not just to gain access to postgraduate studies. In terms of RPL policy implementation in higher education, sharing the research findings will enrich the understanding of RPL practitioners and academics as RPL assessors of the candidate profile, the value of their prior learning and RPL as a learning experience. This knowledge will benefit practitioners to promote RPL and to identify and clarify 'common misconceptions', as per SAQA unit standard (Develop, support and promote RPL practices, SAQA, 2) approach contributing to the long-term benefits of the RPL process for postgraduate studies.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the research was to explore students' and academics' experiences of the RPL process for access to postgraduate studies. Through self-assessment and reflection, students developed a deeper understanding of their knowledge, learning and their personal attributes. This awareness of students' experiences could be used to practically benefit an RPL process, e.g., including pedagogical guidelines on reflection and self-assessment to support students further in the preparation process. It is concluded that the brief explanations on the role of self-assessment, reflection and critical evaluation would enhance the RPL process as an academic process. Academics' experiences of the RPL process could be used to create an awareness amongst academia of the value of an RPL process. By exploring academics and students' perceptions and experiences of RPL, the main contribution of the study lies in clarifying the benefits associated with the RPL process in the context of postgraduate studies.

REFERENCES

Aarts, S.D., Blower, R., Burke, E., Conlin, B., Howell, C.E., Howorth, G., Lamarre & Van Kleef, J. (1999) *A Slice of the Iceberg: Cross-Canada Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition*. Toronto: Cross-Canada Partnership on PLAR.

Adachi, C.J., Hong-Meng, T. & Dawson, P. (2017) Academics' Perception of the Benefits and Challenges of Self and Peer Assessment in Higher Education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43(2) pp.294-306.

Anderson, M. (2016) Tools of Assessment in Recognition of Prior Learning within Vocational Education in Denmark. *PLAIO: Prior Learning Assessment Inside Out 5* pp.1-15.

Anderson, P. & Fejes, A. (2012) Effects of Recognition of Prior Learning as perceived by different stakeholders. PLAIO: *Prior Learning Inside Out* 1(2) pp.1-13.

Armsby, P. (2013) Developing Professional Learning and Identity through the Recognition of Experiential Learning at Doctoral Level. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 32(4) pp.412-429.

Boud, D. (2000) Sustainable Assessment: Rethinking Assessment for the Learning Society. *Studies in Continuing Education* 22(2) pp.151-167.

Boud, D. (2007) Reframing Assessment as if Learning were Important. In D. Boud & N. Falchikov, (Eds.) *Rethinking Assessment in Higher Education: Learning for the Longer Term*, pp.14-25. New York: Routledge.

Boud, D. (2012) Personal electronic message (e-mail) from author. (30 November 2012)

Boud, D. & Soler, R. (2016) Sustainable Assessment Revisited. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 41(3) pp.400-413.

Boud, D. & Falchikov, N. (2007) Aligning Assessment with Long-Term Learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 31 (4) pp.399-413.

Bourke, R. (2017) Self-Assessment to Incite Learning in Higher Education: Developing Ontological *Awareness. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43(5) pp.827-839.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 pp.77-101.

Cameron, R. (2006) RPL and the Disengaged Learner: The Need for New Starting Points. In P. Andersson & J. Harris (Eds.) *Re-Theorising the Recognition of Prior Learning*, pp.77-96. Leicester: National Institute of Continuing Adult Education.

Cleary, P.R., Whittaker, J., Gallacher, B., Merrill, L., Jokinen & Carettes. M. (2002) *Social Inclusion through APEL: The Learner's Perspective: Comparative Report.* Glasgow: Glasgow Caledonian University, Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning.

Cooper, L. (2011) Activists within the Academy: The Role of Prior Experience in Adult Learners' Literacies in a Post-apartheid South African University. *Adult Education Quarterly* 61(1) pp.40-56.

Cooper, L. & Harris, J. (2013) Recognition of Prior Learning: Exploring the Knowledge Question. *International Journal of Lifelong learning* 32(4) pp.1-26.

Donoghue J., Pelletier, D., Adams, A. & Duffield, C. (2002) Recognition of Prior Learning as University Entry Criteria is Successful in Postgraduate Nursing Students. *Innovations in Education and Training International* 39(1) pp.54-62.

Fenwick, S. (2015) Equity-Minded Learning Environments: PLA as a Portal to Fostering Inclusive Excellence. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education* 63(1) pp.51-58.

Fiddler, M., Marienau, C. & Whittaker, U. (2006) *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles and Procedures*. 2nd edition. Chicago: Kendal Hunt.

Flint, T.A. (1999) *Best Practices in Adult Learning: A CAEL/APQA Benchmarking Study*. New York: Forbes Custom Publishing.

Gallacher, L. & Feutrie, M. (2003) Recognising and Accrediting Informal and Non-formal Learning in Higher Education: An Analysis of the Issues Emerging from a Study of France and Scotland. *European Journal of Education* 38(1) pp.71-83.

Garnett, J. & Cavaye, A. (2015) Recognition of Prior Learning: Opportunities and Challenges for Higher Education. *Journal of Work-Applied Management 7*(1) pp.28-37.

Houston, L.Y., Hoover, J. & Beer, E. (1997) Accreditation of Prior Learning: Is it Worth It? An Evaluation of a Pilot Scheme. *Nurse Education Today* 17(3) pp.184-191.

Joossten-ten Brinke, D. (2008) Assessment of prior learning. PhD thesis, Open University, Netherlands.

Kun, D., Kelly E., Matthews & Vincente R. (2019) Chinese students' assessments and learning experiences in a transnational higher education programme. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* pp.1-11, https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2019.1608907

Lamoreaux, A. (2005) *Adult Learners' Experience of Change Related to Prior Learning Assessment*. PhD thesis, Walden University, Minneapolis, US.

Marienau, C. (2014) Why the Adult Brain Likes PLA. *CAEL Forum and News* 12 January 2014, http://www.cael.org/pdfs/2014_forum_and_news-marienau (Accessed 25 January 2018).

Miguel, M.C., Ornelas, J.H. & Maroco, J.P. (2016) Recognition of Prior Learning: The Participants' Perspectives. *Studies in Continuing Education* 38(2) pp.179-194.

Nguyen, T. & Walker, M. (2016) Sustainable Assessment for Lifelong Learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 41(1) pp.97-111.

Pearson, W.S. (2000) Enhancing Adult Student Persistence: The Relationship between Prior Learning Assessment and Persistence towards the Baccalaureate Degree. PhD thesis, Iowa State University, US.

Peter, J. & Lauf, E. (2002) Reliability in Cross-National Content Analysis. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly 79*(4) pp.815-832.

Pokorny, H. & Whittaker, R. (2014) Exploring the Learner Experience of RPL. In J. Harris, C. Wihak & J. Van Kleef, *Handbook of the Recognition of Prior Learning: Research into Practice* pp.259–281. Leicester: NIACE.

SAQA (South African Qualifications Authority). (2013) *Policy and Criteria for the Recognition of Prior Learning*. Pretoria: SAQA.

Singh, A.M. (2011) Let the Doors of Learning be Open to All: A Case for Recognition of Prior Learning. *South African Journal of Education* 25(4) pp.803-818.

Snyman, M. (2013) The influence of the learner profile on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment. DEd thesis, University of South Africa.

Snyman, M. & Van den Berg, G. (2017) The Significance of the Learner Profile in Recognition of Prior Learning. *Adult Education Quarterly* 1 pp.1-17

Stevens, K., Gerber, D. & Hendra, R. (2010) Transformational Learning through Prior Learning Assessment. *Adult Education Quarterly* 60(4) pp.377-404.

Tesch, R. (1992) *Qualitative Research: Analysis Types and Software Tools*. Hampshire: Falmer Press.

Thomas, D.R. (2003) *A General Inductive Approach for Qualitative Data Analysis*. Auckland: School of Population Health, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

UNISA. (2016a) Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. www.unisa.ac.za (Accessed 2 April 2017).

UNISA. (2016b) RPL Procedures Manual for Academics. www.unisa.ac.za (Accessed 2 June 2018).

UNISA. (2016c) Strategic Plan, 2016-2030. www.unisa.ac.za (Accessed 4 May 2016).

UNISA. (2016d) Policy on Research Ethics. www.unisa.ac.za (Accessed 6 June 2019)

UNISA. (2018) Open and distance e-Learning Policy. www.unisa.ac.za (Accessed 4 May 2016).

Valentine, B., Bowles, W. & McKinnon, J. (2016) A Developmental Approach to Recognition of Prior Learning. *Social Work Field Education* 69(4) pp.495-502.

Van Kleef, J. (2014a) Life after PLAR: The Post-Assessment Success of Candidates. In J. Harris, C. Wihak & J. Van Kleef (Eds.) *Handbook of the Recognition of Prior Learning: Research into Practice*, pp.356-377. Leicester: NIACE

Van Kleef, J. (2014b) Quality in PLAR. In J. Harris, C. Wihak & J. Van Kleef (Eds.) *Handbook of the Recognition of Prior Learning: Research into Practice*, pp.206-232. Leicester: NIACE

Villarroel, V.S., Bloxham, D., Bruna, C., Herrera-Seda, C. (2017) Authentic Assessment: Creating a Blueprint for Course Design. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43(5) pp.840-854.

Examining the efficacy of professionalising university teaching through formal teaching qualifications at a historically disadvantaged university in South Africa[1]

Clever Ndebele, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa[2][3]

ABSTRACT

Lecturers in higher education normally come into teaching with little, if any, formal professional training in teaching. The changing higher education landscape, for example, the increased student diversity, has begun to put pressure on academics to get solid grounding in pedagogical training. Many universities across the globe have now put systems in place to professionalise their teaching. This article reports on an initiative by a South African university to foreground the importance of professionalising teaching and learning among current and future university lecturers as a strategy to improve student success. The article discusses impressions of university lecturers enrolled on a formal higher education teaching qualification; the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE) on the usefulness of the qualification. Grounded in the interpretivist paradigm and premised on the qualitative research approach, this case study focuses on only one university. The research was conducted as part of a large National Research Foundation (NRF) research project on the enabling and constraining conditions in the uptake of professional development opportunities in teaching by lecturers, involving eight South African universities. A purposive sample of sixteen academics who had applied for and received funding support to enrol for a post graduate diploma in higher education was used for data collection. The lecturers responded to an open-ended questionnaire on their experiences of the first year of the two-year post graduate diploma and how their teaching practices had been affected by the attendance of that year's sessions. Content analysis was used to identify emerging themes from the data. Findings from the study revealed that new ways of understanding teaching and learning and relating to students had emerged as a result of attending the first-year sessions and that the participants were developing an identity as university teachers. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that professional training in pedagogy is essential for university teaching; disciplinary expertise alone does not necessarily make one a good teacher. Based on the conclusions of the study, it is recommended that academics should undergo training to get solid grounding in pedagogical content knowledge before assuming duties as lecturers at university.

Keywords: agency, culture, pedagogical competence, professional development, structure

1 Date of submission 3 July 2020
Date of review outcome 15 December 2020
Date of acceptance 4 June 2021

2 ORCID: 0000-0002-4258-48120

3 The study was funded by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) which provided funding for the project titled Context, structure and agency (grant number 74003)

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, lecturers have been employed in universities primarily based on their disciplinary expertise rather than pedagogical competence. Teachers in higher education come into teaching with little, if any, formal professional training in teaching other than in the content of their discipline (Al-Hattami et al., 2013; Malfroy & Willis, 2018; Fraser, et al., 2019; Daumiller et al., 2020). The above anomaly is because acclaimed disciplinary expertise and accomplishment as a researcher in one's discipline is seen as sufficient to become a university teacher. The question is whether disciplinary expertise alone is sufficient strength to teach at university. Al-Hattami et al. (2013: 39) argue that expertise based only on subject matter is not enough to claim competency in teaching, because besides subject matter, 'teaching professional competency requires additional "non-academic" knowledge (i.e. social, administrative and technical)'.

The changing higher education landscape, for example, the increased student diversity has begun to put pressure on academics to get solid grounding in pedagogical training (Renta-Davids et al., 2016; Jääskelä, Häkkinen & Rasku-Puttonen, 2017; Reimann & Allin, 2018). Such aspects also extend to issues relating to standards and quality and growing international competition (Yàñez et al., 2019; Reimann & Allin, 2018). The need to raise the profile of teaching in universities, the need to achieve external quality standards imposed by governments (Jawitz & Perez, 2016; Trautwein, 2018) and the need to improve university teachers' teaching skills and pedagogical thinking (Malfroy & Willis, 2018) have further foregrounded the need for pedagogical content knowledge.

In South Africa, no legislation exists that compels university lecturers to possess qualifications in pedagogics or teaching in higher education before appointment. Lecturers are generally appointed on the basis of their disciplinary expertise. Any initiatives to professionalise university teaching are at the discretion of individual universities. This article examines the extent to which existing structures in the university either enabled or constrained the uptake of professional development opportunities by lecturers and lecturer beliefs regarding the significance of training for teaching at university. The study is predicated on the following research question: To what extent was the initiative to professionalise teaching through a formal qualification at the University of Venda seen as having transformed the participating lecturers' pedagogical competencies?

The following objectives guided the study: (i) To examine the extent to which existing structures in the university either enabled or constrained the uptake of professional development opportunities by lecturers; (ii) To solicit lecturers' views regarding formal training for teaching at university and to determine the extent to which formal university lecturer preparation programmes translated to changes in actual teaching practices in the lecture room.

The Case Study

The impetus for this article stems from an initiative by a South African university to foreground the importance of professionalising teaching and learning as a strategy to improve student success. This followed the availability of funding from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2013) in South Africa for teaching development in universities. The Department introduced a ring-fenced 'Teaching Development Grant' now renamed University Capacity Development Grant (DHET, 2019) to be utilised by universities to implement a Teacher Development Programme to support the nurturing of pedagogical competence in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

This case study is located at the University of Venda, a historically disadvantaged university in the South African higher education system. Under the apartheid legacy in South Africa, the university system was divided into what has come to be commonly known as formerly Historically Advantaged Universities

(HAUs) on the one hand and the formerly Historically Disadvantaged Universities (HDUs) on the other (Nyoni, 2020). Historically disadvantaged universities, which are mainly located in poor, rural areas, serve in the main poor students who are poorly prepared for higher education studies (DHET 2014) while the historically advantaged universities benefited from the apartheid system through provision of adequate resources. As Leibowitz et al. (2017) show, this inequality is a logical outcome in a country with one of the highest degrees of wealth disparity in the world, and where there was previously a history of legislated inequality on the basis of both race and class. The nexus between academic professional development and historical disadvantage warrants attention, since sites used for delivering academic professional development undoubtedly influence its uptake (Ndebele, Muhuro & Nkonki, 2016). In addition, geographic and social isolation are linked to professional isolation and lack of professional support from mentors, colleagues and counterparts (Leibowitz, Vorster & Ndebele, 2016; Ndebele, Muhuro & Nkonki, 2016).

As part of its teacher development programme, the University of Venda (UNIVEN) identified the attainment of formal higher education teaching qualifications by its lecturers as a long-term strategy in addition to periodic short courses and workshops conducted within the university to capacitate lecturers with skills in teaching and learning. As the university did not have such a programme in its programme qualification mix (PQM), an external service provider was hired to provide the training.

The diploma runs over two years on a part-time framework and comprises six week-long sessions, each spread over the two years. The purpose of the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (PG Dip: HE), according to CHERTL (2016), is to facilitate the professional development of lecturers as reflexive practitioners in higher education by developing their knowledge of Higher Education (HE) as a field of study. The diploma is designed to assist lecturers to enhance their ability to facilitate, manage and assess students' learning, and provide professional accreditation for HE practitioners. The Diploma is registered as a 120 credit honours level (level 8) course on the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (CHERTL, 2016). This paper reports on research regarding the reflections of the participants after attending the first year of the course.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research was premised on Archer's (1995, 1996, 2000) social realist analytical framework. Her framework is used to analyse the interplay between structure and culture and the development of agency in an initiative to professionalise teaching at UNIVEN. Archer (2000) distinguishes between the people (agents) and the parts (structure and culture). Agents coming onto the scene inherit a set of doctrines, theories, beliefs and values which dictate what could have an impact on them and this shape what these agents can do (Omingo, 2019). The structural domain in Archer's social realist theory comprises things which exist in the institution, such as policies, committees and academic development centres. These structures, either constrain or enable the actions of the agents and in turn, agents reproduce and transform structures. Interpreted in the context of this study, the agents would be the newly appointed lecturers joining the university who need staff development training in pedagogy. Under the domain of structure, are the committees that approve funding for teaching development programmes and the staff development directorate that designs and implements programmes to professionalise teaching in the university.

Culture, in the context of Archer's theory, comprises how and what we think about things. This includes values, beliefs, attitudes, ideas, ideologies, theories and concepts which are manifest through discourses that are used by particular people at particular times (Quinn, 2012). The beliefs held by lecturers, for example, on what constitutes good teaching or on whether training in pedagogy is necessary to teach at university have an important influence on whether or not lecturers take up opportunities to professionalise their teaching.

Agency, according to Archer (1996, 2000), refers to the personal and psychological makeup of individuals, their social roles and relates to the capacity that people have to act in specific ways. Agents can engage in concerted action to re-shape or retain the structural or cultural features they inherit in specific institutional settings. Archer (1996, 2000) believes that social structures exert causal influence on social interactions, while the actions of individuals and groups affect social structures by modifying them. Agents, in this study, refers to the new lecturers coming into a university who can either attend the lecturer preparation programmes or shun any calls to enrol for professional development in teaching courses.

This analytical theoretical framework was used in the research reported in this article to analyse the impressions of lecturers on the role of teaching development courses in professionalising teaching at university. As Archer's social realist theory shows, structure and culture can influence the extent to which lecturers take up teaching development opportunities. In order to extrapolate from Archer's domain of culture, the article discusses the impressions of the lecturers on the extent to which their beliefs about teaching and learning shifted following attendance of the course. Similarly, in order to examine fully the domain of agency, the article considers the extent to which the lecturers felt their actual teaching practices changed as a result of attending the course, specifically the extent to which these agents were able to apply the theories that they learnt in the actual lecture rooms.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Professionalising teaching at university

As already shown in the introduction, traditionally, lecturers have been employed in universities primarily based on their disciplinary expertise rather than pedagogical competence. The need to improve university teachers' teaching skills, the focus on quality enhancement and the need for accountability for public funds allocated to universities (Maclellan, 2015; Jawitz & Perez, 2016; Malfroy & Willis, 2018) have foregrounded the need for pedagogical content knowledge. Many universities across the globe have now put systems in place to professionalise their teaching (Reimann & Allin, 2018).

Initial training of university teachers is now established in universities in the United Kingdom (UK), (Asghar & Pilkington, 2018) Spain, (Fernández & Márquez, 2017) and Switzerland (Charlier & Lambert (2020). Reimann and Allin (2018) note that in the UK, it is not uncommon that the completion of postgraduate certificates in either learning and teaching in higher education (HE) or academic practice is compulsory and linked to probation. In Finland, several universities also arrange pedagogical training for their lecturers (Jääskelä, Häkkinen & Rasku-Puttonen, 2017).

Elsewhere in Europe, some countries for example, Finland (Jääskelä, Häkkinen & Rasku-Puttonen, 2017) teaching development for higher education lecturers has become entrenched, while in Norway (Fremstad et al., 2020), university leaders have established academic development centres to drive lecturer professional development. In Saudi Arabia, according to Al-Hattami et al. (2013), the government has recognised the need to make it obligatory for lecturers to improve their teaching skills and in order to meet this imperative, universities have put in place structures to provide training in different teaching and learning skills to improve the quality of their faculty members. The uptake of professional development in teaching seems to have picked up in Australia. A study by Fraser et al. (2019) found that not only does the Australian higher education sector expect teaching staff to be familiar with their university's specific learning and teaching policies, priorities and strategic directions, it also expects staff to develop an understanding of active learning pedagogies, assessment strategies, evaluation instruments, feedback, academic literacies, first-year transition pedagogies.

In South Africa, Education White Paper 3 (1997) emphasises the need for establishment of academic development structures and programmes at all higher education institutions to promote the development

of teaching skills, curricula, courseware and student support services. In the same vein, *Higher Education Monitor Number 7*, a publication produced on behalf of the Council on Higher Education by Scott, Yeld and Henry (2007: 61) argues that

> There is an important need for a sound level of educational expertise in a number of mainstream academics…sufficient for effectively leading and managing the design and delivery of mainstream courses and programmes and guiding the selection and work of programme and large-course teams.

The above authors argue that some level of professionalisation of teaching is increasingly being required of academic staff in developed countries, whose educational challenges are not as demanding as South Africa's and recommend that all academic teaching staff in South Africa should in time gain a basic level of educational knowledge, sufficient for effectively implementing appropriate educational approaches.

The effect of formal university lecturer preparation programmes on teaching practices

Views of academics on the efficacy of lecturer formal preparation programmes in teaching and learning are reported in literature. An investigation of the impact of university teachers' pedagogical training on approaches to teaching in Finland by Jääskelä, Häkkinen and Rasku-Puttonen (2017) found that university lecturers faced pressures to renew their teaching practices and were challenged by both recent learning research and higher education policy to take an active and agentic role in the development of conducive learning and teaching environments. A study by Trautwein (2018) at a university in Germany that explored the development of academics' identity as teachers before and during teaching development programmes found that enrolment in the teaching development programme marked the beginning of a new phase for the participants. While participants had entered the programme with a conception of the lecturer as the one who possessed all the knowledge to be transmitted to students, after the training, 'They described how they were confronted with the ideas and methods of a learning-centred teaching culture and the changes this brought to their teaching identity' (2018: 1005).

Grounding in the theories that inform teaching and how students learn is enhanced when lecturers engage in professional development related to teaching and learning. After conducting a study on development of academics' identity as teachers before and during teaching development programmes in Germany, Trautwein (2018) reports that participants stated gaining confidence in teaching and shifts from intuitive approaches to teaching to theory-based approaches, which helped them to substantiate and justify their teaching practice.

Participation in formal lecturer preparation programmes promotes critical reflection by lecturers on their teaching practices through the scholarship of teaching and learning. When academics research their teaching, they develop a reflexive critique of their teaching where they explore the underlying values and motivations that drive them to teach the way they do. In a study that examined teachers' ways of experiencing their identity, Korhonen & Törmä (2016) found that professional growth was kept up by constant reflection and reassessment through which the individuals built their roles, fixed goals for changing situations in their careers and constructed alternative practices. It is indeed the lecturers' reflections on their epistemic beliefs which enable them to modify their practices when it is seen as necessary or desirable (Maclellan, 2015). In the same vein, writing from New Zealand, Deaker, Stein & Spiller, (2016) conclude that academic development can be an initiator of reflection on one's behaviours, beliefs and practices.

The issue of generic professional development programmes in higher education has been picked up as a weakness by lecturers who attend such programmes. Daniels (2017) conducted a study in Scotland that looked at standardisation of professional learning in higher education through a Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (PGC TLHE). Although many of the participants of the PGC

THLE programme studied appreciated their learning experience, reporting it as beneficial, 'a frequent complaint regarding the activities and the summative work has been around lack of relevance to individual practice' (Daniels, 2017: 175). Based on her study on the professional development of new lecturers at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, Behari-Leak (2017) also concludes that the generic nature of the professional development programme constrains the ability of new lecturers to bring disciplinary perspectives to bear on their academic practices.

METHOD

Grounded in the interpretivist research paradigm and premised on the qualitative research approach, the aim of this study was to examine the impressions of university lecturers on the extent to which an initiative to professionalise teaching through a formal qualification at one South African university transformed lecturer pedagogical competencies. This case study, which focuses on only one university, was conducted as part of a large National Research Foundation (NRF) research project on the enabling and constraining conditions in the uptake of professional development opportunities in teaching by lecturers, involving eight South African universities. Upon receiving funding from DHET, a communiqué was sent to all academic staff in the University inviting them to express interest in pursuing a postgraduate qualification in higher education studies. A total of 16 academics submitted applications to enrol for the post graduate diploma. The population of the study comprised all academics at the University who did not hold a qualification in learning and teaching in higher education. The sample comprised all the sixteen academics who responded to the call for expression of interest and enrolled for the postgraduate diploma.

The participants consisted of four junior lecturers, nine lecturers and three senior lecturers. An open-ended self-administered questionnaire was issued to participants and collected prior to departure for the first session of the course with a set of questions to find out why they had enrolled for the diploma and what they expected to gain from it. A second open ended self-administered questionnaire was issued mid-way through their studies, that is, at the end of the first year of the two-year course to find out their impressions of the first year, what they perceived to have been the benefits and challenges and how their teaching practices had been affected by the attendance of the first-year sessions. Content analysis, which is a process of categorising qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities or conceptual categories to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables or themes (Omingo 2019) was used to identify emerging themes from the data. Excerpts from the actual data are presented verbatim in some cases in the results section for illustrative purposes.

Ethical issues

Primary ethical clearance was issued to all the eight universities by the ethical clearance committee of the university coordinating the NRF research project. In addition to ethical clearance from the institution coordinating the NRF project, ethical clearance was also granted by the University of Venda under reference number CHETL/11/01/E0811. A consent form was developed in which the purpose and objectives of the study were explained to the respondents and which they were asked to sign as proof of consent before taking part in the study. All participants in the study were informed that their participation was purely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they so wished without consequence. In addition, the researcher guaranteed the anonymity of the participants. Participants were assured that all the information provided would be held in strict confidence and would be reported as aggregated group data. For anonymity, lecturers were coded as JL1 to JL4 for Junior Lecturers, L1 to L9 for Lecturers, and SL1 to SL3 for Senior Lecturers.

RESULTS

The results are presented and discussed according to several emerging themes in this section. Under reasons for enrolling for the course, two issues emerged, namely the importance of grounding in teaching

methodology in addition to grounding in the discipline and the influence of previous participation in short courses and workshops on teaching and learning. Exposure to theoretical principles and discourses underlying teaching and learning also emerged as a key theme. Under the impact of the course on practice, identity development, the promotion of critical reflection on teaching and learning and the development of teaching philosophies were key themes that emerged. Another emerging theme related to the issue of generic teaching development programmes as opposed to discipline-specific tailored teaching development programmes. A major issue that arose from all the participants was the need for training in pedagogy for all lecturers regardless of their length of service.

The first question sought to find out what had motivated the lecturers to enrol for the diploma. The question specifically requested lecturers to think back to their personal reasons for enrolling for the diploma, and what they had hoped to gain from it. Two themes emerged from the responses, first the importance of teaching methodology as a complement to disciplinary knowledge and second, the influence of previous encounters with short courses and workshops on teaching and learning pedagogy.

Importance of teaching methodology as a complement to disciplinary knowledge

Participants had joined the postgraduate diploma because although they were disciplinary specialists, they were not experts in teaching. They needed to develop agency in pedagogy so that they could better handle the teaching and learning process such as, for example, managing large classes. The following sample of responses serves to illustrate the admission by lecturers:

> The reason I applied for the PG Dip: HE is because my academic qualification does not include training on teaching and learning methodology. I believe that teaching requires specific skills and I hope that this programme will unleash those skills which will enhance my teaching (JL3).

> I have realised that holding a masters, PhD or post-doctoral qualification in a particular field does not make one a good teacher. One needs a teaching qualification to be a better teacher (SL2).

The responses imply that participants acknowledged that they could not be good teachers based solely on their disciplinary expertise thus acknowledging the need for grounding in teaching and learning as a field of study. The need for specific skills in mediating learning and teaching in the lecture room is indicated in the responses and enrolling for the diploma is seen as one of the ways such pedagogical content knowledge would be acquired.

Previous encounters with short courses and workshops

Still on the question to find out what had motivated the lecturers to enrol for the diploma, some of the participants had decided to enrol for the course because of their exposure to UNIVEN's internal workshops on teaching and learning which conscientized the lecturers about the significance of knowing how to teach at university. The two responses below demonstrate the influence exerted by the internal workshops on lecturers who eventually enrolled for the formal qualification:

> After attending a short course on curriculum development, I realised that there is a lot that I do not know when it comes to teaching and learning in higher education (L1).

> I did an assessor and curriculum development course. The way the short courses were presented I was convinced that I should enrol for a professional teaching qualification (L4).

Structures and systems that are put in place in the university to create awareness among lecturers on the importance of grounding in teaching pedagogy can spur lecturers on to acquire formal qualifications in

teaching at university. This calls for advocacy campaigns among university lecturers, through for example, internal university workshops and recognition systems for those who have already undergone professional development in teaching.

Exposure to theoretical principles of pedagogy and concepts related to teaching

Another question presented to participants sought to examine ways in which participants' experiences of the first year of the diploma had been similar to and/or different from their initial expectations. Participants were probed to provide explicit examples to illustrate their experiences. Participants generally felt satisfied with the course content and related issues raised during the course:

> The first block provided me with lots of background information on teaching approaches, perspectives and challenges that we as lecturers encounter in, HE and also provided me with possible suggestions on how one can handle such challenges (L2).

> I expected to get a deeper understanding of the theoretical principles of teaching and learning in higher education. The course itself is designed to do exactly that (L3).

Responses indicate that participants benefitted from being exposed to the general higher education context and challenges facing the higher education sector in South Africa. This enabled the participants to realise that some of the issues they had been grappling with were not only peculiar to them. A deeper understanding and grounding in higher education teaching and learning pedagogy increased the confidence of the lecturers in their role as university teachers.

Identity development and teaching philosophy development

On a question seeking participant views on the value and benefit of the diploma, participants were asked to provide explicit examples on what they deemed to have been the most important insights, ideas, or lessons learned. The course, according to responses from the lecturers, enabled the development of an identity as an academic and a university teacher, including how to deal with teaching and learning challenges as shown in these sample responses:

> The first block, amongst many things, assisted me in identifying my role as a teacher. (JL1)

> It gave me the push to explore issues about higher education teaching and learning on my own. It made me realise the existence of that gap between knowing your discipline and knowing how to impart knowledge in your discipline. (L6)

Exposure to the course, as inferred from the responses, enabled shifts in the lecturers' beliefs on teaching and learning. Participants acknowledged that exposure to the teaching philosophy concept enabled them to think more deeply about why they taught the way they did. For example:

> One major thing that has changed so significantly is my teaching philosophy. (SL1)

> Having gone through teaching perspectives and theories of learning I discovered my hidden teaching philosophy. (SL3)

The shifts in teaching philosophies consequent upon the course, urged lecturers in this study to review the way they taught and those who had previously relied only on teacher-centred lecture methods started experimenting with student-centred approaches.

In addition, the lecturers appreciated the knowledge gained so much that they decided to implement whatever they learned as the course progressed rather than wait till completion of the diploma:

> I will adopt the student-centred approach to foster deep approaches to learning for lifelong learning. I intend to use a wider range of teaching methods. (JL3)

> I never considered the way students learn, in other words to me my teaching practice was more teacher-centred not learner-centred. (L2)

> The course has so influenced my teaching that I already encourage student engagement in the form of class discussions in courses I teach. (L5)

> The knowledge and experience I got will help me when I approach my lecturing this academic year. I will not have to wait for the qualification for me to start implementing what I am learning. (L8)

The first year of the course resulted in shifting lecturer beliefs on how students learn. While some had relied previously on lecturer-centred teaching methods, a shift towards student-centred approaches and the promotion of student engagement during the learning and teaching process emerged.

Discipline specific versus generic teaching development courses

An open-ended question was included in the questionnaire to find out the specific challenges that the lecturers encountered during their engagement with the generic diploma and how they would have wanted this done differently. The issue of participating in a generic course on teaching and learning with lecturers from other disciplines emerged from the data as shown in these two excerpts:

> I had expected special attention to be given to individual disciplines in terms of teaching theories. For example, how do we apply behaviourist theories to teaching computer programming? (L3)

> However, I thought in this programme there will be lecturers for specific fields such as Zoology who will teach us how to teach Zoology/ Biology. (L7)

Some academics felt the course was rather too generic without specifically relating to their own disciplines as they would have preferred a contextualised course tailored to their own disciplines. This meant that the lecturers struggled to relate what was taught in the courses to their actual practice. The results imply that; disciplinary allegiance may be so strong sometimes that it blinkers lecturers only to what happens in their own disciplines.

The promotion of critical reflection

An open-ended question was included to gauge how the course had impacted on the lecturers' current practice. The lecturers were further probed to provide examples of changes they intended to implement motivated by the attendance on the course. The promotion of critical refection on own practice emerged as the recurring theme from the responses:

> I was also able to reflect on my teaching perspectives which can encourage the use of different learning approaches. (L4)

> I realised we need to reflect on our teaching practice, research practice. (L2)

> The diploma forces one to reflect on your teaching practices and encourage you to improve every day. (L9)

Lecturers, after attending the first half of the course, as shown in the responses, began to reflect on different approaches to learning, revisited their beliefs on teaching and learning (teaching philosophies) and reflected on the higher education context in general and the implications for learning and teaching. Such reflection, it appears, had not been in place before enrolling for the diploma and can therefore be attributed to participating in the qualification.

DISCUSSION

Importance of teaching methodology as a complement to disciplinary knowledge

One of the emerging themes in the results was the need for grounding in pedagogy in addition to grounding in the discipline. Participants noted that they joined the postgraduate diploma because although they were disciplinary specialists, they needed to develop agency in pedagogy so that they could better handle the teaching and learning processes such as for example, managing large classes. The responses imply that participants acknowledged that they could not be good teachers based solely on their disciplinary expertise.

In terms of Archer's theory, the impressions conveyed by the lecturers reflect a change in the domain of culture. While the lecturers had been teaching without any formal exposure to teaching methodologies, they realised that there was more to the teaching and learning process than only disciplinary expertise. This lack of pedagogical content knowledge is compounded by the fact that academics often receive little, if any, formal exposure to pre-service teacher education before assuming their roles as university lecturers (Daniels, 2017; Daumiller et al., 2020). Participation in the diploma resulted in a shift in lecturers' beliefs about teaching and learning. Thus, Archer (1996)'s argument that agents can engage in concerted action to re-shape cultural features they inherit is true of the lecturers who enrolled for this course. After the course they acknowledged that disciplinary expertise alone was not adequate for good teaching.

These impressions expressed by the participants concur with the argument in the literature that knowledge based on subject matter alone is not enough to claim competency in teaching. A study by Al-Hattami et al. (2013) investigating the needs and importance of having professional training programs to enrich faculty members' teaching competencies in Saudi Arabia confirms that besides subject matter, teaching professional competency requires additional non-academic knowledge such as facilitation, administrative and classroom management skills. Similarly, a study by Trautwein (2018: 997) at the University of Hamburg, Germany that explored the development of academics' identity as teachers before and during teaching development programmes found that

> early career academics view of teaching tends to centre on teaching and content, however, once they establish a teaching identity and undergo teaching training their teaching conceptions are likely to change towards student-centeredness.

This essentially means that early career academics tend to see themselves primarily as experts who have to transmit the knowledge they have to the students, but after training this conception changes and they see themselves as co-learners with their students who they see as possessing the potential to contribute to the teaching and learning process. What is apparent from the findings of this study is that training in pedagogy helps the lecturers to change their beliefs on how students learn and therefore how teaching should happen in the lecture room.

Exposure to theoretical principles of pedagogy and concepts related to teaching

With regards to whether or not their initial expectations of the course were met by the first-year block sessions, participants generally felt satisfied with the course content as shown in the results section. Participants had been exposed to theoretical principles of pedagogy, clarification of concepts related

to teaching and learning and challenges facing the higher education sector generally. Grounding in teaching and learning pedagogy increased the confidence of the lecturers. Exposure to experiences and discourses around teaching and learning, as shown in the findings, can cause lecturers to start relooking at their current teaching practice in view of what they have been exposed to in order to improve it. In this regard, a study by Chabaya (2015) on academic development practices at higher education institutions in Zimbabwe found that exposure to theoretical frameworks such as the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) engaged lecturers in reflective practice on their teaching and this improved the quality of their teaching. Similarly, a study by Reimann (2018) that investigated the impact of two academic development courses that focused on assessment in the UK found that both courses engendered important conceptual changes for the lecturers, in particular the stimulation of critical reflection and new ways of thinking about assessment and student learning. In the same vein, a study that explored the development of academics' identity as teachers before and during teaching development programmes in Germany by Trautwein (2018), found that theory that stemmed, for example, from books about learning-theories or feedback participants received from academic developers informed reflection and tended to catalyse development. Cameron and Woods (2016), however, caution academic developers that a lack of common understanding of what quality teaching means and what counts as evidence may result in resistance to attempts to support and develop teaching expertise among lecturers.

Identity development

Identity development as a university teacher emerged as a key finding from the results. Such identity development gives the lecturers the agency not to be blinkered by their disciplines but to understand higher education more broadly. In this study, the training amongst many things, assisted the lecturers to clarify their roles as teachers. They began to realise the existence of a gap between disciplinary knowledge and mediating student epistemological access to the knowledge, rules and conventions of one's discipline. The significance of training in the development of identity is also reported in the literature. In a study to explore the development of academics' identity as teachers before and during teaching development programmes in Germany, Trautwein (2018: 1002) reports that in the beginning of their teaching career, lecturers

> often had a highly idealistic picture of the teacher, for example, as somebody who is omniscient and can ensure that every student is successful. After teaching for a while, participants described how they modified their conceptions regarding the teacher role, for example, that the teacher does not and cannot know everything.

It can therefore be concluded that teaching development programmes, if properly planned, can indeed help shape identity development. Trautwein (2018) however cautions that pedagogical change, as aimed for in teacher training, may challenge academics' professional identity and can create role and identity ambiguity if the targeted way of teaching in teaching development programmes does not align with teachers' personally held values.

The teaching identity construction of academics is seen in the literature as a holistic, career-long process, in which constant reflection and reassessment of teaching practices and roles, identification of development challenges and goals and the construction of alternative practices induce development (Korhonen & Törmä, 2016). In a study that explored the development of academics' identity as teachers before and during teaching development programmes in Germany, participants also reported how their conceptions regarding the role of the teacher had changed. While they tended to enter the programme with a conception of the teacher as 'a herald of the truth', they described how, 'they were confronted with the ideas and methods of a learning-centred teaching culture and the changes this brought to their teaching identity' (Trautwein, 2018: 1005). The motivation and zeal to start implementing what was being learned from the course including adopting student-focused approaches even before completion of

the qualification in my study shows the motivation that can arise from exposing academics to professional development opportunities that challenge them to change their practice.

Discipline specific versus generic teaching development courses

The postgraduate diploma in which the participants in this study were enrolled was a generic qualification enrolling lecturers from across all disciplines. The issue of participating in a generic course on teaching and learning with lecturers from other disciplines was experienced as a challenge by some lecturers. As the findings show, disciplinary allegiance may be so strong sometimes those lecturers do not see value in what happens in other disciplines. Such allegiance may be linked to issues of relatedness. As van der Rijst, Baggen & Sjoer (2019) show, the need for relatedness will be satisfied if people experience a sense of value and belonging in a community around the topic of interest. Such a community in this study would be the disciplinary community of practice of the lecturer. In this view, the confidence of agency will be cemented if learning takes place in a disciplinary context, where the pedagogy acquired is seen in relation to the discipline taught. As Daniels (2017), avers, following a study in Scotland, when generic standards are applied to meet the demands of professional development, a mismatch becomes evident between the practitioner as agent of her/his own professional development and a standardisation of what is deemed good practice. Behari-Leak (2017) also argues that the generic nature of the professional development programme in her case study at the University of Cape Town in South Africa constrained the ability of new lecturers to bring disciplinary perspectives to bear on their academic practices.

Literature on academic development warns how academic developers sometimes fail to understand the differences between how concepts are applied in different disciplinary settings leading to jumping to conclusions about developmental work in different contexts, which can be less fruitful (Laksov & McGrath, 2020; Reeping, 2020). It is therefore the author's considered view that while introductory generic induction sessions maybe held with lecturers, it is essential to bring in contextual examples from a variety of disciplines or invite disciplinary experts to present some sessions to accommodate all who attend. In addition, discipline specific tailor-made made short courses on teaching and learning are recommended and where these may not be available within an institution, staff could be sent to attend such courses externally.

The promotion of critical reflection

In the domain of culture, one noticeable learning change, as seen from the results, was the development of the craft competence to reflect on their teaching and student learning. Such reflection according to social realist theory (Archer, 2000) is situated in the domain of culture and may result in changes in lecturers' teaching practices. Lecturers, after attending the first half of the course, were able to reflect on activities they did, reflect on different approaches to learning and revisited their beliefs on teaching and learning. The ability to look back at one's teaching with a view to examining what is going well and what may need to be done differently is indeed a lauded move as it means lecturers no longer take things for granted but engage deeply with issues relating to student learning.

With regard to promotion of reflection and how it can contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching, Van der Rijst, Baggen and Sjoer (2019) hold that learning by reflecting is characteristic of teachers who evaluate and consciously reflect on their own learning experiences so that they can improve themselves. Reporting from a university of technology in South Africa, Sebolao (2019) advises that academic development initiatives need to be strengthened by working together with scholarship of teaching and learning programmes to create groups of communities of practice in order to encourage more reflection on teaching practices.

CONCLUSION

This research has shown that the professionalisation of teaching in higher education can benefit both the higher education system in general and the lecturers themselves in particular. Lecturers begin to realise that disciplinary expertise alone is inadequate to teach effectively in higher education. Attendance of teaching development programmes has been shown in this study to result in changes in conceptions of teaching and how students learn. Such courses expose lecturers (who come into field armed only with disciplinary expertise) to theories and principles of teaching and learning. In addition, lecturers attending such courses begin to develop identities as university teachers and begin to interrogate their values, assumptions and beliefs (teaching philosophies) about teaching and learning. If the quality of teaching and learning is to be enhanced in higher education, a national level legislative framework that compels academics to hold qualifications in teaching at university would be a worthwhile risk to take.

Archer's social realist theory has been used in this article to understand the professional development of academics enrolled for the postgraduate diploma in higher education. The impressions expressed in the data confirm the significance of understanding the interplay of Archer's concepts of structure, culture and agency in enabling or constraining the professional development of lecturers. It has been demonstrated that structures put in place in a university, such as a dedicated department dealing with professional development can indeed enable the process to professionalise teaching at university.

In the domain of culture, the article examined the extent to which lecturers' beliefs about teaching and learning shifted following attendance of the course and found that indeed beliefs changed with some lecturers re-visiting their original teaching philosophies while others only conceptualised their teaching philosophies as result of the course. The theory, therefore offers a useful tool for analysing changes in beliefs and practices as a result of professional development. In the domain of agency, the data agrees with the socialist realist theory where we see the agents (lecturers) calling for a requirement to make training in teaching compulsory for university teachers. As social realism shows, agents (the lecturers) can either reproduce the existing structures or transform them. In this article, agents recommend the transformation of existing structures, for example, the current structure in higher education in South Africa where training in teaching is not compulsory for university lecturers. The researcher therefore finds Archer's social realist analytical framework useful and valid for the South Africa context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the presented findings, the following recommendations are put forward regarding ways of increasing the uptake of professional development opportunities in teaching by lecturers. First, professional development courses offered should be varied and tailor-made to ensure relevance to different faculties and departments in universities as this accommodates disciplinary contexts. Second, teaching and learning centres should devise ways of constantly engaging staff to motivate them to make it a priority to undertake professional development courses in teaching and learning. Third, the researcher agrees with the participants on the issue of a compulsory teaching qualification for academics. Fourth, the study further recommends that notwithstanding possession of qualifications in teaching and learning in higher education, professional development for university teaching should be an ongoing lifelong learning exercise.

REFERENCES

Al-Hattami, A.A., Muammar, M.M. & Elmahdi, I.A. (2013) The need for professional training programmes to improve faculty members teaching skills. *European Journal of Research on Education* 1(2) pp.39-45.

Archer, M.S. (1995) *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M.S. (1996) *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, M.S. (2000) *Being Human: The Problem of Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Behari-Leak, K. (2017) New academics, new higher education contexts: a critical perspective on professional development. *Teaching in Higher Education* 22(5) pp.485-500, doi:10.1080/13562517.2016.1273215

Asghar, M. & Pilkington, R. (2018) The relational value of professional dialogue for academics pursuing HEA fellowship. *International Journal for Academic Development* 23(2) pp.135-146, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2017.1386566

Cameron, A. & Woods, C. (2016) A proposed 'ladder of learning' for academics' professional development in teaching. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30(6) pp.176-90, dx.doi/10.20853/30-6-732

Chabaya, R.A. (2015) *Academic staff development in higher education institutions: A case study of Zimbabwe state universities*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa, South Africa.

Charlier, B. & Lambert, M. (2020) Evaluating the effects of faculty development: theoretical framework and empirical implementation. *International Journal for Academic Development* 25(2) pp.162-175, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2019.1659798

Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL). (2016) *National Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education PGDip (HE) Course Guide 2016-2017*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University, South Africa.

Daumiller, M., Rinas, R., Olden, D. & Dresel, M. (2020) Academics' motivations in professional training courses: Effects on learning engagement and learning gains. *International Journal for Academic Development* 26(1) pp7-23, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2020.1768396

Daniels, J. (2017) Professional learning in higher education: making good practice relevant. *International Journal for Academic Development* 22(2) pp.170-181, doi:10.1080/1360144X.2016.1261352

Deaker, L., Stein, S.J. & Spiller, D. (2016) You can't teach me: exploring academic resistance to teaching development. *International Journal for Academic Development* 21(4) pp.299-311, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2015.1129967

Department of Higher Education and Training. (1997) Education White Paper No 3: *A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*. Pretoria: DoE.

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2013) *Ministerial statement on the management and utilization of teaching development grants*. Pretoria: DHET.

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2014) *Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding of Universities October 2013*. Pretoria: DHET.

Department of Higher Education and Training. (2019) *Ministerial Statement on University Funding: 2020/21 and 2021/22*. Pretoria: DHET.

Fernández, I. & Márquez, M.D. (2017) Educational development units in Spain: current status and emerging trends. *International Journal for Academic Development* 22(4) pp.343-359, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2017.1354864

Fraser, K., Ryan, Y., Susan, S., Copeman, P., Cottman, C., Fisher, B.M., Fleming, J. & Luzeckyj, A. (2019) Contemporary induction to teaching in Australian universities. *International Journal for Academic Development* 24(3) pp.286-300, doi:10.1080/1360144X.2019.1612751

Fremstad, E., Bergh, A., Solbrekke, T.D. & Fossland, T. (2020) Deliberative academic development: the potential and challenge of agency. *International Journal for Academic Development* 25(2) pp.107-120, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2019.1631169

Jääskelä, P., Häkkinen, P & Rasku-Puttonen, R. (2017) Supporting and constraining factors in the development of university teaching experienced by teachers. *Teaching in Higher Education* 22(6) pp. 655-671, doi: 10.1080/13562517.2016.1273206

Jawitz, J. Perez, T. (2016) Investing in teaching development: navigating risk in a research intensive institution. *International Journal for Academic Development* 21(3) pp.194-205, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2015.1081852

Korhonen, V. & Törmä, S. (2016) Engagement with a Teaching Career – How a Group of Finnish University Teachers Experience Teacher Identity and Professional Growth. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 40(1) pp.65-82, doi:10.1080/0309877X.2014.895301

Laksov, B.L. & McGrath, C. (2020) Failure as a catalyst for learning: towards deliberate reflection in academic development work. *International Journal for Academic Development* 25(1) pp.1-4, doi:10.1080/1360144X.2020.1717783

Leibowitz, B., Bozalek, V., Garraway, J., Herman, N., Jawitz, J., Muhuro, P., Ndebele, C., Quinn, L., Van Schalkwyk, S., Vorster, J. & Winberg, C. (2017) *Learning to teach in higher education: An investigation into the influences of institutional context on the professional learning of academics in their role as teachers. Higher Education Monitor Number 14*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Leibowitz, B., Vorster, J. & Ndebele, C. (2016) Why a contextual approach to professional development? *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30(6) pp.1-7.

Malfroy, J. & Willis, K. (2018) The role of institutional learning and teaching grants in developing academic capacity to engage successfully in the scholarship of teaching and learning. *International Journal for Academic Development* 23(3) pp.244-255, doi:10.1080/1360144X.2018.1462188

Maclellan, E. (2015) Updating Understandings of Teaching: Taking account of teachers' and learners' beliefs. *Teaching in Higher Education* 20(2) pp.171-182, doi:10.1080/13562517.2014.966238

Ndebele, C., Muhuro, P. & Nkonki, V. (2016) Rurality and the professional development of university teachers. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 30(6) pp.127-145.

Nyoni, P. N. (2020) Pedagogy and Agency in Postgraduate Student Supervision in a Rural South African University. In D.Z. Atibuni (Ed.) *Postgraduate Research Engagement in Low Resource Settings* (pp.296-316). IGI Global, doi:10.4018/978-1-7998-0264-8.ch015

Omingo, M. (2019) Lecturers learning to teach: the role of agency. *International Journal for Academic Development* 24(2) pp.122-134, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2019.1595627.

Quinn, L. (2012) Enabling and constraining conditions for academic staff development. In L. Quinn (Ed.) *Re-imagining Academic Staff Development: Spaces for Disruption*. Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA, pp.27-50.

Reeping, D. (2020) Threshold concepts as 'jewels of the curriculum': rare as diamonds or plentiful as cubic zirconia? *International Journal for Academic Development* 25(1) pp.58-70, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2019.1694934

Reimann, N. (2018) Learning about assessment: the impact of two courses for higher education staff. *International Journal for Academic Development* 23(2) pp.86-97, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2017.1375413

Reimann, N. & Allin, L. (2018) Engaging the wider academic community in a postgraduate certificate in academic practice: the issue of standards. *International Journal for Academic Development* 23(4) pp. 286-297, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2017.1381966

Renta-Davids, A., Jiménez-González, J., Fandos-Garrido, M. & González-Soto, A. (2016) Organisational and training factors affecting academic teacher training outcomes. *Teaching in Higher Education* 21(2) pp.219-231, doi: 10.1080/13562517.2015.1136276

Scott, I., Yeld, N. & Hendry, J. (2007) *A case for improving teaching and learning in South African higher Education*. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

Sebolao, R. (2019) Enhancing the use of a teaching portfolio in higher education as a critically reflexive practice. *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning* 14(2) pp.20-28.

Trautwein, C. (2018) Academics' identity development as teachers. *Teaching in Higher Education* 23(8) pp.995-1010, doi: 10.1080/13562517.2018.1449739

Van der Rijst, R., Baggen, Y. & Sjoer, E. (2019) University teachers' learning paths during technological innovation in education. *International Journal for Academic Development* 24(1) pp.7-20. doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2018.150091

Yàñez, O.J., Càceres, R.A., Canessa, F.C., Rojas L.G. & Torres, A.R. (2019) A teaching accompaniment and development model: possibilities and challenges for teaching and learning centers. *International Journal for Academic Development* 24(2) pp.204-208, doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2019.1594238

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) model – A win-win process between university, postgraduate business students and industry[1] [2]

Isolde Lubbe, University of Johannesburg, South Africa[3]
Göran Svensson, Kristiana University, Norway[4]

ABSTRACT

A project-based work integrated learning (WIL) model that is a match between business postgraduate programmes, business postgraduate students and industry partners can increase employability and job opportunities. This study is based on a qualitative and inductive approach and a longitudinal study initiated in 2014 and evaluated in early 2020. Based on empirical findings in a South African setting, the model reflects that in gaining a sense of the environment via a WIL partnership, postgraduate students are better able to connect innovatively to grow the business. A win-win situation can be achieved where a university, business postgraduate students and industry interact to achieve consensus and a match between industry needs and educational skills. The challenges of companies to find and employ appropriately skilled employees among business postgraduate students can be met through the use of the model. The model contributes to WIL knowledge in a business disciplines. This study presents the argument that if universities and industry partners are able to match their needs, connect, collaborate and engage successfully, postgraduate job opportunities and employability could increase.

Keywords: work integrated learning (WIL), project-based learning, win-win process, business graduate job opportunities, employability

INTRODUCTION

Work integrated learning (WIL) is a process whereby students transfer theoretical knowledge into practice. Universities, industry, and students regard graduate skill, employability and job opportunities as critical success factors for degree programmes (Ohei & Brink, 2019; Ibrahim & Jaaffar, 2017) and WIL enhances a graduate's chances of employability and job opportunities (Freudenberg, Brimble & Vyvyan, 2010). Through building a student's practical and basic skills, graduates can become more employable and WIL is being respected as an important instrument to enhance graduate job opportunities (Ohei & Brink, 2019; Ibrahim & Jaaffar, 2017; Hamilton et al., 2015). WIL also improves learning outcomes by enhancing

1 Date of submission 24 June 2020
Date of review outcome: 11 February 2021
Date of acceptance 4 June 2021

2 Thank you to Cookie Govender from the University of Johannesburg, who assisted with the article's structure.

3 ORCID: 0000-0002-7399-2886

4 ORCID: 0000-0002-4857-9408

personal and cognitive development, student learning, and work-readiness (Smith, Ferns & Russell, 2016), reinforce skills learned, and transfer skills from one context to another (Crebert et al., 2004). The issue is that most WIL studies have tended to focus on undergraduate students' work-integrated experiences, and most WIL models do not easily translate to postgraduate programmes (Karim, Campbell & Hasan, 2020; Campbell, Stewart & Karim, 2018). The compressed nature of a postgraduate degree makes industry involvement difficult to incorporate, but the benefits far outreach the constraints.

One of the reasons graduates do not find jobs is that employers look for not only a university qualification, but also some form of work experience and practical 'on-the-job' knowledge (BizTrends, 2017). The South African economy demands experienced and skilled work-seekers. Not having some form of experience makes it difficult for young people to find employment (StatsSA, 2021). For universities or higher education institutions (HEIs), providing these 'practical skills' is not possible if good partnerships between university, industry, and student are non-existent (Henderson & Trede, 2017). HEIs are expected to adopt a 'market-economy-oriented pedagogy' that will equip students to become global citizens (Kalafatis & Ledden, 2013). A gap exists in literature addressing conceptual or empirical research on project-based WIL models and strategies to achieve linkages between universities and industry partners, specifically for postgraduate business graduates.

This research aims to meet the challenges of business postgraduate students entering the labour market; enhance their employability; and improve the match with industry needs. It also aims to assist companies to find and employ appropriately skilled employees among business graduate students. The research question is how a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Model can establish a win-win process between university, business postgraduate students and industry. The research objective is therefore to describe a WIL-model for business postgraduates.

The study describes a win-win situation where a university, business postgraduate students and industry interact in a quest for consensus and a match between industry needs and educational skills. It contributes to theory by adding to the body of knowledge on WIL and its practical contribution lies in the WIL model presented to attract industry stakeholders and academics to engage in WIL projects. The study is limited to describing the application of a WIL model in business disciplines with postgraduate students.

In a project-based learning approach, the 'project' is central to the learning making sourcing and scoping of the project's key essentials to craft a meaningfully challenging learning endeavour in constructive alignment with its objectives (Vande Wiele et al., 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Industry needs for business managers

According to Branson (2017), there is an element of marketing behind every successful business. Consumers have a desire for products and services that serve their needs, but without marketing, they would not be aware of these (Johnson, 2015; Barwise & Meehan, 2011). Substantial evidence shows that business and marketing, and specifically business functions and tasks such as strategic planning, lead to increased profit margins and ultimately improved business performance and success (La Marca, 2017; Van Scheers & Makhitha, 2016), but this is not possible without skilled business graduates (Melaia, Abratt & Bick, 2008), and specifically business graduates with some form of practical experience (Okoti, 2018; Baker, 2015).

Graduates prefer to find the best job, while employers prefer the best candidate for the job; whether in an emerging economy or a developed economy, employers share common concerns about gaps in graduate skills (McArthur et al., 2017; IOA, 2017; Vaaland & Ishengoma, 2016). Recruiters constantly refer to

their need for 'employable' graduates (McArthur et al., 2017) or 'work-ready' graduates (Greenacre et al., 2017). These requirements constitute a good mix of skills that are not only academic and technical, but also include soft skills (Mutalemwa, Utouh & Msuya, 2020; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015), as soft skills contribute to work-ready graduates (Karim et al., 2020; Schlee & Karns, 2017).

Soft skills are defined as the 'interpersonal, human, people or behavioural skills needed to apply technical skills and knowledge in the workplace' (Weber et al., 2009: 356). Business is a challenging, fast-changing, and a dynamic field that requires managers to have the soft skills necessary to constantly adapt, while regularly updating their 'technical skills' (Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Schlee & Karns, 2017; Saeed, 2015). Table 1 presents a summary of soft skills, technical and academical skills proposed in literature as essential to shape 'work-ready' graduates.

Table 1:
Summary of soft and technical/academical skills needed of business graduates

Type of skill	Source
Soft skills	
Communication skills	Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017; Iyengar, 2015
• Presentation skills	Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017
• Written communication	Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017
• Oral communication	Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017
Time management skills	Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017; Whitler, 2018; Saeed, 2015
Creativity	Hall, 2018; Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017; Saeed, 2015; Ince, 2011
Teamwork	Hall, 2018; Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017; Saeed, 2015; Iyengar, 2015; Ince, 2011
Adapt to new technologies / adaptability to new circumstances and changes in the environment	Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Hall, 2018; Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017; Saeed, 2015; Iyengar, 2015; Ince, 2011
Conflict resolution skills	Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Hall, 2018; Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017; Saeed, 2015; Ince, 2011
Project management skills	McArthur et al., 2017; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015
Negotiation skills	Mutalemwa et al., 2020
Interpersonal skills	Rackova, 2015; Ince, 2011
• Dress for the workplace	Ince, 2011
• Conduct an interview	Ince, 2011
• Draft a CV	Ince, 2011
Emotional intelligence	Masole & Van Dyk, 2016
• to persevere towards goals	Masole & Van Dyk, 2016
• Resilience	Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Masole & Van Dyk, 2016

Type of skill	Source
Technical and academical business skills	
Strategic skills	
• Business thinking	Whitler, 2018; Schlee & Karns, 2017; Saeed, 2015
• Practical skills	Whitler, 2018; Schlee & Karns, 2017; Saeed, 2015
• Analytical skills	Whitler, 2018; Schlee & Karns, 2017; Mustata et al., 2017; Iyengar, 2015; Saeed, 2015
• Innovation and creativity	Mustata et al., 2017; McArthur et al., 2017; Iyengar, 2015; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015; Fodness, 2007
• Problem solving skills / critical thinking skills	McArthur et al., 2017; Iyengar, 2015; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015
• Design and implementation of plans, including budgeting	Mustata at al., 2017; McArthur et al., 2017; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015
• Measurement of plans	McArthur et al., 2017; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015
Plan and conduct research	McArthur et al., 2017; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015
Work to deadlines	McArthur et al., 2017; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015 McArthur et al., 2017; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015
Application of knowledge and breadth of knowledge as well as up to date knowledge	Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Gannon et al., 2016
Digital business and marketing skills	Gannon et al., 2016

Lubbe & Svensson, 2021

Soft Skills

Interpersonal skills are built on good communication skills (Rackova, 2015). Good written communication, oral communication, and presentation skills, with the ability to manage competing priorities and timelines are other important skills that employers are looking for (Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017). Additional requirements include problem solving skills, project management skills, creativity, the ability to work in teams, the ability to adapt to new technologies, and the willingness to learn, together with conflict resolution skills (Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Hall, 2018; Schlee & Karns, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017; Saeed, 2015; Ince, 2011). Mutalemwa et al. (2020) elaborate that the employers further seek initiative, self-awareness, ethical skills, and stress tolerance. Ince (2011) even proposes that graduates should be taught how to handle an interview, draft a CV, and dress for the workplace. Masole and Van Dyk (2016) propose that graduates should present emotional intelligence, and the ability to persevere towards goals and show resilience to attain success. Iyengar (2015) argues that although all these skills are important for graduates, postgraduate WIL programmes should specifically focus on critical thinking, creative solutions, solving complex problems and to grow managers for the digital world. Gannon, Rodgrido & Santema (2016) add that postgraduate programmes should encourage teamwork, inter-culturally contact, and create opportunities for digitally literate skills to develop.

Table 1 above presents a summary of soft skills proposed in literature. Although educators can assist with technical knowledge and skills and provide opportunities for students to exercise the softer skills, the gap between theory and practice is too wide and must be eliminated if educators are to create the skilled, business managers that industry needs (Krell, Todd & Dolecki, 2019).

Technical and academic business skills

From the actual degree, recruiters expect graduates to have more than academic and/or technical skills, but to interpret complex information, solve problems, apply critical thinking, go beyond reporting and metrics, and to be proficient in a full range of analytical skills (Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Whitler, 2018; Schlee & Karns, 2017; Saeed, 2015). Furthermore, graduates, specifically postgraduates are expected to plan and conduct research, but to interpret the research in such a way that they can identify problems and use the insights gained to develop strategic plans (Ferreira & Barbosa, 2019; McArthur et al., 2017; Greenacre et al., 2017; Kausar, 2015). It is important for postgraduate students to understand concepts, have the breadth of knowledge in their field, be up to date with latest trends and know how to apply knowledge gained (Mutalemwa et al., 2020). The issue is that many recruiters require some form of business 'hands-on' or 'know-how' experience when hiring, but these business postgraduate students are less likely than most to be involved in decision-making while studying (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2021; Keegan, 2017; Kausar, 2015; Baker, 2015).

Students, especially those in postgraduate studies, need opportunities to develop their thinking, research and practical skills, specifically on the strategic aspects of business, in order to engage with potential employers (Mutalemwa et al., 2020; Meza Rios et al., 2018). Strategic thinking is an important skill and companies are in serious need of managers equipped with strategic thinking savvy (Seyed Kalali, Momeni & Heydari, 2015; Moon, 2013). Strategic thinking, heightened by today's market uncertainty and technological turbulence, has become a key management tool. It is essential for setting direction, growing a business and shaping the future goals of that business (Vega, 2018; Haycock, Cheadle & Bluestone, 2012).

The main elements of strategic skills include soft skills, business thinking and practical skills. Strategists need as much social skills as they need intellectual skills (Carucci, 2018). For example, analytical skills, planning and teamwork are not possible if a manager does not have good communication skills, a sense of responsibility and the ability to delegate and resolve conflicts (Mustata, Alexe & Alexe, 2017; Gurchiek, 2010). It is further argued that vision and analytical skills affect the strategic manager's questioning ability positively, and inspire innovation and creativity (Mustata, Alexe & Alexe, 2017; Seyed Kalali et al., 2015; Fodness, 2007). Strategic thinkers are able to recognise and solve problems by defining objectives and developing a strategic action plan to resolve daily challenges. Each objective should be broken down into tasks, while each task is allocated resources, budgets and timelines with measurable standards (Bradford, 2018; Mustata, Alexe & Alexe, 2017; Grecu & Denes, 2017). Table 1 summarises the technical and academic skills proposed in literature.

Strategic skills have to be developed by more than just theoretical teaching; they are better acquired through hands-on experience than classroom learning (Meza Rios et al., 2018; Seyed Kalali et al., 2015). Workplace experience and improving personal skills are a means to enhance the graduates' chances of gaining employment and being work-ready (IOA, 2017). Market turbulence and technological turbulence foster **strategic thinking** at the organisational level and there is a positive relationship between **strategic thinking** and performance (Moon, 2013). Work-integrated learning (WIL) models and strategies offer many benefits to all related stakeholders, especially industry, by creating work-ready, business postgraduates as future talent for the global marketplace.

Work-integrated learning (WIL)

WIL is also known as project-based learning or practise-based learning and occurs when there are partnerships between the higher education institution, such as a university, and a business organisation (referred to as 'industry' in this paper) to facilitate learning in providing hands-on experience (Prior et al., 2021). Students engaging in this type of learning, are able to enhance their skills development as well as

their professional demeanour required to be a work-ready postgraduate (Clausen & Andersson, 2019). In this study, a project-based WIL adheres to three characteristics: (i) students engage with an industry partner, (ii) students undertake activities for industry, and (iii) students are assessed on these activities. This is different from authentic learning, as authentic learning 'exist[s] along a continuum where WIL encapsulates the learning that occurs in close situation to the experience of work' (Karim et al., 2020: 159). It seems though that universities tend to focus more on undergraduate WIL (Campbell et al., 2018) and that literature on postgraduate studies tend to be few and far in between (Valencia-Forrester, 2019: 389) with benefits for postgraduate WIL not entirely explored (Karim et al., 2020; Ferreira & Barbosa, 2019).

Industry benefits from strategic WIL

University-industry linkages are fast becoming the norm in developed countries and emerging economies (Clausen & Andersson, 2019; Vaaland & Ishengoma, 2016). Agnew, Pill and Orrell (2017) as well as Vande Wiele et al. (2017) argue that partnerships between educators, industry (business) and students are important because all three should share an understanding of the expected requirements and responsibilities and value gained. This multi-stakeholder partnership provides lucrative benefits for all stakeholders, including students, educators, businesses and government (Govender & Wait, 2017; Vaaland & Ishengoma, 2016).

By engaging in WIL models and partnerships with universities, industry benefits from the opportunity to showcase its expertise, brand and organisational culture (Johnson et al., 2016; Vaaland & Ishengoma, 2016). When industry experts join Advisory Board discussions in graduate programmes, they are able to influence skills sets those graduates bring to the workplace. University graduates are the future talent that workplaces seek when recruiting new employees and creating talent pools. Leaders and managers benefit from WIL students who present recruitment and talent scouting opportunities when they showcase their theoretical knowledge of business competencies (Hemmert, Bstieler & Okamuro, 2014; Johnson et al., 2016).

Future-fit graduates present business and industry with fresh ideas, innovative creations and futuristic knowledge, skills, values and attitudes (Jackson, 2015). Graduates are 'techno-savvy', with knowledge on how to access and utilise the latest technological devices and applications in the local, national and global arena. University graduates present businesses with strategies for growth and development, especially to meet future, global market trends (Govender & Wait, 2017). Qualified, professional Gen-X, Gen-Y and Gen-Z talent pools are naturally created by tertiary institutions and are fast becoming sought-after talent in the global strategic sector (Wiedmer, 2015).

Industry benefits by engaging in WIL projects, especially when it employs graduates or commits to internships and graduate empowerment programmes after WIL implementation. WIL industry partners meet national and international skills development and human resource strategic imperatives and may gain tax benefits from engaging with university-industry linkages (Govender & Wait, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is based on a qualitative and inductive approach. It is an ongoing longitudinal study, initiated in 2014 and evaluated in early 2020. The process of developing a WIL model between a university and industry partners is based on empirical findings in a South African setting.

Population and Sample

The initiative was set up to meet the challenges of business postgraduate students in the labour market and to improve their employability by enhancing their match with industry needs. It was also designed to assist companies to find and employ appropriately skilled employees among business postgraduate students. It is ultimately about creating a win-win situation where a university, business postgraduate student and industry interact in a quest for consensus and a match between industry needs and educational skills.

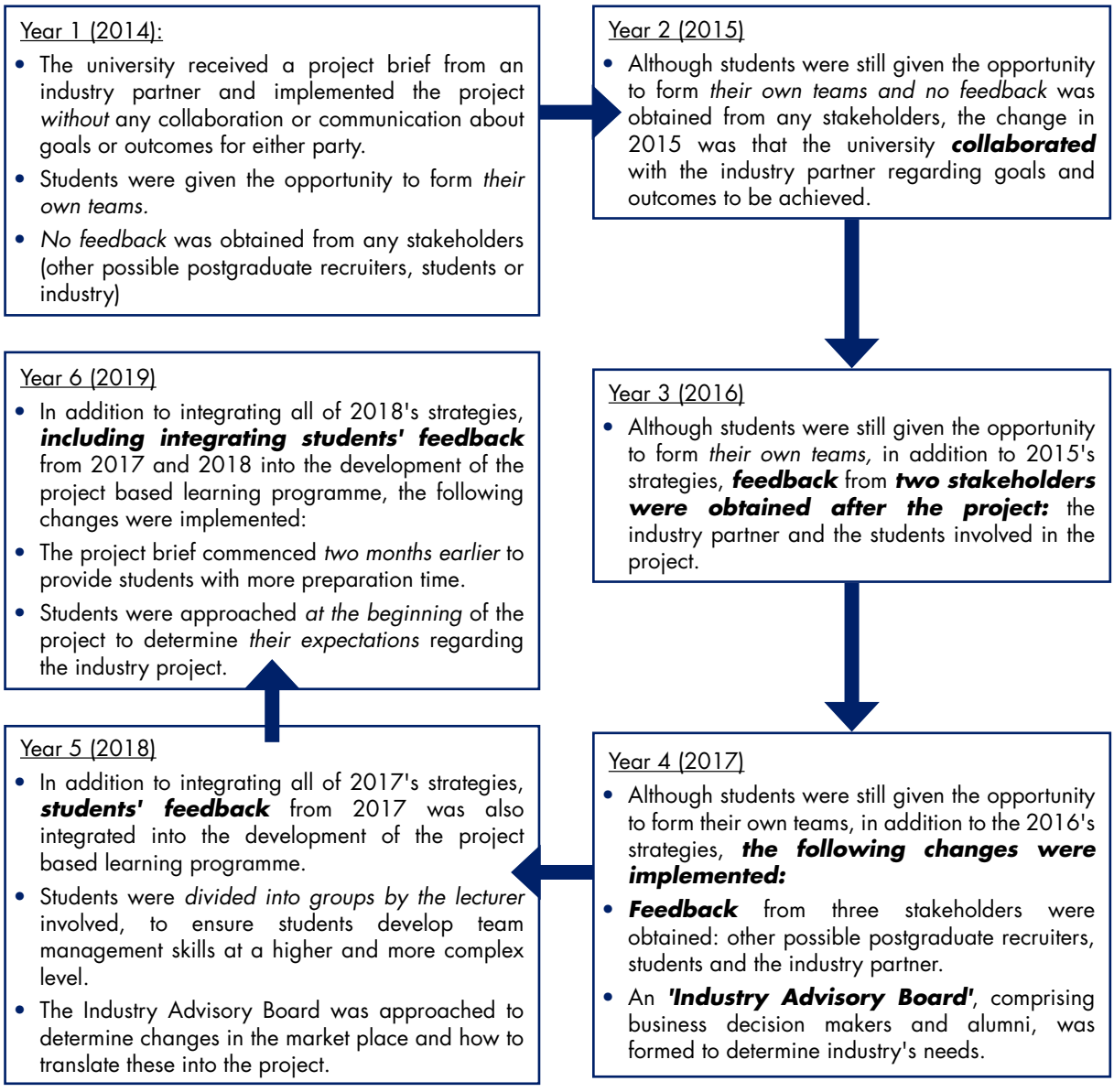
Data Collection

The evolutionary stages of the empirically developed project-based WIL model, from inception in 2014 until end of 2019, are depicted in Figure 1. It is evident from the stages implemented, that the project-based learning programme evolved every year and was transformed to better meet and match all stakeholders' (students, recruiters, industry partner and the university) changing needs. To understand the needs and expectations of all parties involved, they need to be involved from the commencement of the project. All stakeholders have to be consulted so that they feel they have influence and a voice to what the outcomes might be and to better manage and match expectations and needs.

Ethical Considerations

Participants in this study were granted strict confidentiality and anonymity. Furthermore, there was no obligation whatsoever to participate, but business postgraduate students, recruiters and industry partners all gave their consent and volunteered in good faith to collaborate in the process of establishing a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Model to develop a win-win process between university, business graduate students and industry.

Figure 1:
Project based WIL model stages from 2014 to 2019



Lubbe & Svensson, 2020

To determine needs and expectations from postgraduate students, feedback was gathered in 2020 from participants in the 2018 group (depicted in Table 1), who by this time had had a year of work experience and were better equipped to reflect on the WIL programme. The response rate on interviews was 38% (23 out of 60 students). Of the participants providing feedback, 78% indicated that they are more employable based on the WIL-model and 78% indicated better job opportunities.

FINDINGS

This section reports the findings based on the WIL-model stages applied and described in the previous section. Table 2 structures a summary of the skills and benefits gained from interviewing students on the WIL model. Multiple skills are gained as a result of participation in the programme. Key skills reported were: (i) working under pressure / tenacity, (ii) presentation skills, (iii) team dynamic skills, (iv) conflict

resolution skills, (v) problem solving skills / critical thinking skills, (vi) project management skills, (vii) research skills, and (vii) digital business and marketing skills.

The top three skills mentioned by interviewees were firstly (i) the ability to present to a variety of audiences, secondly (ii) to work under pressure were mentioned jointly with applying your project management skills as students had expectations from industry participants, their lecturer and their team members. Jointly in third place (iii) were critical thinking and problem-solving skills and digital business and marketing skills.

Table 2
Participants' feedback on skills and benefits, and proposed changes of the WIL model

Skills gained	Benefits	Proposed changes
Working under pressure / Tenacity	Provided the skills and confidence to find a job / internship	Increase financial knowledge and practical financial abilities by adding more course work and by exposing student to more industry-specific financial information
Presentation skills to various audiences / dry-run skills / communication skills	Better prepared for the working world	Brief guest speakers before their presentation on specific deliverables
Team dynamic skills	Apply skills to approach work promotions	Remove repetitive messages or course information (other modules in programme)
Conflict resolution skills	Apply oneself better in various circumstances	Include a sales module or project to make students more versatile in the job market
Problem solving skills/critical thinking	Learning how to adapt to changing world/ new technologies e.g. virtual presentations to industry partner, Statistical Packages.	More feedback from industry participants and projects and assignments
Project management skills	Exposure to corporate structures & different work environments	Consider job shadowing opportunities when internship is not an option
Conducting data analysis and transferring insights into real campaigns/ research skills	Exposure to different brands and a diverse customer base	Include a variety of industry projects, not just FMCG, or financial services management focused.
Plan, devise and execute a campaign	Provided 'real work' experience	Guard against a silo approach, include a lecture from for example the logistics department.
Digital business and marketing skills	Provided career direction to areas of business and marketing preferred or enjoyed more	

Lubbe & Svensson, 2020

There are a range of benefits (Table 2) recorded, such as: (i) skills and confidence to find a job/ internship; (ii) better preparation for the working world; (iii) application of skills to approach work promotions; (iv) application of oneself in various work circumstances; (v) adaption to changing world /new technologies; (vi) exposure to corporate structures and different work environments; (vii) exposure to different brands and a diverse customer base; (viii) 'real work' experience; and (viii) the WIL programme provided career

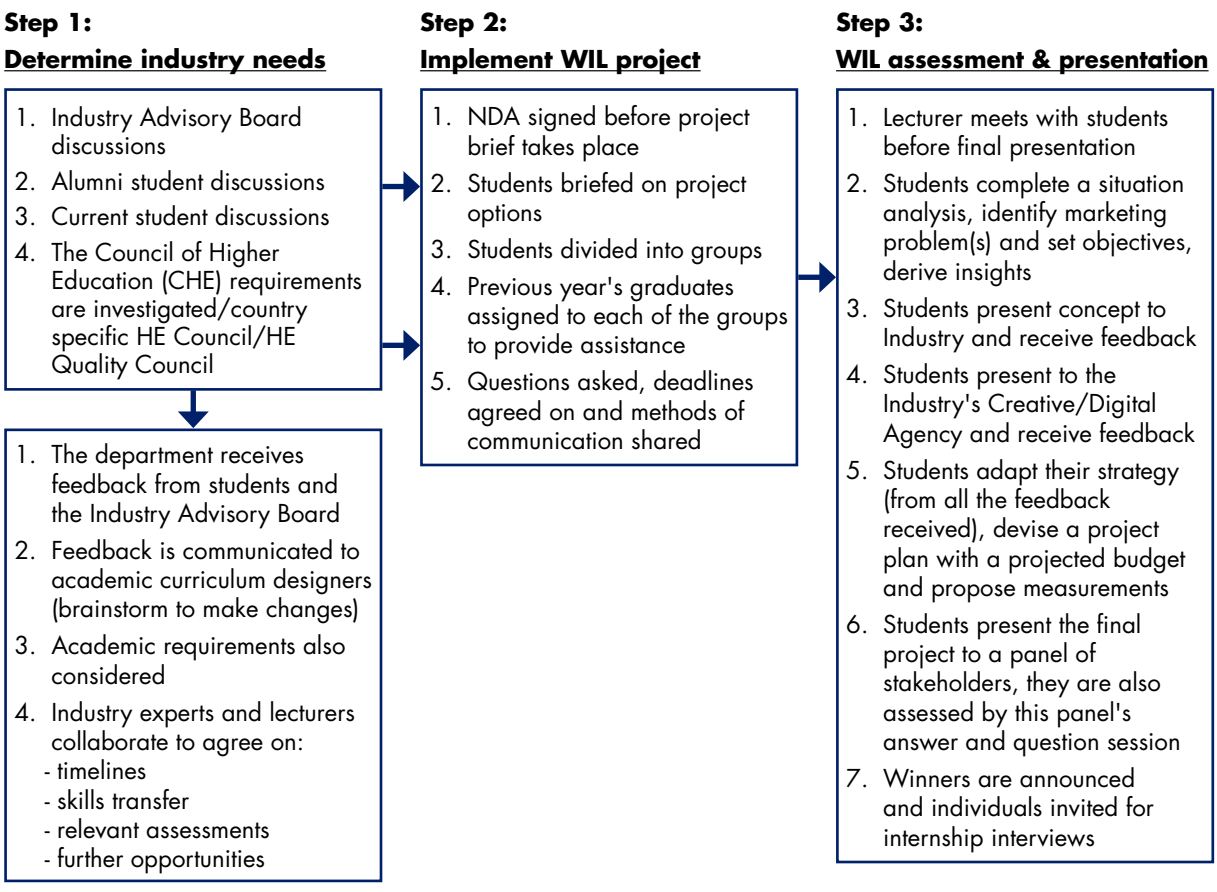
direction to areas of business and marketing preferred or enjoyed more by students. The top benefit mentioned, was that students felt better prepared for the working world.

Participants provided proposals (Table 2) for additions to the programme, such as: (i) increasing students' financial knowledge and specifically practical financial abilities by adding more course work and by exposing students to more industry-specific financial information; (ii) briefing guest speakers before their presentations on specific deliverables (e.g. what their industry is looking for, what they value, how to apply for a job); (iii) removing repetitive messages or module information (lectures to obtain knowledge of what is offered in the entire programme and become less silo focused); (iv) including a sales module or project to make students even more versatile in the job market; (v) ensuring industry participants also provide feedback on the projects and assignments – not just the lecturers; (vi) considering job shadowing opportunities where internships or graduate programme are not an option for the industry partner involved; (vii) including a variety of industry projects, not just for example financial services management and fast moving consumer good management opportunities; and (viii) guard against a silo approach.

DISCUSSION FROM FINDINGS

The authors propose a WIL-model for business graduates based on the feedback gathered from participants and the WIL-model stages outlined in the section of methodology. Current literature assisted in synthesising the steps that were followed to design, develop and implement the WIL model for business postgraduates described above, into the more formal model presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2:
The proposed WIL model for business postgraduates



Lubbe & Svensson, 2020

Step 1: Determine industry needs

Since the process of obtaining industry input, be it from potential employers (Zakharchenko, 2017; Henderson & Trede, 2017; HRDC, 2017; McArthur et al., 2017) or past students (Atkinson, Coleman, & Blankenship, 2014; Jacques, 2014) is supported by current literature, the WIL model commences by conducting research with WIL stakeholders. To determine what skills the industry requires, educators conduct focus group sessions with current students, in-depth interviews with alumni and formal discussion meetings with selected industry members. Industry experts are invited to serve on the university Industry Advisory Board. Students are asked what skills they expect will be required for job opportunities and which skills they think they still lack. Alumni students are interviewed regarding the skills they would like to have learnt, or learned more about, and what skills, in their experience, the job market requires of graduates in the field of business.

The focus is on constructive feedback regarding where the degree fulfils job environment needs (so that the Department can continue doing this), and where the skills gaps exist. Feedback from students and the Industry Advisory Board includes constructive criticism of softer skills that students can improve on, such as time management, presentation skills, working in groups, and general communication skills. Examples of the latter include how to write a professional email, when to send an email, when to phone and how to adapt when a situation changes. Focus group discussions and Industry Advisory Board meetings also attempt to uncover participants' thoughts on future trends in general and how these will alter the skills sets that will be required in the workplace.

Feedback received from students and the Industry Advisory Board is then communicated to academic curriculum designers, where brainstorming takes place regarding changes that can be implemented immediately and those that need to be planned. It is at this stage that academic requirements need to be considered. The established Curriculum Committee agrees on time pressures and theory requirements regarding specific qualification modifications. Industry experts and business lecturers then collaborate to agree on WIL timelines, skills transfer, relevant assessments and further opportunities. These discussions are confirmed via email to the relevant industry and other partners, and WIL participants.

Step 2: Implement the WIL project

The project requires both educators and the industry partner to agree on time and budget commitments and constraints. Both partners need to obtain buy-in at different levels, and constant communication between the partners is essential. A designated manager from industry and one from the university need to be appointed, as the 'go-to' people for the two partners. At the first project briefing session, the industry partner explains a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) whereby students agree not to disclose business information with external parties, and each student is required to sign this before the project brief takes place. The Protection of Personal Information Act (applicable in South Africa) is also discussed, and students provide written confirmation that their personal particulars (e.g., name, surname, cellular phone number and email address) can be provided to the industry partner, especially if it should be required for recruitment purposes.

Once administrative issues are dealt with, the industry partner briefs students on three possible projects which they will complete as a group, with each student selecting one project in which they would like to participate. The lecturer is responsible for dividing students into equal groups and needs to ensure that an equal number of groups are allocated to each project. It would not be fair to project 1, as an example, if only two groups are allocated to this project, but six groups are allocated to project 2. Competition should be equal; it is much easier to 'win' a project if only two groups 'compete'. As far as possible it should be 'fair game' for everyone participating, the students as well as the industry participants. In this particular scenario, equal groups are proposed, to make it fair. A group of four members will have to work harder

than a group of six members, and it is easier for individuals to get lost or hide in groups that are bigger than six members.

It is recommended that where possible, four groups participate per project, as experience has shown that this is manageable from a time management and project management perspective for a group of 60 students. The industry partner then presents an overview of the company, what it stands for, its culture, its work ethic, the history of the WIL project, how collaboration is shared, and how each project is expected to unfold, with specific requirements. Current market information, product information and sensitive 'real project' issues are shared, and it is reiterated that these details cannot be shared via any type of social media or informal conversation with friends. Students working on the project and the industry partner's sponsors and colleagues are the only partners' privy to the project specifications. The industry partner also introduces the main sponsors who are engaged with the brand/project internally.

The previous year's graduates who received an internship with the company are invited to assist with the project and mentor and coach current students. A group leader is appointed by each group, and after the general briefing session, the project groups break away and talk to the industry partner's sponsors and alumni graduates. Questions are asked, deadlines are agreed on and methods of communication are shared. Literature supports this step, stressing that collaboration between the university and the industry partner is crucial (Khuong, 2016; Etzkowitz & Ranga, 2015) as this working relationship provides lucrative benefits to all parties involved including student, educator and the business partner (Govender & Wait, 2017; Ferns, Russell & Kay, 2016;). Involvement from the industry partner is reiterated, delivering good guidelines, expectations and a well-written brief (Henderson & Trede, 2017).

Step 3: WIL presentation and assessment

The project briefing should be conducted as the first lecture or briefing session for the particular module, and the final presentation to the industry partner's directors and senior managers should take place at the end of the same semester/year. The lecturer meets with the students during the allocating lecturing slots, for three-and-a-half hours per session, before the final presentation. At these sessions certain themes are lectured, theories are explained, and all theories are linked to the different projects where applicable. Guest speakers are invited to address the latest trends in business thinking and students are encouraged to engage with guest lecturers during these sessions. Class participation is encouraged through a debate, themed around an industry trend and/or challenge. An individual report is submitted initially, in which each student is required to portray a thorough situation analysis, identify the problem, and set the objectives for their project as a 'check point' to ensure that they start at the right place.

Student groups present their project ideas to the industry panel, where they have the opportunity to engage with the panel and critically and constructively address questions and comments. They are then steered in the right direction with recommendations for improvement. The groups next present their amended concepts to a Creative Agency, together with the industry partner's sponsors and industry interns. The Creative Agency develops one image from input and discussions at this meeting and the WIL students use this image in their final presentations. The lecturer, together with other academic colleagues, attends an event where each student group presents their proposals to industry and the Creative Agency to gauge progress, determine if students are on the right track and intervene if there are gaps.

At these presentations, student groups are awarded a mark by all panel members present. An average of these marks counts towards their academic semester mark. The rubric for marking is developed with the industry partner beforehand and is available to students before the presentation. The same procedure is followed with the final presentation at the end of the semester/year. Once again, a rubric is available to the students, and they receive the average mark of the industry attendees present. At the final presentation,

student groups present for 30–45 minutes and receive feedback. Each group answers specific questions regarding their concept, proposed strategy and implementation suggestions. They are required to present a 'fictional budget', and show how they would implement it and how they would measure the success of their campaign. In the final part of the presentation, each group reflects on the journey of the industry project and highlights the project's strengths as well as challenges.

Students and groups who impress industry partners most are targeted for interviews for possible internships and/or employment positions. The winning group from each project is announced at various educator and industry year-end functions, where each group member is presented with a reasonable cash voucher. Leon-Garcia (2018) and Farr-Wharton et al., (2018) support the notion of lecturers preparing students for the real world by providing opportunities to engage in teams as well as with the lecturer. Student and lecturer communication, engagement, and class participation are crucial in preparing students to achieve the WIL industry-project's goals (Hunt & Madhavaram, 2014; Farr-Wharton et al., 2018).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 3:
Summary of further recommendations to the current 3-step WIL model to benefit the beneficiaries

Recommendations	Beneficiaries	Benefits
Recommendations to Step 1: Determine Industry needs		
Determine who are the 'behind the scenes' stakeholders and interview them on their experiences during the WIL project.	Industry + students + future talent	Workplace ready business graduates for industry
Obtain input from lecturers from other disciplines who are involved in WIL projects.	Industry + students + university	Workplace ready business graduates for industry and an improved WIL program for the students, university and industry.
Involve all the lecturers on the course to evaluate the WIL model.		
	Industry + students + university	Workplace ready business graduates for industry and an improved WIL program for the students, university and industry.
Recommendations to Step 2: Implement WIL project		
Agree and negotiate expectations between the student and the lecturer	Students + university	Increased learning experience.
Facilitate strategic thinking.		
	National economy + global markets + job opportunities	Futuristic business managers designing future trends, getting jobs and enable students to explore entrepreneurial avenues
Recommendations to Step 3: WIL assessment and presentation		
Assess industry stakeholders' benefits and experiences throughout the WIL process	Industry + students + + universities + national economy	Stakeholders partner to create employability opportunities & mutual benefits

Lubbe & Svensson, 2021

Recommendations to Step 1: Determine Industry needs

Recommendation 1: Determine who are the 'behind the scenes' stakeholders

As mentioned in step 1, it is imperative to meet each year with the entire industry project team involved before the new projects are devised and approved. The benefits of evaluating the previous year's performance are to (i) gain an understanding about the industry participants perceptions and experiences of what can be improved; (ii) gain knowledge of new technologies that need to be implemented; and (iii) agree on expectations and outcomes. Currently proposed during step 1 of the postgraduate WIL Model, the industry's needs are evaluated and determined, but from the industry advisory board, the alumni, the current students and the Council of Higher Education. However, to improve this current postgraduate WIL-model, it is proposed that key stakeholders that are 'behind the scenes' from industry are interviewed to gain an understanding of what worked and did not work. Although industry participants are approached every year to evaluate the previous year's project and plan for the coming year's project, there are stakeholders 'behind the scenes' that are not approached. For example, the marketing director and/or divisional manager who attended the final presentations, but who are not formally part of the university-industry project or the Industry Advisory Board, might have valuable insights. It is not necessary for these 'behind the scenes' stakeholders to meet, but research strategies can be implemented to gain their input too.

Recommendation 2: Obtain input from lecturers from other disciplines who are involved in WIL projects

To incorporate the proposed recommendation by students to guard against a 'silo' approach, this can be overcome by inviting other lecturers from other disciplines to provide input into this particular WIL model. A lecturer from, for example, Applied Information Services, who is still in the business domain, can share his or her experiences and 'know how' to improve the current postgraduate WIL model.

Recommendation 3: Involve all the lecturers on the course to evaluate the WIL model

To incorporate feedback from students who commented:

> Remove repetitive messages or course information (other modules in programme,

the various lecturers on the programme need to talk to each other to ensure repetitiveness is avoided. Constructive criticism on the entire course will influence the perception of the WIL project that builds on all the modules presented in the course. Repetitive information can be removed if transparency is adhered to. Another suggestion from students were:

> To address the issue of a variety of experiences on the course.

Again, if there is transparency about what each lecturer is doing in each of the modules, variety can be introduced.

Recommendations to Step 2: Implement WIL project

Recommendation 4: Agree and negotiate expectations between the student and the lecturer

Although the WIL-model for postgraduate students is refined after each year, it is evident from some students' responses that their expectations were not met. One student wrote

> I never plan to work in FMCG, so I wasn't sure why I had to participate in this project.

Another student wrote:

> I am an entrepreneur and will start my own business and I didn't see how this project align to my future business plans.

Although there were only four negative responses on the project itself, it is proposed that the university, specifically the lecturer in charge should communicate and negotiate expectations and projected outcomes *before* the project commences. Furthermore, it will be good to hear what students' expectations are, *before* they start with the project and to agree together: students, industry and university on guidelines and ground rules *before* the project starts. To address the need to have exposure to more than one industry, all the lecturers on the course have to meet during step 1 as explained above in recommendation 3.

Recommendation 5: Facilitate strategic thinking

Literature states the need for strategic thinking skills (Vega, 2018; Haycock et al.,2012; Seyed et al., 2015; Moon, 2013), and propose that it is easier to gain these skills when students are involved in practical, hands-on projects (Meza Rios et al., 2018). In straddling the business theory and practical business challenges, opportunities arise for creative problem solving, together with novel ideas and innovative solutions that facilitate strategic thinking. Undergraduate numbers hinder the practicality of hands-on, work-related industry projects, and thus the increased need for postgraduate WIL projects is highlighted where classes are smaller with less students that makes such a project more manageable. It is recommended that students are provided with the opportunity to incorporate all their knowledge gained from undergraduate studies as well as on the rest of the postgraduate course. The only way to do this, is for the lecturer to be involved in undergraduate programmes too, to understand what is offered and how the postgraduate scaffolds on the undergraduate foundation.

Furthermore, to address students' feedback that financial skills are not fully addressed with this particular postgraduate WIL model, it is recommended that experts are brought in, from other disciplines at the particular university, or from other parts of industry to provide students with this hand-on practical financial expertise to better their strategic thinking skills.

Recommendations to Step 3: WIL assessment and presentation

Recommendation 6: Assess industry stakeholders' benefits received after final presentations

It is not possible to increase benefits if the expectations and needs are not known. It should not be assumed that what the university sees as a benefit, is what the industry participants or the students see as benefits. The only way to determine needs, is to ask what they are and to monitor various' parties' experiences throughout the entire process. It is therefore proposed that the university WIL project leader, identify stages *during* the WIL process to obtain feedback. Currently the postgraduate WIL project proposes that stakeholders meet before and after the project, however expectations can be better managed if it is monitored throughout the process. This will provide all the participants the opportunity to adapt during the process to provide a better experience for all participants involved.

CONCLUSIONS

This study critically evaluated an existing WIL model for postgraduate business students. The two strengths of this study are firstly, the promotion of input and feedback from all stakeholders involved in the postgraduate WIL project, and secondly this proposed WIL model can be a good starting point for universities or industry considering a future postgraduate WIL project for business students. Although feedback from stakeholders have been obtained to refine and improve the model over the years, the

authors recognise that there are yet more improvements to implement: (i) determine who are the 'behind the scenes' stakeholders, (ii) obtain feedback from lecturers from other disciplines, (iii) involve all the lecturers on the course to evaluate the WIL model, (iv) agree and negotiate expectations between the student and the lecturer, (v) facilitate strategic thinking, and (vi) assess industry stakeholders' benefits and experiences throughout the WIL process.

The challenges for implementing future postgraduate WIL projects are the increasing postgraduate student numbers. Pressure from management to increase postgraduate student numbers put strain on lecturers to manage this increasing classes sizes. Furthermore, it becomes harder to manage WIL projects when there are many students involved. Industry also faces challenges, with financial pressures to make a profit with increased economic pressures leave little time to involve industry participants in university related WIL projects, when they could be billing their hours. However, in this particular project the industry partner recognises the privilege to be involved in shaping future business leaders and to be first to spot talent.

This study presents the value for postgraduate business students and the benefits to industry of partnering in WIL projects for a win-win situation. It presents a working WIL model for postgraduate business students, which is aligned with trends documented in literature. Step 1 of the model determines industry needs. Step 2, enables students to experience WIL as a practical activity and Step 3 allows students to present and showcase their unique talents and skills to potential employers. It is this phase that has the potential to increase job opportunities for graduating business students in the immediate short term. In the long term, all students experiencing the WIL model stand a chance of becoming absorbed into the workforce, locally, nationally or internationally.

REFERENCES

Agnew, D., Pill, S. & Orrell, J. (2017) Applying a conceptual model in sport sector work-integrated learning contexts. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 18(3) pp.185-198.

Alharahsheh, H.H. & Pius, A. (2021) Exploration of Employability Skills in Business Management Studies Within Higher Education Levels: Systematic Literature Review. *Research Anthology on Business and Technical Education in the Information Era*, pp.1147-1164.

Asproth, V., Amcoff Nyström, C., Olsson, H. & Öberg, L. (2011) Team syntegrity in a triple loop learning model for course development. *Issues in Informing Science & Information Technology* 8 pp.1-11.

Atkinson, J.K., Coleman, P.D. and Blankenship, R.J. (2014) Alumni attitudes on technology offered in their undergraduate degree program. *Databases* 52(3) pp.63-793.

Baker, H. (2015) What makes a great PR or marketing graduate? *The B2B PR Blogg*, http://b2bprblog.com/blog/2015/05/what-makes-a-great-pr-or-marketing-graduate

Barwise, P. & Meehan, S. (2011) Customer insights that matter. *Journal of Advertising Research* 51(2) pp.342-344.

BizTrends 2017. (2017) #BizTrends2017: SA's graduate labour market – trends and issues. *Bizzcommunity* http://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/722/157320.html (Accessed 15 November 2019).

Bradford, R. (2018) Strategic Thinking: 11 Critical skills needed. *Center for Simplified Strategic Thinking, Inc.* https://www.cssp.com/CD0808b/CriticalStrategicThinkingSkills/ (Accessed 17 January 2020).

Branson, R. (2017) Richard Branson's advice for creating great marketing. Virgin.com. https://www.*virgin.com*/entrepreneur/richard-bransons-advice-creating-great-marketing (Accessed 15 November 2019).

Campbell, M., Stewart, V. & Karim, A. (2018) Beyond employability: Conceptualising WIL in postgraduate education. *Creating connections, building futures: Proceedings of the 2018 Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) 2018* National Conference. Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) Limited, Australia, pp.19-23.

Carucci, R. (2018) Three ways to be sure you're a strategic thinker. *Forbes* https://www.forbes.com/sites/roncarucci/2018/04/09/three-ways-to-be-sure-youre-a-strategic-thinker/#2034f4764218 (Accessed 10 October 2019).

Chuenpraphanusorn, T., Snguanyat, O., Boonchart, J., Chombuathong, S. & Moonlapat, K. (2017) The development of work-integrated learning model in business service field for Rajabhat University, Thailand. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 8(1) pp. 216-226.

Clausen, H.B. & Andersson, V. (2019) Problem-based learning, education and employability: a case study with master's students from Aalborg University, Denmark *Journal of teaching in travel & tourism* 19(2) pp.126-139. doi.org/10.1080/15313220.2018.1522290

Crebert, G., Bates, M., Bell, B., Patrick, C-J. & Cragnolini, V. (2004) Developing generic skills at university, during work placement and in employment: graduates' perceptions. *Higher Education Research & Development* 23(2) pp.147-165.

Donald, W., Baruch, Y. & Ashleigh, M. (2017) Boundaryless and Protean Career Orientation: A multitude of pathways to graduate employability. *Graduate Employability in Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Etzkowitz, H. & Ranga, M. (2015) Triple helix systems: an analytical framework for innovation policy and practice in the knowledge society. *Entrepreneurship and Knowledge Exchange*. Routledge.

Farr-Wharton, B., Charles, M.B., Keast, R., Woolcott, G. & Chamberlain, D. (2018) Why lecturers still matter: The impact of lecturer-student exchange on student engagement and intention to leave university prematurely. *Higher Education 75*(1) pp.167-185.

Ferreira, L. & Barbosa, M. (2019) PBL method in the formative process in postgraduate courses: An evaluation from students' perception. *International journal for innovation education and research 7*(12) pp.333-347.

Ferns, S., Russell, L. & Kay, J. (2016) Enhancing industry engagement with work-integrated learning: Capacity building for industry partners. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 17(4) pp.363-375.

Fitzgerald, B.K., Barkanic, S., Cardenas-Navia, I., Elzey, K., Hughes, D. & Troyan, D. (2015) The BHEF National Higher Education and Workforce Initiative: A model for pathways to baccalaureate attainment and high-skill careers in emerging fields, Part 2. *Industry and Higher Education* 29(5) pp. 419-427.

Fodness, D. (2007) Strategic thinking in marketing: implications for curriculum content and design. *AMA Winter Educators' Conference Proceedings* pp.341-342.

Freudenberg, B., Brimble, M. & Vyvyan, V. (2010) The penny drops: Can work integrated learning improve students' learning? *E-Journal of Business Education & Scholarship of Teaching* 4(1) pp.42-61.

Gannon, J., Rodrigo, Z. & Santomà, R. (2016) Learning to work interculturally and virtually: Developing postgraduate hospitality management students across international HE institutions. *International Journal of Management Education* (Elsevier Science) 14(1) pp.18-27, doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2016.01.002

Govender, C.M. & Taylor, S. (2015) A work integrated learning partnership model for higher education graduates to gain employment *South African Review of Sociology* 46(2) pp.43-59.

Govender, C.M. & Wait, M. (2017) Managing work integrated learning strengths, opportunities and risks in the emerging South African environment. *GABTA 19th Annual Conference – Vienna, Austria* 11-15 July, pp.223-232.

Grecu, V. & Denes, C. (2017) Benefits of entrepreneurship education and training for engineering students. In the 8th International conference on Manufacturing Science and Education – MSE 2017. *MATEC Web of Conferences* 121 No.12007 pp.1-7. EDP Sciences

Greenacre, L., Freeman, L., Jaskari, M. & Cadwallader, S. (2017) Editors' Corner: The 'Work-Ready' Marketing Graduate. *Journal of Marketing Education* 39(2) pp.67-68.

Gurchiek, K. (2010) Strategic thinking, communicating are top HR competencies *HR Magazine 55*(5) p.18.

Hall, J. (2018) 5 Marketing Trends to Pay Attention to in 2019. *Forbes* https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnhall/2018/06/17/5-marketing-trends-to-pay-attention-to-in-2019/#739ad1c560f7 (Accessed 15 November 2019).

Hamilton, M., Carbone, A., Gonsalvez, C. & Jollands, M. (2015) Breakfast with ICT Employers: What do they want to see in our graduates. *Proceedings of the 17th Australasian Computing Education Conference (ACE 2015)* 27(1) p.30.

Haycock, K., Cheadle, A. & Bluestone, K.S. (2012) Strategic thinking: Lessons for leadership from the literature. *Library Leadership and Management* 26(3-4) p.10.

Hemmert, M., Bstieler, L. & Okamuro, H. (2014) Bridging the cultural divide: Trust formation in university-industry research collaborations in the US, Japan, and South Korea. *Technovation* 34(10) pp.605-616.

Henderson, A. & Trede, F. (2017) Strengthening attainment of student learning outcomes during work-integrated learning: A collaborative governance framework across academia, industry and students. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 18(1) pp.73-80.

HRDC. (2017) The importance of education-industry partnerships. Human Resource Development Council South Africa, http://hrdcsa.org.za/the-importance-of-education-industry-partnerships/ (Accessed 7 March 2019).

Hunt, S.D. & Madhavaram, S. (2014) Teaching dynamic competition in marketing. *Atlantic Marketing Journal* 3(2) pp.80-93.

Ibrahim, H. & Jaaffar, A. (2017) Investigating post-work integrated learning (WIL) effects on motivation for learning: an empirical evidence from Malaysian Public Universities. *International Journal of Business and Society* 18(1) pp.17-32.

Ince, M. (2011) How are universities responding to demand for degrees that better prepare students for future employment? *Top Universities* https://www.topuniversities.com/student-info/careers-advice/how-can-universities-prepare-students-work/ (Accessed March 2019).

Iyengar, R.V. (2015) MBA: The Soft and Hard Skills That Matter. IUP Journal of Soft Skills 9(1) pp.7-14.

IOA. (2017) How can graduates better their chances of employment in the South African job market? On Africa (IOA) https://www.inonafrica.com/2017/07/20/can-graduates-better-chances-employment-south-african-job-market-2/ (Accessed March 2019).

Jackson, D. (2015) Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: Barriers and best practice *Studies in Higher Education* 40(2) pp.350-367.

Jacques, C. (2014) *Credit quandaries: How career and technical education teachers can teach courses that include academic credit.* Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED555679.pdf (Accessed 10 October 2019).

Johnson, L., Becker, S.A., Cummins, M., Estrada, V., Freeman, A. & Hall, C. (2016) *NMC horizon report: 2016 Higher Education Edition*. The New Media Consortium, pp.1-50.

Johnson, P. (2015) Can a business survive without marketing? LinkedIn, https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/can-business-survive-without-marketing-poppy-johnson/ (Accessed 17 January 2020).

Kalafatis, S. & Ledden, L. (2013) Carry-over effects in perceptions of educational value *Studies in Higher Education* 38 pp.1540-1561.

Karim, A., Campbell, M., Hasan, M. (2020) A new method of integrating project-based and work integrated learning in a postgraduate engineering study. *The Curriculum Journal* 31(1) pp.157-173, doi: 10.1080/09585176.2019.1659839

Keegan, B.P. (2017) The value of strategic thinking. *Forbes* https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/04/26/the-value-of-strategic-thinking/#371b6153430b (Accessed 17 January 2020).

Khuong, C.H. (2016) Work-integrated learning process in tourism training programs in Vietnam: Voices of education and industry. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 17(2) pp.149-161.

Krell, J., Todd, A. & Dolecki, P.K. (2019) Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice in Neurofeedback Training for Attention. *Mind, Brain, and Education* 13 pp.246-260. doi:10.1111/mbe.12220

La Marca, D. (2017) Why IoT (Internet of Things) and Industry 4.0 need professional marketing. *Media Buzz*, https://www.mediabuzz.com.sg/research-analysis-and-trends-july2017/why-iot-and-industry-4-0-need-professional-marketing (Accessed 17 January 2020).

Leon-Garcia, F. (2018) Preparing students for a rapidly-changing world. *University World News*. 23 March, https://www.universityworldnews.com/ (Accessed January 2019).

Masole, L. & Van Dyk, G. (2016) Factors influencing work readiness of graduates: An exploratory study. *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 26(1) pp.70-73.

McArthur, E., Kubacki, K., Pang, B. & Alcaraz, C. (2017) The employers' view of 'work-ready' graduates: A study of advertisements for marketing jobs in Australia. *Journal of Marketing Education* 39(2) pp.82-93.

Melaia, S., Abratt, R. & Bick, G. (2008) Competencies of marketing managers in South Africa. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 16(3) pp.233-246.

Meza Rios, M., Herremans, I., Wallace, J., Althouse, N., Lansdale, D. & Preusser, M. (2018) Strengthening sustainability leadership competencies through university internships. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 19(4) pp.739-755.

Moon, B. (2013) Antecedents and outcomes of strategic thinking. *Journal of Business Research* 66(10) pp.1698-1708.

Mustata, I.C., Alexe, C.G. & Alexe, C.M. (2017) Developing competencies with the general management ii business simulation game. *International Journal of Simulation Modelling (IJSIMM)* 16(3) pp.412-421, doi:10.2507/IJSIMM16(3)4.383

Mutalemwa, D., Utouh, H. & Msuya, N. (2020) Soft Skills as a Problem and a Purpose for Tanzanian Industry: Views of Graduates. *Economic Insights - Trends & Challenges* 4 pp.45-64.

Ohei. K.N. & Brink, R. (2019) Investigating the prevailing issues surrounding ICT graduates' employability in South Africa: A case study of a South African University. *The Journal of Independent Teaching and Learning* 14(2) pp.29-42.

Okoti, D. (2018) It takes more than a degree to beat unemployment. *Daily Nation* https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/mynetwork/It-takes-more-than-a-degree-to-beat-unemployment/3141096-4588296-ff7uv4/index.html (Accessed 10 October 2019).

Papakonstantinou, T., Charlton-Robb, K., Reina, R.D. & Rayner, G. (2013) Providing research-focused work-integrated learning for high achieving science undergraduates. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 14(2) pp.59-73.

Pate, D.L. (2020) The skills companies need most in 2020—and how to learn them. www.googlescholar.com (Accessed 16 March 2020).

Prikshat, V., Kumar, S. & Nankervis, A. (2019) Work-Readiness Integrated Competence Model: Conceptualisation and Scale Development. *Education & Training* 61(5) pp.568-589.

Prior, S.J., Van Dam, P., Phoebe, E.J., Griffin, N.S., Reeves, L.K., Bronwyn, P., Giles, A. & Peterson, G.M. (2021) The healthcare redesign student experience: qualitative and quantitative insights of postgraduate work-integrated learning. *Higher Education Research & Development* doi:10.1080/07294360.2020.1867515

Rackova, K. (2015) Towards Selected Interpersonal Skills in Management. *Social & Economic Revue* 13(4) pp.68-70.

Reinhard, K. & Pogrzeba, A. (2016) Comparative cooperative education: Evaluating Thai Models on work-integrated learning, using the German Duale Hochschule Baden-Wuerttemberg Model as a benchmark. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 17(3) pp 227-247.

Saeed, K. (2015) Gaps in marketing competencies between employers' requirements and graduates' marketing skills. *Pakistan Business Review* 17(1) pp.125-146.

Schlee, R.P. & Karns, G.L. (2017) Job requirements for marketing graduates: are there differences in the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes needed for different salary levels? *Journal of Marketing Education* 39(2) pp.69-81.

Seyed Kalali, N., Momeni, M. & Heydari, E. (2015) Key elements of thinking strategically. *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics* 2(8) pp.801-809.

Solnet, D., Kralj, A., Moncarz, E. & Kay, C. (2010) Formal education effectiveness and relevance: Lodging Manager perceptions. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education* 22(4) pp.15-24.

StastSA. (2020) Vulnerability of youth in the South African labour market. *StatsSA*. June 24, http://www.statssa.gov.za/

Vaaland, T.I. & Ishengoma, E. (2016) University-industry linkages in developing countries: perceived effect on innovation *Education + Training* 58(9) pp.1014-1040.

Valencia-Forrester, F. (2019) Internships and the PhD: Is this the future direction of work-integrated learning in Australia? *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning* 20(4) pp.389-400.

Vande Wiele, P., Morris, D., Ermine, J.L. (2017) Project based learning for professional identity: a case study of collaborative industry projects in marketing. *Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning* 12(2) pp.44-63

Van Scheers, L. & Makhitha, K.M. (2016) Are small and medium enterprises (SMEs) planning for strategic marketing in South Africa? *Foundations of Management* 8(1) pp.243-250.

Vega, J. (2018) Strategic Thinking. *Stratex Solutions* http://www.stratex.solutions/strategic-thinking/ (Accessed 28 January 2019).

Whitler, K.A. (2018) The 2018 summer reading list for marketers. *Forbes* https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimberlywhitler/2018/06/03/the-2018-summer-reading-list-for-marketers/#7af425884282 (Accessed 17 January 2020).

Wiedmer, T. (2015) Generations do differ: Best practices in leading traditionalists, boomers, and generations X, Y, and Z. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* 82(1) p.51.

Zakharchenko, Y. (2017) Professional training of marketing specialists: Foreign experience. *Comparative Professional Pedagogy 7*(2) pp.51-55.

Using practice questions based on Bloom's taxonomy to improve quality of learning of block release students in Zimbabwe: A case study of public policy analysis module[1]

Hardson Kwandayi, Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education, Zimbabwe[2]
Tenson Muyambo, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe[3]

ABSTRACT

The paper observes that nearly all universities in Zimbabwe offer crash academic programmes that are commonly referred to as block release because students attend their face-to-face classes for a short space of time. The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified the use of block release. During block release sessions, students are taught all the course content for the whole semester which usually includes four courses. After the intensive face-to-face lessons, students are expected to write their assignments and then come back to write their final examinations at the end of the semester. The paper contends that the block release mode of instruction is typical distance education and therefore requires continuous student-instructor interaction through use of well-planned practice questions based on the course syllabus. To be effective, the paper suggests that the practice questions should be based on Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of questions. The questions focus on key verbs which include remember (or recall), understand, apply, analyse, evaluate and create. This approach enables students to master various types of knowledge which are factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognitive. The paper uses illustrative questions from public policy analysis which is a relatively new discipline in the context of Zimbabwe. The illustrative questions can also be applied across disciplines such as Family and Religious Studies, History and Geography.

Keywords: block release, distance teaching, student support

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe has a total of 20 fully functional private and public universities. In terms of mode of education delivery, all of them are conventional universities except the Zimbabwe Open University which is the only distance teaching university in the country. Yet nearly all the conventional universities in Zimbabwe have adopted part-time mode of education which is commonly referred to as block release. The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified the use of block release. In short, block release has become a form of distance education whereby students meet the lecturers for a short period ranging from two weeks to one month for face-to-face teaching at an agreed venue in a given semester. During this period, students cover their

1 Date of submission 26 June 2020
Date of review outcome: 13 October 2020
Date of acceptance 12 May 2021

2 ORCID: 0000-0002-3848-8078

3 ORCID: 0000-0001-6765-5031

courses for the required number of contact hours ranging from 45 to 48 depending on the university. While the number of hours that are stipulated in the general regulations are covered, the teaching – learning process is hurried and intense. Since this teaching process does not give students adequate time for digesting and processing the material covered, it is most unlikely that all students would have grasped the delivered material. After the intense classes, students are expected to go and read the work covered. In addition, the learners are expected to write their assignments as well as coming back to write end of semester examinations. However, we contend that the current block release mode of instruction is an inadequate mode of instruction and therefore requires retooling by applying principles of distance education especially continuous engagement with the learners after face-to-face block release teaching. In this practice-based paper, we demonstrate how university instructors can enrich their block release teaching by using revision questions based on Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy as distancing teaching tools. Before presenting our teaching experiences using revision questions, we delineate our methodology.

METHODOLOGY

Unlike empirical research articles that have a common writing approach or methodology, conceptual papers which include practice-based articles have often had debatable approaches as 'researchers struggle to design and write non-empirical articles because of the lack of commonly accepted templates to guide their development' (Jaakkola, 2020: 18). After observing absence of broadly acceptable framework to write non-empirical papers, Whetten (1989) suggested seven criteria that should be used to assess suitability of conceptual or theoretical papers. These criteria are in form of seven questions as follows:

1. Does the paper contribute novel and substantial value to current knowledge and thinking in a given area?
2. Will the recommended practice or approach likely to change organisational processes in a given area?
3. Are the authors' assumptions, views, underlying logic and evidence convincing?
4. Does the article demonstrate grounded and sustained thinking and thoroughness in a given area?
5. Is the paper clearly, logically and professionally written?
6. Is the topic current and will it stimulate new discourses in the area?
7. Is the paper appealing and is it likely to attract wide readership?

Whetten (1989) concluded by arguing that a paper may not have to address all the foregoing questions but should strive to answer most of the questions for it to be taken seriously. While the questions do not provide a specific format to write a conceptual paper, they stimulated our thoughts to write such a paper.

The specific methodology to write this paper was partly based on guidelines presented by the *Voluntary Sector Review* (2017), a journal published by Bristol University Press. The journal says that a practice-based paper should have five key sections. First, the paper should state the issue or problem to be addressed and then explain why the issue or problem is important. Second, the paper should explain the basis for the claims the author is making based on literature, theory or empirical research. Third, in the main body of the article, key lessons learned from experience or other activities should be presented. Fourth, the paper should discuss the implications of the suggested or recommended solutions. Finally, the article should conclude by emphasising how the article should enable readers to better respond to the challenges or questions raised at the beginning.

The Africa Virtual University (2017) also gave the authors insights into writing conceptual articles. The University presented a template for scholars to present their practice-based papers with special reference

to conference papers. In this regard, the University says that the first step is to state the problem to be addressed or the opportunity to be exploited. This step should also include how the problem is impacting on the target audience or population. The second step is to design and implement a strategy to deal with the problem identified in the first stage. The third step is to assess the impact of the strategy implemented in the previous stage. At this stage, the focus will be on concrete results achieved in terms of outputs and outcomes. The fourth step focuses on lessons learned while the fifth and final step presents conclusions and recommendations. The focus in the final stage is to infer if the intervention has been successful and to make recommendations for future practice.

Based on the foregoing frameworks of presenting conceptual and practice-based papers, this paper used a synthetic approach which was developed by the authors. Accordingly, our first step is to outline problems associated with block release teaching. Our second step is to delineate the importance of using fully-fledged distance teaching approach as a strategy to improve block release teaching. In addition to distance teaching, the paper recommends use of revision questions based on Bloom's taxonomy to enrich distance teaching of block release classes. In the third step we show the results of our strategy by presenting the actual Bloom-based revision questions we crafted and used to teach our public policy classes. The final step is on implications for practice. We summarise the approach we used to write this paper in Figure 1.

Figure 1:
Synthetic model of presenting practice-based paper

Step 1: Problem: Block release as an instructional approach

Step 2a: Recommended Strategy 1: Strengthening block release teaching by infusing broad-based distance teaching instruction

Step2b: Recommended Strategy 2: Writing and strengthening block release revision questions based on Blooms taxonomy

Step 3: Results: Bloom's taxonomy-based revision questions used in practice

Step 4: Implications for practice

THE PROBLEM: BLOCK RELEASE AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

A close analysis of block release as a form of instruction shows that it is a form of distance education given that the key feature of distance education is learning which takes place when the student and the teacher are geographically separated with occasional face-to-face interaction. Zigerell (1984: 10) succinctly defined distance education as a form of instruction characterised 'by the physical separation of teacher from student, except for the occasional face-to-face meeting.' Today, most distance learning involves e-Learning with or without face-to-face learning. However, from Zigerell's definition it is clear that block release is a form of distance education since the students and the instructors meet only for short period of time - at most a month in a semester. In this regard, it is clear that there is a long period of separation between the institution and the learners. Yet unlike formal distance education which has learner support mechanisms after face to-face instruction, most block release programmes do not have known learner support services except in a few cases whereby lecturers communicate with their students via several e-Learning platforms such as Moodle. Therefore, to ensure block release mode of instruction is effective, this paper contends that block release programmes should enhance student learning by incorporating practice questions based on Bloom's taxonomy of questions. These questions would ensure that crash teaching during block release is enhanced by spaced learning throughout the semester. In fact, research has shown that spaced learning or distributed practice enhances student subject matter retention (Benjamin

& Tullis, 2010). In the next section we discuss distance education as a strategy to enhance teaching and learning for block release students.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGY 1: DISTANCE EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY TO ENHANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR BLOCK RELEASE STUDENTS

Concept of distance education

Distance learning became an important part of the education process in many countries in the mid-20th century and its popularity is growing especially with the advent of e-Learning. Distance education or learning at a distance is education of students who are not always present at a school, college or university. In this regard, the students and the instructors are often physically separated. Traditionally, distance education was often referred to as correspondence education since most of the communication was via the post. However, today distance education now uses several forms of media such as online learning or e-learning. As a result, most distance education institutions now use a mixture of traditional face-to-face instruction and e-learning resulting in what is often referred to as hybrid or blended hybrid (Tabor 2007) or blended learning or education (Vaughan, 2010).

What is critical in modern distance education is that the student and the instructor should interact throughout the semester. This interaction is what is critical in any education transaction. This point is emphasized by Shale and Garrison (1990) when they say that in its fundamental form, distance education is an interaction among the student, instructor and subject content. This point is stressed by Moore (1993) who noted that a transactional distance in distance education is whereby the instructor and the learners do not interact in the same physical learning environment and temporal space. Therefore, to reduce the negative effect of the transactional distance, Moore came up with three types of interaction essential for learning to take place in distance learning. The first is the learner content interaction which involves getting learning materials from the instructor or institution. In this regard, the learning material which is provided could be in form of audio or video tape, CD-ROM or online communication. The second is learner-instructor interaction which involves the interaction between the students and the instructor. This mode of interaction entails the lecturer sending quizzes, questions or assignments to learners. This also includes communicating critical information to the student or providing useful feedback to the learners. In addition, the student and the instructor can ask each other questions. The lecturer can also communicate important course information to students. The third is the learner – learner interaction which is an important element of distance education. Student-student interaction is whereby learners exchange vital information and ideas about the course. This can take place when the instructor is absent or present. It can take place during class discussions. Student-student discussions can also take place during small group discussions. This type of interaction enhances the learning process through student collaboration and knowledge sharing. The current authors observed that the foregoing interactions observed by Moore (1993) are absent in most block release programmes. One explanation for this is that the majority of lecturers in conventional universities in Zimbabwe are not trained to use the distance education mode. Yet given the preponderant use of block release model of delivery, it is essential that student receive continuous support throughout the semester.

Nature of student support services in distance education

As an instructional delivery system, distance education does not compel learners to be physically present where the instruction is delivered. Instead, students can still receive instruction wherever they are. For example, distance education can by delivered through technology. In some cases, it is delivered through written materials in form of modules. However, in most universities distance education involves limited face-to-face instruction at a given venue followed by student self-study at home. To make institutional delivery more effective, distance learning involves the provision of support services. These support services help to meet the various learning needs of students. As observed by Stewart (1993), student support

services are a critical component of distance education as they encourage the growth and development of the learners. In fact, any meaningful distance education should have a robust student support service. As noted by Rumble (2000), distance educators are now aware of the criticality of student support services to avoid traditional correspondence mode of distance learning which was prevalent in 1960s.

Today the success of distance education now depends on the nature of student support that is provided. Accordingly, the provision of varied and adequate student support services has become an important component of distance education as it provides a conducive learning environment to students learning at a distance. In well-endowed institutions, the range of student support services is wide and different. The definitions of student support services in distance education are also numerous, for example, Simpson (2000) views student support services as all activities that facilitate student learning and development. This definition, of course, excludes the learning materials such as modules. The support services embedded in Simpson's definition focus on cognitive, intellectual and organizational support. According to Garrison (1989) student support services in distance education include library services, Internet and software programmes and a range of human and non-human resources that facilitate student learning and development. In this regard, Farajollahi, and Moenikia (2010: 4452) say that 'Student support services are the provision of assistance to meet students' needs'.

Need for continuous student support for block release programmes

The previous section demonstrated the importance of student support services in distance education. Yet as earlier highlighted, block release as a form of distance education does not have specified student support services after face-to-face sessions. The main argument could be that the face-to-face contact hours for most block programmes are enough. However, we contend that effective learning under block release is hampered by the fact that it is too loaded with some programmes covering four courses in three weeks resulting in what is referred to as massed practice. APA Dictionary of Psychology (2020) defines *massed practice* as learning or training sessions that are often long and intense. Massed practice is opposed to what Simmons (2012) calls distributed *practice* which uses shorter and generally less intense teaching and learning sessions. Distributed *practice puts emphasis on spacing of content of a lesson*. In fact, the psychology of lesson planning calls for adequate spacing of content. In this regard, Smolen, Zhang and Byrne (2016) say that one strategy to enhance mastery of what is taught is to increase the gaps of time between learning episodes. This is called the 'spacing effect' or 'distributed practice' (Benjamin &Tullis, 2010) which refers to spacing out learning activities over time. According to Smolen, Zhang and Byrne (2016) this phenomenon has the potential to increase retention of learning considerably for students in schools, colleges and universities.

Several studies have revealed that spaced learning (distributed practice) consistently and robustly enhances long-term retention of subject matter by students (Janiszewski, Noel & Sawyer, 2003). For instance, it has been established that it improves learning of names (Carpenter & DeLosh, 2005), learning of vocabulary (Kornell, 2009), fact learning (Rawson & Kintsch, 2005), learning of mathematical concepts (Rohrer & Taylor, 2007) and learning of musical skills (Simmons, 2012). A study by Kapler, Weston and Wiseheart (2015) found that spaced learning for undergraduate students led to lasting benefits with respect to factual learning.

As a pedagogical approach, the main advantage of spaced learning or distributed practice is that it gives time for the lecturer to provide feedback. It also provides the student with ample time for reflection. Distributed practice is consistent with traditional scheduling of classes in conventional universities where lessons for each course are spread over the semester. However, the other approach – massed practice, is a crash programme which is consistent with block release mode of learning. The main disadvantages of massed practice are that there is not enough time for the lecturer to provide feedback and it is too demanding and leads to learner fatigue.

Given the research evidence on the efficacy of spaced learning, there is need for universities to enable students to continue learning even after the crash programme (massed practice) which often takes two weeks to one month to cover four courses which should ordinarily be taught in 10-12 weeks in a traditional face-to-face instructional mode. It is therefore our contention that revision or practice questions and other assignments should constitute part of the additional instructional activities for block release programmes. The other activities could be e-Learning consisting of quizzes and additional exercises. These activities would enable learning to take place long after the crash programme.

Importance of practice questions after block release crash programme

We view block release as a crash programme (massed practice) which is an intense form of instruction used by most universities in Zimbabwe to deliver some of their courses in a given semester. Therefore, to ensure continuous learning throughout the semester, we recommend use of planned practice questions to guide the students to revise content covered during the block. We also view practice questions as additional learning activities. In the context of this paper, practice questions are unique because they are detailed and attempt to cover the whole syllabus of a given module instead of focusing on a few topics. In fact, the authors are of the view that practice questions should cover the whole syllabus to prevent narrow coverage of a module. After going through all the practice questions, the student should be able to address key aspects of a module.

The authors have often found practice questions as a useful teaching and learning enhancing strategy when teaching block release classes. Most importantly, practice questions enable students to focus on cardinal aspects of the course throughout the semester. In fact, several scholars have also echoed the importance of practice questions, for example, Fofade, Elsner and Haines (2013) noted that practice questions are important because they:

- assess students' mastery of knowledge
- promote comprehension
- stimulate critical thinking
- generate discussion among students
- increase higher order learning
- stimulate independent learning
- assess students' preparation
- actively involve students in the learning process
- assess mastery of course objectives.

Our experience as lecturers on the block release classes has shown that practice or revision questions based on the syllabus help students to:

- read widely beyond the syllabus
- respond to questions with well thought out answers
- think deeper
- connect lecture material to real world ideas and events
- cover the whole syllabus
- focus on important themes and concepts in a module
- exchange ideas with the lecturer as the students are free to seek clarification of the practice questions provided.

It is clear from the foregoing that the practice questions are a useful student support strategy for deep learning for block release students. In fact, continuous engagement with the course material throughout the

semester definitely enhances student's mastery of the course material. Therefore, in the next section, we explain how an instructor can plan practice questions that enhance student learning.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGY 2: WRITING AND STRENGTHENING BLOCK RELEASE REVISION QUESTIONS BASED ON BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

To ensure effective learning for students, practice questions should be well crafted. One strategy we encourage instructors to use is to classify assignment questions according to students' cognitive level. This approach is embedded in Bloom's hierarchical approach to cognition. Bloom's original taxonomy of questions had six levels consisting of recall, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation and synthesis questions. However, according to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), the taxonomy was revised in 2001 where the synthesis questions became create questions. The new taxonomy of questions is shown in Table 1. The lowest level of the taxonomy is the remember questions while the highest level is the create questions. The instructor's task is to vary questions focusing on addressing various levels of cognition starting with basic remember or recall questions. The lecturer can combine the questions in each set of assignments. However, it is expected that the first set of questions will be simple recall questions. For illustrative purposes, we have used public policy analysis questions meant for students taking a course in public policy analysis for a Master's degree programme. We deliberately chose public policy because this field of study is still in its infancy in Zimbabwe.

Table 1
The Cognitive Processing Dimension of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

Dimension	Examples of the cognitive processes involved
Remember: can the student recall or remember the information?	Define, duplicate, list, memorize, recall, repeat, reproduce state
Understand: can the student explain ideas or concepts?	Classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate, paraphrase
Apply: can the student use the information in a new way?	Choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write
Analyze: can the student distinguish between the different parts?	Appraise, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test
Evaluate: can the student justify a stand or decision?	Appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, evaluate
Create: can the student create new product or point of view?	Assemble, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, write

Anderson, L. (2006) in Pickard, M.J. (2007: 48)

RESULTS: BLOOM'S TAXONOMY-BASED REVISION QUESTIONS USED IN PRACTICE

In this section we present the actual revision questions we have often used to teach our block release classes in public policy. As stated earlier, the questions are based on Bloom's taxonomy.

Remember questions

Remember or recall questions simply ask the student to remember the facts that the students have memorised. Remembering facts is considered to be the lowest level of cognition. At this level the students are simply required to give definitions, examples, summarise some information or to classify items. At this level,

common question stems include words like define, identify, recognise, name, label, locate and list. In this regard, we have found the following questions useful at this level:

i. Draw a labelled diagram showing the policy making process based on the James Anderson model.
ii. Define policy evaluation and policy analysis.
iii. Outline the main features of the elite theory of public policy making.
iv. Identify the official and unofficial policy makers in your country.
v. Describe the various levels of policy making.
vi. Identify types of public policies and policy analysis.

Understand/Comprehension questions

The next level of questions which the instructor should ask are comprehension questions. At this level students are expected to go beyond recall by demonstrating their understanding of what the issues being raised mean. The common verbs that are used at this level include: explain, interpret, outline, express, infer, discuss, describe and summarise. Basically, the focus of the comprehension level is to test the learners' understanding. It is important to note that the cognitive level at this stage is still low. The following are examples of questions we have often asked:

i. Describe steps you would follow if asked to evaluate a public policy of your choice.
ii. Explain why public transport vehicles such as buses should have speed limits.
iii. Expound how a public problem can reach the attention of public policy makers such as cabinet ministers.
iv. Outline factors which can contribute to a public issue to reach agenda status worth the attention of policy makers.
v. Discuss public policy making skills public managers should possess for them to effectively participate in the policy making process.
vi. Summarise cardinal elements of modernised public policy making.

Application questions

The third level cognitive is application. Application questions expect the learners to apply the knowledge they have learned. In this regard, students are expected to execute a process or procedure in a situation with which the students are familiar. At this level again, students are also expected to solve a given problem or to develop a project or programme to solve a problem. Common verbs associated with application include demonstrate, present, change, predict, solve, use, perform and apply. Examples of such questions include:

i. Describe how you would use agenda setting strategies to influence policy in your constituency.
ii. Explain how your local authority can apply the rational comprehensive model in its decision making and planning.
iii. Using examples, demonstrate how councillors can use agenda denial tactics in the policy making process.
iv. Predict the political decisions of newly selected policy makers through the lens of public choice theory.

v. There is rampant corruption in your local authority, and you have been engaged as a volunteer to assist it to fight the vice. Develop a plan of action to root out corruption in your local authority

vi. Apply the rational model of policy analysis to solve a public problem in your community.

Evaluation questions

Evaluation is concerned with the ability to judge the value of a statement, research report, policy proposal or existing policy. The assessment or judgments should be based on given criteria. The criteria may be given, or the students might develop or determine their own criteria. Learning outcomes at this level are very important because they contain features of all the other categories. They also contain value judgments centred on noticeably well-defined criteria. Commonly used verbs include appraise, assess, criticise, decide, defend, determine, evaluate, justify, judge, support and weigh. The following questions are examples of evaluation questions:

i. Debate the pros and cons of having Family and Religious Studies as a compulsory course in high schools.

ii. Assess the efficacy of the devolution policy in your country.

iii. Evaluate the extent to which public policies in your country are modernised and consistent with 21st century public policy expectations.

iv. All politicians should have some basic understanding of political science and public policy analysis. Critique this statement.

v. Compare and contrast the elite and public choice models of public policy analysis.

vi. Assess the assertion that public policy is a reflection of selfish interests of policy makers.

Analysis questions

The fourth cognitive level according to Bloom's Taxonomy is analysis. At this level, learners are expected to identify patterns and relationships in what they have learned. Questions at this level may ask students to organise elements of a given phenomenon. They are also expected to distinguish useful from useless information. Common question verbs at this level include: analyse, examine, compare, contrast, differentiate, investigate, validate and infer. At the evaluation level, the students are expected to make judgments on the basis of given criteria or standards. Again, at this level learners are expected to critique a given statement or work. They are also expected to determine the appropriateness of a solution to a problem. Evaluation of a theory or model takes place at this level. Examples of questions at this level include:

i. According to Thomas Dye, public policy is what government chooses to or not to do. Critique this definition.

ii. Examine the strengths and weaknesses of the multiple streams model of policy analysis.

iii. Compare and contrast public choice theory and the iron triangle model of public policy making.

iv. Identify a newspaper article where a government minister is trying to justify an action or policy. Examine the discourses of motive inherent in the newspaper article.

v. Differentiate the main attributes of an effective and ineffective public policy analyst.

vi. Distinguish between policy analysis and policy evaluation.

Create questions

At this level students are expected to develop new ideas, new products and themes. Accordingly, learners are expected to make suggestions, propose revision to an idea, and generate a plan or proposal. They

should also be able to hypothesise and test the hypotheses. Common question stems at this level include: create, invent, compose, design, formulate and propose.

Before the revision of Bloom's original taxonomy of questions, create questions used to be called synthesis (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). At this level, students are expected to put together components of knowledge to create something new. Students are also expected to adopt or adapt various strategies to solve emerging problems. Development of thought-provoking ideas is also expected at this level. Students operating at this level are expected to generate new ideas and use several arguments to support those ideas. An accomplished student of policy analysis at this level should be able to propose their own policy analysis models for generating policy alternatives to solve public problems in their communities and at national level. At the creating level, learners are expected to create or develop new innovative ideas and products. Learners operating at this level should be able to carry out tasks such as the following:

i. Develop a plan of action to get rid of a given problem such as gender violence in the community.
ii. Recommend a policy proposal to deal with squatters at national level.
iii. Propose a school volunteer programme to enhance the spirit of *Ubuntu*.

To assess creativity, a public policy lecturer can ask students the following questions:

i. Your government adopts splendid isolation as its foreign policy. Imagine and explain likely consequences of such a policy.
ii. Recommend and justify several policy alternatives to solve the problem of street kids in urban areas.
iii. Present a policy proposal to deal with persistent hunger caused by frequent drought in your country.
iv. Based on the theory of social construction of problems, propose and justify a public problem you would create in order to adopt your favoured policy at an opportune time.
v. In view of several models of policy analysis you have studied, develop a synthetic model you would craft for policy analysis in your local community.
vi. Suggest and vindicate public policies you would recommend attracting investment in your country.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

While the taxonomy of questions gives the impression that the questions are distinct and should operate in a hierarchical order, our view is that in practice recall questions can be embedded in other levels such as evaluation and analysis. In a typical question involving analysis, the student always starts by addressing basic recall questions before serious analysis or evaluation. Again, at the highest level of create questions, the student may start with an analysis. However, despite the overlapping and the embedded debate on the accuracy of Bloom's taxonomy, our advice to instructors is that they should vary their questions to enhance students' understanding of the subject matter. Again, at university level lower order questions are more suitable for undergraduate students while higher order questions should be predominating in graduate classes. Of course, we expect all levels of questions to be asked at all levels given the connectedness of the taxonomy of the questions.

It is important to note that Bloom's taxonomy of questions helps students to master several levels of knowledge. Instructors should therefore ensure that students master all levels of knowledge. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) have come up with four levels of knowledge. The lower order questions at recall and comprehension levels help students to develop factual and conceptual knowledge. Factual knowledge is basic information about a specific topic or discipline that learners should understand. This basic

information includes specific terms or elements of a subject. Mastering of factual knowledge is essential for learners since it builds the foundation for them to understand cardinal facets of a given topic or discipline. Conceptual knowledge deals with understanding key terms, principles, models, concepts and theories in a given subject or discipline. Some scholars refer to conceptual knowledge as declarative knowledge. Students master this type of knowledge through listening, reading, experiencing or mental reflection. Higher order questions which focus on application, evaluation and analysis equip students with procedural knowledge which enables learners to perform specific tasks and is useful knowledge to follow specific procedures or to carry out an operation. Finally, the higher level of knowledge is called meta-cognitive which is reflective or strategic knowledge and equips learners with problem solving skills. It enhances learners' ability to design a strategy to approach a task in class or outside the classroom environment. Hence, practice questions suggested in this paper should be geared towards addressing all the knowledge levels.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Given that most universities in Zimbabwe use block release as mode of instruction, this paper contended that lecturers should give students well-planned practice questions as a strategy to enhance student learning. This suggestion is based on the theory of spaced teaching and learning which is thought to enhance student mastery of the subject matter. To be effective, the paper recommended use of Bloom's taxonomy of questions. To make the paper more practical, we used public policy analysis questions. However, the use of practice questions is applicable in all fields. The paper further recommended that instructors should allow students to ask their own questions. In the process, the instructor can moderate the class discussion through online platforms. Finally, we urge future authors to further test the applicability of our synthetic model of writing practice-based papers.

REFERENCES

Africa Virtual University. (2020) Template for writing up your practice-based submission. https://avu.org/avuweb/en/resources-presenters-reviewers/template-for-writing-up-your-practice-based-submission/ (Accessed 20 October 2020).

Anderson, L.W. & Krathwohl, D.R. (Eds.) (2001) *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

APA Dictionary of Psychology (2020) Massed practice. https://dictionary.apa.org/massed-practice (Accessed 10 June 2020).

Benjamin, A.S. & Tullis, J. (2010) What makes distributed practice effective? *Cognitive Psychology* 61(3) pp.228-247.

Carpenter, S.K. & Delosh, E.L. (2006) Impoverished cue support enhances subsequent retention: Support for the elaborative retrieval explanation of the testing effect. *Memory & Cognition* 34 pp.268–276.

Farajollahi, M. & Moenikia, M. (2010) The study of relation between students support services and distance students' academic achievement. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2 pp.4451-4456.

Garrison, D.R. (1989) *Understanding distance education: A framework for the future*. London: Routledge.

Jaakkola, E. (2020) Designing conceptual articles: four approaches. *AMS Review* 10(1) pp.18-26.

Janiszewski, C., Noel, H. & Sawyer, A.G. (2003) A Meta-analysis of the Spacing Effect in Verbal Learning: Implications for Research on Advertising Repetition and Consumer Memory. *Journal of Consumer Research* 30(1) pp.138-149.

Kapler, I. V., Weston, T. & Wiseheart, M. (2015) Spacing in a simulated undergraduate classroom: Long-term benefits for factual and higher-level learning. *Learning and Instruction* 36 pp.38-45.

Kornell, N. (2009) Optimising Learning Using Flashcards: Spacing is more effective than cramming. *Applied Cognitive Psychology* pp.1297-1317.

Moore, M.G. (1993) Theory of transactional distance. In D. Keegan (Ed.) *Theoretical Principles of Distance Education* (pp.22-38). London: Routledge.

Pickard, M.J. (2007) The new Bloom's taxonomy: An overview for family and consumer sciences. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences Education* 25(1) pp.43-55.

Rawson, K.A. & Kintsch, W. (2005) Rereading effects depend on time of test. *Journal of educational psychology* 97(1) pp.70-80.

Rohrer, D. & Taylor, K. (2007) The shuffling of mathematics problems improves learning. *Instructional Science* 35(6) pp.481-498.

Rumble, G. (2000) Student support in distance education in the 21st century: learning from service management. *Distance Education* 21(2) pp.216-235.

Sewart, D. (1993) Student support system in distance education. *Open Learning* 8(3) pp.3-12.

Shale, D. & Garrison, D.R. (1990) Introduction. In D.G.D.R. Shale (Ed.) *Education at a distance* (pp. 1-6). Malabar, FL: Robert E. Kriger.

Simmons, A.L. (2012) Distributed practice and procedural memory consolidation in musicians' skill learning. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 59(4) pp.357-368.

Smolen, P., Zhang, Y. & Byrne, J.H. (2016) The right time to learn: mechanisms and optimization of spaced learning. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 17(2) pp.77-88.

Tabor, S.W. (2007) Narrowing the Distance: Implementing a Hybrid Learning Model. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education* 8(1) pp.48-49.

Tofade, T., Elsner, J. & Haines, S.T. (2013) Best practice strategies for effective use of questions as a teaching tool. *American journal of pharmaceutical education 77*(7) pp.1-9.

Vaughan, N. (2010). A blended community of inquiry approach: Linking student engagement to course redesign. *Internet and Higher Education* 13(1-2) pp.60-65.

Voluntary Sector Review (2017) Advice for preparing Practice Papers for the Journal Voluntary. https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/asset/4589/what-is-a-practice-paper-sept-2017.pdf (Accessed 20 October 2020).

Whetten, D. (1989) What constitutes a theoretical contribution? *Academy of Management Review* 14 pp.490-495.

Zigerell, J. (1984) *Distance education: An information age approach to adult education* (No. 283). ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, National Center for Research in Vocational Education: Ohio State University, US.

Psychological career meta-capacities in relation to the retention of female academics in a teaching and learning environment[1]

Ingrid Potgieter, University of South Africa, South Africa[2]
Nadia Ferreira, University of South Africa, South Africa[3]

ABSTRACT

This article explored the relationship between self-esteem and job-embeddedness (as a set of psychosocial career meta-capacities) and the satisfaction with retention factors of female employees in a teaching and learning environment. The article further reports on the differences that exist between the psychosocial career meta-capacities and satisfaction with retention factors in terms of the demographic variables of age, race and qualification level as well as whether psychosocial career meta-capacities significantly predict satisfaction with retention factors. The study made use of a simple random sampling method to select a sample consisting of permanently employed females within a teaching and learning environment. Data were collected using the Culture-Free Self-esteem Inventory (CFSEI-2AD), Job-Embeddedness Scale (JES) and Retention-Factor Measurement Scale (RFMS). A quantitative research approach was followed. Correlational analysis revealed several links between the variables of self-esteem, job embeddedness and retention factors. Stepwise Regression Analysis results found that only job embeddedness (as a psychosocial career meta-capacity) significantly and positively predicted satisfaction with retention factors. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis tests provided partial supportive evidence that differences exist in self-esteem, job-embeddedness and retention factors in terms of the demographic variables (age, race and qualification level). Recommendations are provided in terms of retention strategies to be implemented by human resource professionals, specifically for female employees within a teaching and learning environment.

Keywords: teaching and learning, job embeddedness, self-esteem, psychosocial career meta-capacities, retention

INTRODUCTION

Males and females experience socio-psychological realities differently within the work environment. It is thus expected that they differ significantly with regards to their commitment to the organisation and their intention to stay (Kanwar, Singh & Kodwani, 2012). The challenge in employee retention primarily originates from changes in labour force demographics such as the growing role of females and Generation

1 Date of submission 24 June 2020
Date of review outcome: 14 January 2021
Date of acceptance 1 February 2021

2 ORCID: 0000-0002-0763-7632

3 ORCID: 0000-0003-0436-9289

Y employees who has different and diverse personal needs and work values (Idris, 2014; Yamamoto, 2011). Generation Y employees are also referred to as millennials and are those employees born between 1980 and 2004. Several previous studies found that female employees have a much lower retention rate compared to their male counterparts (Hom, Roberson & Ellis, 2008; Marmenout & Lirio, 2014). Numerous studies reported on the under-representation of female employees within higher education institutions (Bailyn, 2003; Fotaki, 2013; Van den Brink, Benschop & Jensen, 2010). Coetzee and Schreuder (2009) noted that inconclusive results have been found with regards to female retention, which add to the existing need to understand the reasons behind female retention as it is evident that a higher risk exists that woman leave their occupations (compared to men), especially in a teaching and learning environment.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general aim of this research was to firstly determine whether a relationship exists between psychological career meta-capacities (self-esteem and job-embeddedness as independent variables) and retention factors (dependent variable), and secondly to determine whether individuals from different age, race as well as qualification levels differ with regard to these variables. Lastly, this research investigated whether psychological career meta-capacities significantly predict retention of female employees. The aim of this study was to recommend female retention strategies to teaching and learning institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academics are crucial to a nation as they are primarily responsible for educating the future leaders of a country (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2004; Dhanapal et al., 2013). Higher education institutions have an essential role in the generation and development of knowledge to assist in growing, refining and developing future talent and socio-economic development with a country, such as South Africa (Shikha, 2012; Van den Berg, Manias & Burger, 2008). For the purpose of this study, higher tertiary education institutions will represent teaching and learning environments and include further education (which is beyond high school qualifications), specifically at college and university levels.

Teaching and learning institutions in South Africa have become susceptible to losing their knowledgeable employees to more attractive offers (from the private sector or from international teaching and learning institutions) (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Recognizing the factors that keep employees in their present institution is therefore essential. When employees are satisfied with the retention factors offered by an institution, they are likely to remain with their current organisation (Bhattacharyya, 2015; Jakhar, 2015; Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001; Takawira, Coetzee & Schreuder, 2014).

Psychosocial career meta-capacities

Savickas and Porfeli (2012) found that employees who have a variety of psychological career resources are more adaptable to changes in the workplace and are more likely to be committed to their organisation. With the current Covid-19 pandemic it is inevitable that several changes will occur in the workplace. Teaching and learning institutions had to adapt from traditional face-to-face classroom teaching to online teaching. It is thus even more crucial for organisations, specifically teaching and learning institutions to implement retention strategies to enhance the commitment of employees to their organisations. Organisational commitment has a direct influence on employee retention (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Coetzee, Ferreira & Potgieter, 2019). In the current world of work, defined by fast technological and unpredictable changes, retention is influenced by the self-regulation capacities and psychological coping resources of employees (Bezuidenhout, 2010; Ferreira, 2009; Savickas, 2011; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Ferreira (2012) defined career meta-capacities as a set of psychological career resources that individuals hold. In-depth and comprehensive literature reviews found that limited research is available on the

influence of psychological career meta-capacities on the retention of employees. This study focusses on the constructs of self-esteem and job embeddedness (as psychological career meta-capacities) and their possible link with retention.

Self-esteem is defined as a person's general perception of and feelings about their own worth (Battle, 1992). This study made use of the model of Battle (1992) who categorised self-esteem as a multidimensional concept within the work context. His multidimensional dimension of self-esteem includes: general self-esteem (referring to an individuals' overall perceptions and feelings about their own self-worth), social self-esteem (referring to an individuals' feelings about the quality of their relationship with others) and personal self-esteem (referring to an individuals' perception about themselves).

According to Potgieter, Coetzee and Ferreira (2018), job-embeddedness relates to an individuals' non-affective and collective reasons why they would choose to stay within their job or organisation. Mitchell, Holtom and Lee (2001) defined job-embeddedness as a multidimensional construct, and divided it into two divisions, including 'on the job' and 'off the job'. This study made use of the model of Mitchell et al. (2001) to explore, explain and measure the concept of job-embeddedness. Job-embeddedness is associated with how well an employee feels he or she fits into the organisation and thus relates to the psychological attachment an employee has to the job characteristics and working conditions of his or her job or organisation (Potgieter et al., 2018). Mitchell et al. (2001) categorised job-embeddedness into three different scales, which are: fit, links and sacrifice. *Fit* relates to how well an employee believes he or she fits in within their current job, organisation or the community within they work (Holmes, Chapman & Baghurst, 2013). *Links* are the perceived interpersonal connections that employees have (for both on and off the job). This may be connections or links with other people or with groups. If an employee feels connected (and thus have a higher sense of links to other people or groups), he or she is likely to be more committed to the organisation. *Sacrifice* lastly refers to the benefits employees believe they will have to sacrifice if they leave the organisation, job or community (Porter, Woo & Campion, 2016).

Retention factors

Employee retention is the attempt of the organisation to keep their knowledgeable and valuable employees to meet business objectives and contribute to organisational performance, competitive advantage and success (Jakhar, 2015; Netswera, Rankhumise & Mavundla, 2005, Potgieter et al., 2018). Retention factors are those elements that influence an employees' decision to either stay or leave their current organisation (Döckel, 2003). According to Burton et al. (2010), the more satisfied an employee is with the retention factors of the organisation, the more likely he or she is to stay with the organisation. Döckel (2003) also found that organisations are increasingly realising the importance of employee satisfaction with the organisational retention factors. For the purpose of this research, the retention factors identified within a South African work context by Döckel (2003) were used. These factors include compensation (remuneration packages, including benefits, base salaries, increases, etc), job characteristics (constructive features of the job), training and development opportunities (training opportunities such as workshops, seminars, etc), supervisor support (such as the support, recognition and feedback from supervisors/line managers), career opportunities (internal opportunities such as promotion and external opportunities such as moving to another organisation) and work-life balance (the ability to meet both work and family responsibilities).

Literature revealed that there has been a global trend of teaching and learning employees leaving their respective institutions (Theron, Barkhuizen & Du Plessis, 2014). Due to the high direct and indirect costs involved when losing valuable and knowledgeable employees, it is imperative that organisations recognise the factors that impact on the retention of employees. To date, no previous research was found on these constructs, especially within a teaching and learning environment in South Africa. Against this

background, the article extends the research on retention of female employees within a teaching and learning environment by reporting on the relationship found between psychological career meta-capacities and retention factors.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research approach

The research made use of a cross-sectional quantitative approach. Data were collected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique.

Research participants

A non-probability convenience sample (*N* = 244) of part-time and full-time employed female employees within a teaching and learning institution participated in this study. They were predominantly white (75%) employees in their early career stages (43%; 26 – 40 years). Almost half of these participants (47%) completed their PhD studies.

Measuring instruments

Permission from the developers of the questionnaire were obtained prior to conducting this study.

Culture-free Self-Esteem Inventory (CFSEI-2AD)

The self-esteem of participants was measured using the Culture-free Self-Esteem Inventory (CFSEI2-AD) developed by Battle (1992). This instrument was specifically designed to assess the self-esteem construct of adults within a valid and reliable manner. The CFSEI-2AD is a self-rated instrument, containing 44 items and three subscales. The subscales include general self-esteem (example item: 'I am happy most of the time'), social self-esteem (example item: 'I like everyone I know') and personal self-esteem (example item: 'I am usually tense or anxious'). The instrument was scored on a 6-point Likert-type scale where 1 equals strongly disagree, and 6 equals strongly agree. Several previous studies confirmed the validity and reliability of the CFSEI2-AD (Battle, 1992; Coetzee, 2005; Potgieter, 2012). The reported reliability indices for the CFSEI2-AD ranged from .79 to .92. The overall reliability coefficient obtained from the CFSEI 2-AD in this study was .82. For the subscales of self-esteem in this study, the internal consistency reliability coefficients ranged between .64 (social self-esteem) and .87 (general self-esteem).

Job embeddedness scale (JES)

To measure the job embeddedness of the participants, the Job Embeddedness Scale (JES) developed by Mitchell et al. (2001) was used. This scale was chosen as it was proven to be valid and reliable for use within a South African context. The JES is a self-rated, multi-factorial measuring instrument and contains 17 items and 3 subscales: fit (7 items, for example 'I fit with the company's culture'), links (6 items, for example 'My co-workers are similar to me') and sacrifice (10 items, for example 'I would sacrifice a lot if I left this job'). This instrument was scored on a six-point Likert-type scale, where 1 equals strongly disagree, and 6 equals strongly agree. Several previous confirmed the validity and reliability of the JES. In terms of reliability (internal consistency) in this study, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient obtained for job embeddedness ranged from .83 (Links) to .92 (overall job embeddedness).

Retention Factor Measurement Scale (RFMS)

The level of satisfaction respondents has with retention factors was measured using the Retention Factor Measurement Scale (RFMS) developed by Döckel (2003). The RFMS (Döckel, 2003) is a multi-dimensional, self-rated measurement which consist of 42 items and 6 subscales. The subscales include compensation (example item: 'The number of benefits I receive'), job characteristics (example item: 'The job is quite simple and repetitive'), training and development opportunities (example item: 'I can apply the training I receive

in this organisation'), supervisor support (example item: 'I feel undervalued by my supervisor'), career opportunities (example item: 'My chances of being promoted are good'), and work-life balance (example item: 'I often feel that there is too much work to do'). The instrument is scored on a 6-point Likert-type scale where 1 equals strongly disagree and 6 equals strongly agree. Several previous studies confirmed the validity and reliability of the RFMS (Dockel et al., 2006; Van Dyk, Coetzee & Tebele, 2013). The internal consistency reliability coefficients of scores from the subscales (compensation, job characteristics, training and development opportunities, supervisor support, career opportunities and work life balance) ranged between .53 (supervisor support) and .97 (compensation).

Research procedure

An online survey was conducted amongst permanently employed female staff at a teaching and learning institution in South Africa. The researcher invited participants to partake in the study on a voluntary basis. The online survey included a participation information sheet, and it was assumed that the participants consented to partake in the study if they chose to continue with the survey after reading the information sheet. The privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of all the participants were ensured and honoured during the whole research process. Ethical clearance and permission to conduct the research were obtained from the management of the university.

Statistical analysis

In order to achieve the objectives of this research study, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations and Cronbach alpha coefficients), correlation analysis, stepwise regression analysis and Kruskal Wallis tests were conducted. The significance value for the interpretation of the results were set at $p \leq 0.05$ (95% confidence level) to make provision for the elimination of the probability of Type 1 error. Furthermore, the threshold value for multicollinearity concerns were set at r greater than .90 (Hair et al., 2010). The guidelines of Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) were followed to indicate multicollinearity in the multiple regression analysis. Tolerance values were therefore set at ≤.10.

Several research studies indicated that demographical variables significantly influence retention. The demographical variables of age, race and qualification level were therefore included as control variables.

RESULTS

Descriptive and correlations

As shown in Table 1, the reliability coefficients reported acceptable internal consistency reliability of the three overall scales. The overall reliability coefficients of all scales scored high, with RFMS (α = .91), JES (α = .92) and CFSEI-2AD (α = .82). These coefficients showed strong overall internal consistency for the three subscales.

Table 1
Internal consistency Reliability: CFSEI-2AD, JES, and RFMS

Subscale	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Self-Esteem (CFSEI-2AD)	4.35	-.86	1.23	.82	40
Job Embeddedness (JES)	4.35	-.66	-.10	.92	23
Retention factors (RFMS)	3.92	-.26	.23	.91	34

In terms of the objective of determining the relationship between the variables of self-esteem, job embeddedness and satisfaction with retention factors, the CFSEI-2AD, JES and RFMS variables (as shown in Table 2) show that the links were all significant and positive, ranging between .16 ≤ *r* ≤ .93 (small to large practical effect, .05 ≤ *p* ≤ .001). It was, however, interesting to note that no significant association were found between work/life balance and any of the self-esteem or job-embeddedness variables. It was expected that multicollinearity would not be a problem, as the Pearson product-moment coefficients revealed a small to large practical effect (the highest value being .93), and this is just above the level of concern for multicollinearity (*r* ≥ .90) to be present (Hair et al., 2010).

The results of the bivariate correlation analyses revealed supportive evidence that a significant relationship exist between self-esteem (CFSEI-2AD), job embeddedness (JES) and retention factors (RFMS) as manifested in the sample of female respondents within a teaching and learning environment.

Table 2
Correlations: CFSEI-2AD, JES, and RFMS

Variables	General SE	Social SE	Personal SE	Overall CFSEI-2AD	Fit	Links	Sacrifice	Overal JES	Compensation	T&D opp	Sup. supp	Career opp.	Work/Life	Overall RFMS
General SE	1.000													
Social SE	.58***	1.000												
Personal SE	.74**	.48**	1.000											
Overall CFSEI-2AD	-	-	-	1.000										
Fit	.45**	.38**	.38**	-	1.000									
Links	.27**	.21**	.24**	-	.64*	1.000								
Sacrifice	.22**	.19**	.18*	-	.60*	.93**	1.000							
Overall JES	-	-	-	.32**	-	-	-	1.000						
Compensation	.16*	.16*	.18*	-	.39*	.80**	.76*	-	1.000					
T&D opportunities	.17*	.18*	.28**	-	.44*	.50**	.52*	-	.44**	1.000				
Supervisor support	.17*	.13	.22**	-	.33*	.40**	.41*	-	.36**	.35**	1.000			
Career opportunities	.17*	.15*	.31**	-	.43*	.62**	.59*	-	.52**	.45**	.30**	1.000		
Work-life balance	.11	.04	.05	-	-.01	-.06	-.06	-	-.11	-.10	-.11	-.14	1.000	
Overall RFMS	-	-	-	.24**	-	-	-	.76**	-	-	-	-	-	1.000

Notes: N = 195 *** *p* ≤ .001; ** *p* ≤ .01; * *p* ≤ .05. *r* ≤ .30 (small practical effect size), *r* ≥ .30 ≤ .49 (medium practical effect size), r ≥ .50 (large practical effect size)

Stepwise regression analysis

Stepwise regression analysis was performed using the demographic variables (age, race and qualification level), and the overall self-esteem construct and the overall job-embeddedness construct as the independent variables, and the continuous retention-factors construct as the dependent variable.

According to the results obtained, the regression model was significant ($F = 58.23$; $p = .000$; $R^2 = .56$; $\Delta R^2 = .55$; $\Delta F = 55.92$). The adjusted R^2 value of .55 indicated that the model predicted approximately 55% (medium practical effect) of the variance in the dependent variable (retention factors). Table 3 shows that JES significantly ($ß = .76$; $p \leq .000$), explains the variance of retention factors. The collinearity statistics revealed that the tolerance values of all constructs were all almost 1 and the variance inflation factor (VIF) was less than 2.5 (suggesting slight or no multicollinearity concerns).

Table 3

Results of the Stepwise Regression Analysis: Demographic Variables and CFSEI-2AD and JES Variables as Independent Variables and RFMS as Dependent Variable

Model variables	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B.	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.55	.35		4.34	.000***		
Age	.13	.11	.06	1.22	.22	.95	1.04
Education	.08	0.08	0.5	1.04	.30	.94	1.06
CFSEI-2AD	-.05	.08	-.03	-.61	.55	.88	1.13
JES	.59	.04	.76	14.45	.000***	.87	1.1.12

Notes: N = 195; *** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$.

The results revealed that only job embeddedness significantly and positively predict satisfaction with retention factors. According to the results, demographic variables and self-esteem did not significantly predict satisfaction with retention factors. However, the demographic variables, self-esteem and job embeddedness jointly explain the variation in retention factors as the regression model was significant ($p < .000$).

Tests for significant mean differences

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test scores for age (Table 4) indicated that there was statistically significant difference between the different age groups and general self-esteem ($p \leq .05$), personal self-esteem ($p \leq .01$), and overall self-esteem ($p \leq .01$). A significant difference was only found between age groups and fit ($p \leq .01$) (job embeddedness scale) as well as age groups and training and development opportunities ($p \leq .01$) (retention factor scale). It thus seems significant differences were found between most of the self-esteem variables and only some of the job-embeddedness and retention factor variables.

Table 4
Kruskal-Wallis Test Scores for Age (N = 195)

Variable	Age	N	Mean Rank (SD)	Chi-Square	df	p
General SE	25 and younger	8	111.50	8.30	3	.04*
	26-40 Years	92	85.70			
	41-55 Years	69	109.01			
	56 and older	26	109.13			
Social SE	25 and younger	8	89.69	5.38	3	.15
	26-40 Years	92	89.09			
	41-55 Years	69	105.40			
	56 and older	26	112.46			
Personal SE	25 and younger	8	101.81	11.53	3	.01**
	26-40 Years	91	85.14			
	41-55 Years	69	102.78			
	56 and older	26	125.42			
Lie Items	25 and younger	8	98.25	4.85	3	.18
	26-40 Years	91	105.07			
	41-55 Years	69	94.62			
	56 and older	26	78.42			
Overall CFSEI-2AD	25 and younger	8	**106.13**	**10.23**	**3**	**.02****
	26-40 Years	91	**84.48**			
	41-55 Years	69	**108.89**			
	56 and older	26	**114.44**			
Fit	25 and younger	8	107.94	10.34	3	.02**
	26-40 Years	91	83.40			
	41-55 Years	69	108.23			
	56 and older	26	112.02			
Links	25 and younger	8	109.63	2.17	3	.54
	26-40 Years	91	91.67			
	41-55 Years	69	103.34			
	56 and older	26	94.86			
Sacrifice	25 and younger	8	114.63	1.77	3	.62
	26-40 Years	91	91.63			
	41-55 Years	69	99.67			
	56 and older	26	95.48			

Variable	Age	N	Mean Rank (SD)	Chi-Square	df	p
Overall JES	25 and younger	8	**109.63**	**3.34**	**3**	**.34**
	26-40 Years	91	**89.36**			
	41-55 Years	69	**103.86**			
	56 and older	26	**101.82**			
Compensation	25 and younger	8	116.13	1.95	3	.58
	26-40 Years	91	92.58			
	41-55 Years	69	95.16			
	56 and older	26	104.04			
T&D opportunities	25 and younger	8	108.44	10.10	3	.02**
	26-40 Years	91	80.53			
	41-55 Years	69	95.61			
	56 and older	26	115.74			
Supervisor support	25 and younger	8	117.75	5.29	3	.15
	26-40 Years	91	83.17			
	41-55 Years	69	95.41			
	56 and older	26	100.94			
Career opportunities	25 and younger	8	112.13	2.96	3	.40
	26-40 Years	91	85.98			
	41-55 Years	69	92.53			
	56 and older	26	100.78			
Work-life balance	25 and younger	8	56.75	4.24	3	.24
	26-40 Years	91	91.53			
	41-55 Years	69	96.13			
	56 and older	26	87.04			
Total RFMS	25 and younger	8	**116.19**	**4.36**	**3**	**.23**
	26-40 Years	91	**88.54**			
	41-55 Years	69	**98.26**			
	56 and older	26	**109.80**			

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test scores for race (Table 5) indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between the different race groups (Black, Coloured, Indian and White) and self-esteem or retention factors. The only significant differences were found in job-embeddedness. A significant difference was found between race and Links ($p \leq .01$) and Sacrifice ($p \leq .05$).

Table 5
Kruskal-Wallis Test Scores for Race (N = 195)

Variable	Race	N	Mean Rank (SD)	Chi-Square	df	p
General SE	African	24	87.46	2.98	3	.40
	Coloured	2	131.75			
	Indian	3	61.50			
	White	166	99.78			
Social SE	African	24	69.42	7.10	3	.10
	Coloured	2	103.00			
	Indian	3	107.67			
	White	166	101.90			
Personal SE	African	24	121.15	5.88	3	.12
	Coloured	2	118.50			
	Indian	3	68.50			
	White	166	94.33			
Lie Items	African	24	105.29	1.30	3	.73
	Coloured	2	75.25			
	Indian	3	118.83			
	White	166	96.25			
Overall CFSEI-2AD	African	24	**95.94**	**1.07**	**3**	**.79**
	Coloured	2	**114.25**			
	Indian	3	**68.00**			
	White	166	**98.64**			
Fit	African	24	82.75	4.72	3	.19
	Coloured	2	83.00			
	Indian	3	46.17			
	White	166	100.19			
Links	African	24	72.96	9.44	3	.02**
	Coloured	2	28.25			
	Indian	3	70.00			
	White	166	101.85			
Sacrifice	African	24	73.09	7.86	3	.05*
	Coloured	2	41.00			
	Indian	3	62.83			
	White	166	100.35			

Variable	Race	N	Mean Rank (SD)	Chi-Square	df	p
Overall JES	African	24	**75.46**	**7.33**	**3**	**.06**
	Coloured	2	**55.00**			
	Indian	3	**56.17**			
	White	166	**101.41**			
Compensation	African	24	69.02	7.10	3	.07
	Coloured	2	83.00			
	Indian	3	68.33			
	White	166	100.28			
T&D opportunities	African	24	107.79	3.51	3	.32
	Coloured	2	129.25			
	Indian	3	69.75			
	White	166	89.71			
Supervisor support	African	24	96.29	2.15	3	.54
	Coloured	2	45.50			
	Indian	3	115.75			
	White	166	91.14			
Career opportunities	African	24	113.64	6.71	3	.08
	Coloured	2	30.25			
	Indian	3	88.50			
	White	166	89.36			
Work-life balance	African	24	80.40	2.11	3	.55
	Coloured	2	55.25			
	Indian	3	104.00			
	White	166	92.72			
Total RFMS	African	24	**82.20**	**3.29**	**3**	**.35**
	Coloured	2	**65.75**			
	Indian	3	**65.67**			
	White	166	**98.77**			

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test scores for qualification level (Table 6) indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between qualification level and self-esteem. Statistically significant differences were found between qualification level and Links ($p \leq .05$), Sacrifice ($p \leq .05$) and overall job-embeddedness ($p \leq .01$). A statistically significant difference was also found between qualification level and work/life balance ($p \leq .01$).

Table 6
Kruskal-Wallis Test Scores for Qualification Level (N = 195)

Variable	Qualification	N	Mean Rank (SD)	Chi-Square	df	p
General SE	Honours	17	91.76	2.03	3	.57
	Masters	74	100.55			
	PhD	100	95.79			
	Under Grad	4	132.75			
Social SE	Honours	17	93.15	1.80	3	.61
	Masters	74	95.70			
	PhD	100	99.14			
	Under Grad	4	132.63			
Personal SE	Honours	17	84.38	1.57	3	.67
	Masters	74	100.73			
	PhD	100	96.65			
	Under Grad	4	114.63			
Lie Items	Honours	17	104.59	2.44	3	.49
	Masters	74	93.09			
	PhD	100	100.90			
	Under Grad	4	64.88			
Overall CFSEI-2AD	Honours	17	**88.06**	**1.59**	**3**	**.66**
	Masters	74	**98.65**			
	PhD	100	**98.05**			
	Under Grad	4	**127.00**			
Fit	Honours	17	102.71	5.67	3	.14
	Masters	74	87.44			
	PhD	100	101.39			
	Under Grad	4	142.00			
Links	Honours	17	113.32	7.97	3	.05*
	Masters	74	83.93			
	PhD	100	102.67			
	Under Grad	4	130.50			
Sacrifice	Honours	17	109.31	8.07	3	.05*
	Masters	74	83.64			
	PhD	100	101.44			
	Under Grad	4	139.63			

Variable	Qualification	N	Mean Rank (SD)	Chi-Square	df	p
Overall JES	Honours	17	**111.71**	**9.10**	**3**	**.03****
	Masters	74	**84.01**			
	PhD	100	**102.27**			
	Under Grad	4	**145.75**			
Compensation	Honours	17	108.00	2.85	3	.42
	Masters	74	89.97			
	PhD	100	97.40			
	Under Grad	4	125.63			
T&D opportunities	Honours	17	88.00	1.50	3	.68
	Masters	74	87.79			
	PhD	100	94.94			
	Under Grad	4	117.17			
Supervisor support	Honours	17	110.59	2.64	3	.45
	Masters	74	87.16			
	PhD	100	91.22			
	Under Grad	4	98.33			
Career opportunities	Honours	17	117.56	4.32	3	.23
	Masters	74	88.92			
	PhD	100	89.13			
	Under Grad	4	86.17			
Work-life balance	Honours	17	47.50	12.57	3	.01*
	Masters	74	92.63			
	PhD	100	97.13			
	Under Grad	4	94.00			
Total RFMS	Honours	17	**103.03**	**2.35**	**3**	**.50**
	Masters	74	**89.91**			
	PhD	100	**98.34**			
	Under Grad	4	**123.88**			

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

For the purpose of this discussion, the teaching and learning institution will refer to the organisation for which the participants work. Individuals with high self-esteem (general, social and personal) may feel more embedded in their jobs and within the organisation (Potgieter & Ferreira, 2018). High self-esteemed individuals are more likely to control their emotions and are more likely to connect with others in the

organisation and therefore experience a stronger connection with the organisation. Individuals that feel more embedded in their organisation may therefore prefer to remain with the organisation. The empirical results confirm that individuals who experience a good fit, or feelings of compatibility with the organisation are more likely to stay with the organisation (Potgieter & Ferreira, 2018). Similarly, individuals with positive highly developed self-esteem may experience stronger links as well as a higher sense of sacrifice (although not as high as fit) leading to these individuals being more embedded in their organisations. This leads to employees choosing to remain with the organisation and therefore higher retention of valued employees for the organisation.

Individuals that possess high (general, social and personal) self-esteem are likely to experience high levels of satisfaction with the retention factors of the organisations (Potgieter & Snyman, 2018). The findings of this study suggest that individuals prefer competitive compensation structures within organisations. Moreover, individuals value an organisation that provides training and development opportunities. Therefore, competitive compensation structures and training and development opportunities may result in an increase of individual self-esteem. Similarly, organisations that provide career opportunities to employees may contribute to higher self-esteem in individuals (general, social and personal). In particular, the results of the study indicate that, providing career opportunities may result in an increase in personal self-esteem or self-worth. A possible reason for this increase in personal self-esteem may be that career opportunities can be regarded a personal goal. Therefore, where organisations provide career opportunities for their employees, it seems logical that this may lead to an increase in individual self-worth. In this manner, organisations that provide career opportunities for their valued employees have a positive influence on retention. According to the results, work-life balance had no impact or showed no significant difference in terms of level of self-esteem. Therefore, a flexible work-life balance appears not to affect individuals' level of self-esteem. This finding contradicts the majority of studies that do find that providing adequate work-life balance for employees leads to an increase in self-esteem.

Individuals that are embedded in the organisation are more likely to have a higher intention to stay with their organisation. In this manner, it can be assumed that individuals that experience high embeddedness contribute to improved retention for organisations. In particular, this study found that participants who are provided with career opportunities (a retention factor) may experience higher levels of embeddedness in their current organisations. This relationship (job-embeddedness and career opportunities) might be understood in terms of the importance of career opportunities for an individual (career opportunities are linked to personal self-esteem, which can be understood as a personal level of self-worth as indicated in the results). Therefore, in an instance that an organisation does provide career opportunities, it results in increased job-embeddedness. This increased job-embeddedness may lead to better organisational retention. Moreover, the results indicate that work-life balance showed no significant difference in terms of level of job-embeddedness. In this manner, whether an organisation provides work-life balance is unrelated to individuals' level of job-embeddedness. This is in contradiction to a variety of recent studies that have found a significant relationship between job-embeddedness and work-life balance (Afsar & Rehman, 2017; Cowart et al., 2014).

Individual demographic variables (age and qualification level) and self-esteem (general, personal and peer) do not appear to affect company retention factors. However, the results indicate that age, qualification level, self-esteem and job-embeddedness jointly do explain the variation in retention factors. This result suggests that organisations should focus on employee demographics, in particular in terms of their self-esteem and job-embeddedness conjointly as a means of retaining talented employees. Moreover, the empirical study revealed that high job-embeddedness may lead to individual satisfaction with retention factors.

The results indicate that individuals of different age groups differ in terms of their level of general, personal and overall self-esteem. This is in line with recent research that found that people of different age groups experience different levels of self-esteem. Self-esteem increases from adolescence to middle adulthood, peaks at around age 50-60 years, then declines into old age (Orth & Robins, 2014). Moreover, the results suggest that organisations should note that individuals of different age groups differ in terms of their level of the 'fit' they experience with their organisation. As such, individuals of different ages differ in terms of their level of compatibility experienced with their current organisation.

Moreover, the results suggest that different age groups are not affected by retention factors. The results suggest that individuals of different race groups (Black, Coloured, Indian and White) experience no differences in self-esteem (personal, peer and general). Similarly, different race groups do not appear to be affected by retention factors. However, individuals of different races (Black, Coloured, Indian and White) seem to differ in terms of their perception of how embedded they are in their current organisation. In particular, the results indicate different race groups' experiences of the number or quality of links or connections they have in their current organisations. Moreover, race groups also differ in terms of their experience of what they perceive they will have to sacrifice, once choosing to leave the current organisation. In this manner, individual perceptions of stronger links and what will be sacrificed if an individual decided to leave the organisation, allow for these individuals to be more embedded within their current organisation, and therefore support employee retention.

It appears that individuals that have different qualification levels (Honours, Masters, PhD and Undergrad) do not differ in terms of their level of self-esteem. The level of self-esteem (high or low) is not affected by an individual's qualification level and vice versa. However, this research suggests that individuals' level of job-embeddedness is affected by their qualification level. Therefore, an individual's qualification level affects their degree of embeddedness within his or her current organisation. In particular, the higher the individual's qualification level, the more connections (links) the individual has with his or her current organisation. Moreover, higher qualified individuals may also experience a higher sense of sacrifice, in terms of what they would consider they would have to give up if they left the current organisation. Thus, an increased level of embeddedness experienced by higher qualified individuals may lead to improved organisational retention. Moreover, the results indicate that individuals with higher qualification levels may value work flexibility more than those with lower qualification levels.

CONCLUSIONS

The research has contributed to an empirically tested psychological career profile that may be used to inform retention practices within a teaching and learning environment, specifically for female employees. Significant relationships were found between the variables, self-esteem and job-embeddedness, in particular, the sub-variable fit. Moreover, a positive relationship exists between self-esteem and retention factors, especially, compensation, training and development and supervisor support. The empirical research also indicated a positive relationship between job-embeddedness and retention factors. In particular, fit showed significant positive relationships with all the retention factor variables except for work-life balance. Moreover, it was found that high-job-embeddedness was linked with compensation, training and development, and career opportunities, in particular in terms of links and sacrifice. Human resource practitioners within teaching and learning institutions should thus take note of these findings when designing and implementing retention strategies for female academics.

The consequences of possible future research could include raising mindfulness of the fact that employees in the workplace have different levels of self-esteem, they also experience different levels of job-embeddedness, and these constructs influences employee retention. Moreover, employees differ in terms of their age, race and qualification levels and these variables influence an employee's level of self-esteem

and embeddedness. Organisations need to be aware that every individual needs to be treated in a way that is suitable to him or her as a means to promote self-esteem and employee job-embeddedness, which will culminate in employee satisfaction with retention factors, resulting in retention of valuable employees. This study also highlights the possibility of the importance of compensation, career development and career opportunities and retention practices.

REFERENCES

Afsar, B. & Rehman, Z.U. (2017) Relationship between work-family conflict, job embeddedness, workplace flexibility, and turnover intentions. *Makara Hubs-Asia* 21(2) pp.92-104.

Arasanmi, C.N. & Krishna, A. (2019) Employer branding: perceived organisational support and employee retention – the mediating role of organisational commitment. *Industrial and Commercial Training* 48(2) pp.631-643.

Bailyn, L. (2003) Academic careers and gender equity: Lessons learned from MIT. *Gender, Work & Organization* 10 pp.137-153.

Battle, J. (1992) *Culture-free self-esteem inventories for children and adults*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Bezuidenhout, M. (2010) *The development of an instrument to measure employability of students: A pilot study* (Unpublished draft research proposal). University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

Bhattacharyya, D.K. (2015) Compensation and benefits program a mediating variable for talent retention: A study of two centuries old Indian organisations. *Compensation and Benefits Review* 30 pp.1-16.

Burton, J.P., Holtom, B.C., Sablynski, C.J., Mitchell, T.R. & Lee, T.W. (2010) The buffering effects of job embeddedness on negative shocks. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 76 pp.42-51.

Coetzee, M., Ferreira, N. & Potgieter, I.L. (2019) Perceptions of sacrifice, workplace friendship and career concerns as explanatory mechanisms of employees' organisational commitment. *South African Journal of Human Resource Management* 17, doi.org/10.4102/sahrm.v17i0.1033

Coetzee, M. & Rothman, S. (2004) An adapted model of burnout for employers at a higher education institution in South Africa. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* 30(3) pp.29-40.

Coetzee, M. & Schreuder, D. (2009) Psychological career resources as predictors of working adults' career anchors: An exploratory study. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* 35(1) pp.1-11.

Cowart, T., Gilley, A., Avery, S., Barber, A. & Gilley, J.W. (2014) Ethical leaders: trust, work-life balance, and treating individuals as unique. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability & Ethics* 11(3) pp.70-81.

Dhanapal, S., Alwie, S., Subramaniam, T. & Vashu, D. (2013) Factors affecting job satisfaction among academicians: A comparative study between gender and generations. *International Journal of Management Excellence* 2(1) pp.128-139.

Döckel, D. (2003) *The effects of retention factors on organisational commitment: An investigation of high technology employees* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

Döckel, A., Basson, J. & Coetzee, M. (2006) The effect of retention factors on organisational commitment: An investigation of high technology employees. *South African Journal of Human Resource Management* 4(2) pp.20-28.

Ferreira, N. (2009) *The relationship between psychological career resources and organisational commitment* (Unpublished master's dissertation). University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

Ferreira, N. (2012) *Constructing a psychological profile for staff retention* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

Fotaki, M. (2013) No Woman is Like a Man (in Academia): The Masculine Symbolic Order and the Unwanted Female Body. *Organization Studies* 34(9) pp.1251-1275.

Hair, J.F., Babin, B.J. & Anderson, R.E. (2010) *Multivariate data analysis: A Global Perspective*. (7th edn.) Pearson Education: Upper Saddle River.

Holmes, P., Chapman, T. & Baghurst, T. (2013) Employee job embeddedness: why people stay. *International Journal of Business Management and Economics Research* 4(5) pp.802-813.

Hom, P.W., Roberson, L. & Ellis, A.D. (2008) Challenging conventional wisdom about who quits: revelations from corporate America. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 93(1) pp.1-34.

Idris, A. (2014) Flexible working as an employee retention strategy in developing countries: Malaysian bank managers speak. *Journal of Management Research* 14(2) pp.71-86.

Jakhar, S. (2015) Employee retention strategy in the consultancy organisations. *My Research Journals* 3(1) pp.20-30.

Kanwar, Y.P.S., Singh, A.K., & Kodwani, A.D. (2012) A study of job satisfaction, organisational commitment and turnover intent among the IT and ITES sector employees. *The Journal of Business Perspective* 16(1) pp.27-35.

Marmenoutm J. & Lirio, P. (2014) Local female talent retention in the Gulf: Emirati woman bending with the wind. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 25(2) pp.144-166.

Michaels, E.D., Handfield-Jones, H. & Axelrod, B. (2001) *The war for talent*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Mitchell, T.R., Holtom, B.C. & Lee, T.W. (2001) How to keep your best employees: Developing an effective retention policy. *The Academy of Management Executive* 15(4) pp.96-109.

Netswera, F.G., Rankhumise, E.M. & Mavundla, T.R. (2005) Employee retention factors for South African higher education institutions: A case study. *South Africa Journal of Human Resource Management* 3(2) pp.36-40.

Ngobeni, E.K. & Bezuidenhout, A. (2011) Engaging employees for improved retention at a higher education institution in South Africa. *African Journal of Business Management* 5(23) pp.9961-9970.

Porter, C.M., Woo, S.E. & Campion, M.A. (2016) Internal and external networking differentially predict turnover through job embeddedness and job offers. *Personnel Psychology* 00 pp.1-38.

Potgieter, I.L., Coetzee, M. & Ferreira, N. (2018) The role of career concerns and workplace friendship in the job embeddedness – retention practices satisfaction link. *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* 44(0), doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v44i0.1519

Potgieter, I.L. & Ferreira, N. (2018) Female human resource professionals' job embeddedness in relation to commitment foci: An exploratory study. *Acta Commercii* 18(1) a493, doi.org/10.4102/ac.v18i1.493

Potgieter, I.L. & Snyman. A.M. (2018) Personal factors in talent retention in the South African banking industry. *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 28(6) pp.455-461, doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2018.1544393

Savickas, M.L. 2011. New questions for vocational psychology: Premises, paradigms, and practices. *Journal of Career Assessment* 19(3) pp.251-258.

Savickas, M.L. & Porfeli, E.J. (2012) Career adapt-abilities scale: Construction, reliability, and measurement equivalence across 13 countries. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 80 pp.661-673.

Shikha, V.G. (2012) Talent acquisition and retention issues of faculty in higher education. *Journal of Human Resource Management and Development* 2(2) pp.20-31.

Tabachnick, B.G. & Fidell, L.S. (2001) *Using multivariate statistics* (4th edn.) Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Takawira, N., Coetzee, M. & Schreuder, D. (2014) Job embeddedness, work engagement and turnover intention of staff in a higher education institution: An exploratory study. *South African Journal of Human Resource Management* 12(1) pp.524-534, doi:org/10.4102/sajhrm.v12i1.524

Theron, M., Barkhuizen, N. & Du Plessis, Y. (2014) Managing the academic talent void: Investigating factors in academic turnover and retention in South Africa. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 40(1), Art. #1117, 14 pages. dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v40i1.1117

Van den Berg, H., Manias, D. & Burger, S. (2008) The influence of job-related factors on work engagement of staff at University of the Free State. *Acta Academica* 40(3) pp.85-114.

Van den Brink, M., Benschop, Y. & Jensen, W. (2010) Transparency in academic recruitment: A problematic tool for gender equality? *Organizational Studies* 31 pp.1459-1483.

Van Dyk, J., Coetzee, M. & Tebele, C. (2013) Organisational commitment and job embeddedness of service staff with critical and scarce skills. *South African Journal of Labour Relations* 37(1) pp.61-78.

Yamamoto, H. (2011) The relationship between employee health benefit management and employee retention. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 24(4) pp.747-767.

Schools as learning organisations for educators in post-apartheid South Africa: An education law and policy perspective[1]

Nicholus Tumelo Mollo, Edu-HRight Research Unit, North-West University, South Africa[2]

ABSTRACT

Schools as learning organisations (hereinafter referred to as SLOs) for educators should be regulated and guided by education law and policies to ensure that educators acquire the required knowledge, skills and values. This study provides answers to the following research questions: (i) How do the South African education law and education policies regulate and guide SLOs? (ii) How are the South African education law and education policies that regulate and guide SLOs translated into practice? Research on SLOs has often focused more on non-legal and non-policy aspects. This study intends to close this research gap. A review of existing literature and the analysis of educational law and policy sources was conducted which is underpinned by the three SLOs' dimensions of the Marsick and Watkins model. The two main findings are: (i) There are sufficient education law and education policies that regulate and guide SLOs in South Africa. (ii) The existing education law and education policies that regulate and guide SLOs for educators have not yet been successfully translated into practice. This study provides educators, school management team members and officials of the Department of Basic Education with recommendations that they can use to enable schools to become SLOs.

Keywords: Schools as learning organisations, educators, education law, education policy, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

The National Development Plan (NDP) states that school leaders should be one of the key players involved in organising and delivering educator development activities (National Planning Commission, 2012). For schools to be autonomous, they should be learning organisations. Watkins and Marsick (1993) define schools as learning organisations (SLOs) as institutions that do not stop learning and they learn in order to bring positive changes that will provide quality education. Continuous learning helps educators to be up to date with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will lead to excellent teaching and learning. The NDP indicates that educators themselves should be used in identifying education matters, which are part of their developmental needs (National Planning Commission, 2012).

1 Date of submission 11 November 2019
Date of review outcome: 19 August 2020
Date of acceptance 27 November 2020

2 ORCID: 0000-0003-0427-0836

Nkambule & Amsterdam (2018) showed that educators rely on the developmental workshops that are run by the subject advisors from the Department of Basic Education (DBE). In order to ensure that schools act as learning organisations, clear and specific education law and education policies on the SLOs are required. This will enable the schools to know how far they should organise developmental activities for their educators. This study answers the following research questions: (i) How do the South African education law and education policies regulate and guide SLOs? (ii) How are the South African education law and policies that regulate and guide SLOs translated into practice? A review of existing literature and an analysis of educational law and policy sources were conducted based on the three dimensions of the Marsick and Watkins model, which are creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting inquiry and dialogues and encouraging collaboration and team learning. This model ensured that the research problem and research question are addressed.

The quality of teaching is achieved by the creation of continuous learning opportunities for educators which should be attained by inductions, mentoring and workshops, to mention but a few. In addition to the continuous learning for educators, schools should promote inquiry-based learning and constructive dialogue. Educators who are involved in inquiry and dialogue learn from each other. Collaboration should take place internally and externally. The school management team should create environments that allow learning with and from external environments because they do not operate in vacuums (Kools & Stolls, 2016). Teamwork is usually better than work that is done by individuals because it allows the exchange of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

Studies that are based on SLOs have been conducted internationally and in South Africa. These studies have often focused more on non-legal and non-policy aspects. This created the knowledge gap regarding the education law and policy perspective on SLOs for educators in post-apartheid South Africa which this study intends to close. The next section provides an explanation of how data have been collected.

METHODOLOGY

This study followed the document analysis research method. Firstly, document analysis was used to answer the first research question. In order to answer the first research question, data were collected by analysing education law and education policy documents. These documents included national legislation and national policies that guide SLOs for educators. The studied documents had the dimensions of SLOs such as creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting inquiry and dialogues and encouraging collaboration and team learning.

Secondly, document analysis was used to answer the second research question. Secondary data were collected from various research reports and academic articles that dealt with the aspects that are relevant to the dimensions of SLOs such as creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting inquiry and dialogues and encouraging collaboration and team learning which have been translated into practice. The section that follows deals with the literature review on schools as learning organisations for educators: trends and debates in the international and South African context.

LITERATURE REVIEW ON SCHOOLS AS LEARNING ORGANSIATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

SLOs have been studied in many countries including South Africa which present various trends and debates about SLOs. This section of the study reviews literature focused on the previous studies that have been conducted about SLOs.

There are various dimensions that are required for schools to become learning organisations. Silins et al. (1998) in a study conducted in South Australia and Tasmania found that dimensions such as collaborative

climate, taking initiatives, improving school performance and professional development were identified by educators and principals of secondary schools as factors that form the learning organisation. In a study that examined the key dimensions of schools as learning organisations that was conducted in Wales (UK) by Kools et al. (2020: 24) it was found that a school as a learning organisation is associated with eight dimensions which are

> (a) a shared vision centred on the learning of all students, (b) partners contributing to school vision, (c) continuous learning opportunities, (d) team learning and collaboration, (e) a culture of enquiry, innovation and exploration, (f) systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning, (g) learning with and from the external environment, and (h) modelling learning leadership.

A South African study conducted by Moloi, Globler and Gravett (2002: 94) states that schools can become learning organisations if dimensions such as 'personal mastery, mental models, a shared vision, team learning and system thinking are used in a positive way. In addition to the list of dimensions that Moloi, et al. (2002) mentioned, Moloi (2010) added other important dimensions such as reflection, dialogue and leadership as additional dimensions that can be used by educators who are working in difficult contexts to change their schools into learning organisations. Even though the above studies identified various important dimensions of the schools as learning organisations, some of them are similar. Schools should use the above-mentioned dimensions to change their schools into learning organisations.

For schools to become SLOs, it is important that educators should have a positive attitude. A study that was conducted by Jokic et al. (2012: 85-86) found that respondents (educators) generally had a positive attitude towards the dimensions of a learning organisation such as 'individual learning, team learning, organisational learning, system thinking, personal and professional development, mental models, building shared vision'. They further indicated that even though there is a positive attitude towards these dimensions, implementation was not done as required (Cosic et al., 2012). A positive attitude without implementation cannot make SLOs successful. Both aspects should be considered.

Schools cannot achieve their goals if they do not have practices that foster the development of SLOs. Geleta and Tafesse (2017) conducted a study in selected Ethiopian schools about practices that are fostering the development of strong SLOs. These practices included leadership, vision and goals, systems perspective, structure, culture, resources and technology and professional development (Geleta & Tafesse, 2017).

Various studies found that the dimensions of SLOs are not effectively implemented. Geleta and Tafesse (2017) found that the implementation of the dimensions of SLOs were very low in the selected Ethiopian schools. Kools et al. (2020) also found that a lack of clarity of the concept 'school as a learning organisation' and the limited number of scales that should be used to measure its effectiveness hindered the understanding and implementation of this concept. This study contributed with a 65 items scale for measuring the effectiveness of a school as a learning organisation (Kools, et al., 2020). In a study conducted in state and private schools of Gaziantap, Kayseri and Kahramanmaras Can (2011) found that most primary schools do not have sufficient activities of learning organisations. Rehman (2004ii) conducted a study in South Africa where it was found that while the school did display some of the dimensions of a learning organisation 'discrepancy was identified between the perceptions of the staff and those of the principal with regard to how effective the schools was embracing the changes'. In this study there was a contradictory statement regarding the dimension of leadership because educators saw the principal as autocratic while he saw himself as a good leader (Rehman, 2004).

Other studies found that the implementation of the dimensions was effective. In a study conducted in Kuwait, Alazmi, Alazmi and Algahtani (2013) found that most heads of instructional departments perceived their

schools as learning organisations and also perceived their educators as problem-solvers. In Spain, Gil, Carrillo and Fonseca-Pedrero (2019) studied the educators' perspective about the dimensions of a school as a learning organisation such as leadership towards learning, learning structure, learning opportunities and learning culture. They found that educators perceived the implementation of these dimensions in their schools as satisfactory (Gil et al., 2019).

Principals that want to change their schools into learning organisations should consider the status of their country. This status may include legal, economic, political and social aspects. A study by Tan (2019) argued that the implementation of Stoll and Kool's integrated model of an SLO should consider and include the dimensions that already exist in their country, China.

Aspects such as leadership style, age, organisational structure, relationship between schools as learning organisations and satisfaction have an impact on the implementation of SLOs. The leadership style of the principal plays an important role in changing a school into a learning organisation. It also has an impact on schools that are learning organisations for educators. Hamzah et al. (2011) found that transformational leadership by principals plays an important role in ensuring that schools are learning organisations for educators. They further hold that transformational leadership of the principals and existing good practices of the school as a learning organisation should be improved from time to time (Hamzah et al., 2011). Principals of schools who want to become learning organisations should use a transformational leadership style.

Age of staff members has an impact on SLOs. In a study conducted in 137 primary schools of Kastamonu, Recepoğlue (2013: 621) found:

> teachers' perceptions on organisational learning change according to their ages. Teachers in the age of 31-40 stated more positive opinion about learning than the teachers of 41-50. Teachers who are between the ages of 41-50 had a negative opinion about organisational learning. Teachers in the age group of 51 and over conveyed the most positive opinion about organisational learning in instructional practices.

Schools should have strategies to motivate educators of different age groups to be effective in changing schools into learning organisations. All age groups can make an important contribution in their schools.

The role that is played by organisational structure should not be taken for granted. Barnard (2020) found that schools which have adopted a multi-age organisational structure have a greater opportunity of changing their schools into learning organisations than those who use same-age organisational structure. In a study conducted in West Oromia secondary schools of Ethiopia, it was found that schools have low favourable organisational culture and structures that are needed for changing schools into schools as learning organisations (Geleta & Tafesse, 2017). Schools should adopt a multi-age organisational structure as it has a positive influence on SLOs.

SLOs have an impact on staff members and the community. Kools et al. (2019) conducted a study in Wales where they found that the school as a learning organisation is positively related to job satisfaction of staff members. Kools (2020) in a study conducted in Wales found that developing SLOs impacts positively on the performance of human resources which in turn impact positively on the performance of learners. In a study conducted in South Africa, Moloi (2019) argued that SLOs as sites of social justice can play an important role in promoting human rights in poverty-stricken communities. Changing schools into learning organisations plays a role not only in job satisfaction, performance and community development but also on empowerment of staff members. The above literature review focuses more on non-legal and non-policy

aspects. Therefore, there is a need to conduct research on the education law and policy perspective of SLOs. The following section provides a theoretical framework that is based on the three dimensions of the Marsick and Watkins (2003) model as mentioned above.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Marsick and Watkins model

This study is underpinned by the Marsick and Watkins model that consists of dimensions such as creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting inquiry and dialogues, encouraging collaboration and team learning, establishing systems to capture and share learning, empowering people toward a collective vision, connecting the organisation to its environment and providing strategic leadership to learning (Beyerlein, Dirani & Xie, 2017). This study focuses on the three dimensions of this model that speak directly to educators which are creating continuous learning opportunities, promoting inquiry and dialogues, encouraging collaboration, and team learning. These are discussed below.

Creating continuous learning opportunities

According to Ghaffari et al. (2011), learning is made part of the work in order to ensure that educators learn while they are busy performing their allocated tasks. This dimension necessitates educators to participate in ongoing professional learning.

Promoting inquiry and dialogues

Inquiry-based learning means that educators acquire new knowledge and skills independently so that they can provide quality education (Arora, Saxena & Gangwar, 2017). Ghaffari, et al. (2011) indicate that during the process of searching for information and being involved in conversations regarding their subjects, educators get an opportunity to give input and gain from what other educators are saying or doing. Ghaffari, et al. (2011) further indicate that the culture of promoting research and conversation supports questioning, feedback and experimentation. Educators should make time to think about their work in order to diagnose their errors (Moloi, 2010). The dialogue should accommodate positive, constructive, factual and non-personal criticism, which tends to make the provision of quality education an achievable goal of the school. Principles be considered during a dialogue include: exchange of ideas, participation of all concerned, all relevant arguments are legitimate, being accepting of others' arguments, tolerating others, and producing an agreement for practical action (Ennals, 2017). Dialogue should be conducted in a respectful and trustful manner.

Encouraging collaboration and team learning

Collaborative learning refers to the process whereby diverse learning styles are used by a group of educators to get information and solve educational problems (Smith & MacGregor, 1993). Educators should collaborate with each other, and School Management Teams should create a conducive environment for educators to collaborate internally (within the school) and externally (outside the school). Collaborative learning has become a prominent strategy, where internal and external role players work as a team and participate in the learning process (Sharrat & Planche, 2018, Livingston, 2018).

In addition to the collaborative learning that takes place within and across schools, different types of collaborative learning, such as:

> cross-sectoral learning (learning with people from other relevant fields), community learning (learning with parents), intergenerational learning (learning from older and younger colleagues) and online learning should form part of collaborative learning for teachers and should be applied in schools (Livingston, 2018: 415).

Collaborative learning teams such as subject discussion groups, staff development teams and team-teaching groups are good examples of developmental teams that should be formulated for educators to learn in schools (Kools & Stoll, 2016).

The following section of the study analyses the education law and education policies based on the three dimensions of the Marsick and Watkins model. Furthermore, it analyses and discusses how education law and education policies have been translated into practice.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION LAW, EDUCATION POLICIES AND EDUCATION REPORTS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

It is essential that SLOs should be regulated and guided by education law and education policies, and which should be translated into practice. Education law refers to rules (Wallace & Wild, 2010) that are contained in the legislation, case law, common law, customary law, indigenous law and international law (Oosthuizen, 2019) that regulate education, whereas education policies are 'guidelines for functionaries in education and do not have the power of laws …' (De Waal & Beckmann, 2019: 5). Even though there is a difference between education law and education policy, it is important to note that they serve the same purpose which is to bring solutions to problems in education (De Waal & Beckmann, 2019). The following paragraph analyses education law, education policies and research reports that are based on the creation of continuous learning opportunities for educators.

Continuous learning for educators

Section 195(1)(h) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (Constitution) provides for the development of careers for educators in order to improve their teaching talents (RSA, 1996a). Lifelong learning is one of the aspects that should be considered by educators for their career development. Section 3 of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 (NEPA) provides for the determination of the national education policy by the Minister and section 4(e) of the same Act further states that 'the policy contemplated in section 3 shall be directed towards providing opportunities for and encouraging life-long learning' (RSA, 1996b). The Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) (NSE) provides that educators should be scholars and lifelong learners. In order to realise this role, schools should encourage their educators to participate in various life-long learning activities that are available and relevant to their career. Regarding the implementation of the above education law and education policies, Onwu and Sehoole (2015) state that the Department of Education adopted measures to improve the qualifications of under-qualified educators by providing in-service training course. Since 1994 the number of unqualified and underqualified educators has reduced (Onwu & Sehoole, 2015). The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has also provided skill development opportunities for qualified educators who want to obtain higher postgraduate diplomas and degrees.

Item 2.4. in the Annexure A of the Education Labour Relations Council Resolution 7 of 1998 (ELRC Resolution 7) on the Workload of Educators [School-based]) provides that

> all educators may be required by the employer to attend programmes for ongoing professional development, up to a maximum of 80 hours per annum. These programmes to be conducted outside the formal school days or during school vacations.

The Report on the National School Monitoring Survey (DBE013, conducted in 2011) states that in 2011, educators used 38.1 hours of their 80 hours for professional development nationally (DBE, 2011). Furthermore, a report compiled by the DBE states that in 2017, an educator in South Africa on average spends 40 hours per year on professional development (DBE, 2019).

Section 2(b) of the South African Council for Educators Act 31 of 2000 (SACE Act) provides that one of the objects of the SACE Act is to ensure that educators are developed. Section 5(b)(iv) of the SACE Act mentions that

> the Council, with regard to the promotion and development of the education and training profession, must manage a system for the promotion of the continuing professional development of all teachers.

In response to the above section, SACE has developed a professional development points schedule for Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD Points Schedule). In this schedule, type 2 activities are school-led activities promoting learning in schools. These type 2 learning activities encourage a school to be a learning organisation that endeavours to be involved in:

> School-based meetings, workshops, developmental activities, support sessions, seminars, mini conferences, action research, projects, twinning, networks, responding to school results, professional learning communities at school level and subject cluster meetings (SACE, 2014: 15).

The Centre for Development and Enterprise (2015) found that unions and public schools agreed that professional development was not effective at the schools, district and national level. The DBE published a School Monitoring Survey 2017/2018, which indicated that in some schools there are educators who did not take the issue of CPTD points seriously and they even indicated that they were not aware of how the CPTD works (DBE, 2019).

Section 5(b)(v) of the SACE Act states that the Council:

> may develop resource material to initiate and run, in consultation with an employer, training programmes, workshops, seminars and short courses that are designed to enhance the profession (RSA, 2000).

SACE has not yet achieved the goal of developing resource material and running educator development programmes. This has been caused by conflicting views from various stakeholders that are hindering the implementation of Section 5(b)(v) of the SACE Act (SACE, 2011). 'The contestation has always been on the one hand, SACE providing professional development and other SACE promoting professional development and not providing it' (SACE, 2011).

Item 3.6 of annexure A.3. and item 3.6. of annexure A.4. in Revised Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) 2016 provides that 'senior teachers' and 'master teachers' should play mentoring roles to inexperienced educators. Item 3.2.4 of annexure A.5. of the PAM further states that Departmental Heads of schools should co-ordinate guidance for educators. In terms of Section 198C(3)(b) of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA) educators who are employed on a part-time basis, for example on governing body posts, should be given the same learning opportunities as full-time educators. In this instance, the school should take the working hours of a part-time educators into consideration. This guidance may include guiding inexperienced educators on how to perform their duties. Furthermore, Regulation 3(1) of the Regulations Regarding Terms and Conditions of Employment of Educators (1995) (RRTCEE) provides that the probation time frame for educators is 12 months. This time frame can be extended if there is a valid reason for that extension. Item 8 of Schedule 8 in the LRA mentions that newly appointed educators should receive training during their probationary periods. According to Regulation 3(3) of the RRTCEE, the purpose of probation is to certify that during the probation period, the educator has been diligent, behaving well and he or she is well-suited to the position that he or she has been placed in, thus he or she can be a permanent educator. A study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal Province by Kajee (2011) found that

most schools do not have policies for inducting and mentoring educators. Kajee (2011) further found that the are no formal structures for induction and mentoring in these schools. He also found that the newly appointed educators do not receive sufficient induction.

The Education Labour Relations Council Collective Agreement Number 8 of 2003 (ELRC Collective Agreement 8), which deals with the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) states that educators are required to reflect critically on their own performances (self-evaluation) in order to know what they should learn. In the SLOs, educators reflect and evaluate themselves independently and continuously without being forced; this takes place as an on-going process. In addition to self-evaluation, the ELRC Collective Agreement 8 mentions that observation of educators in practice should be conducted. Observations should be conducted for the purpose of learning and not for fault finding, so that there is a positive continuous learning spirit in a school. Malema (2013) and Mtapuri (2014) found that IQMS is an important system for educator development. However, its implementation has been affected by various challenges. Malema (2013) identified challenges such as lack of cooperation from educators, time constraints, workloads that are not manageable, lack of understanding resulting from lack of training, dishonesty in rating in order to receive money, to mention but a few. Mtapuri (2014) indicated that participants mentioned challenges such as the capability and credibility of those who are training them, allocation of high marks, and educators refusing to assist with development. The Centre for Development and Enterprise (2015) stated that in schools the professional aspect of IQMS has not received favourable attention because of insufficient time and skills.

The next section of the study provides an education law and policy perspective on the promotion of inquiry and dialogues for educators. It also indicates how education law and education policies that promote inquiry and dialogue for educators have been translated into practice.

Inquiry-based learning and constructive dialogue for educators

Inquiry-based learning and constructive dialogue should be based on the SACE Code of Professional Ethics for Educators (SACE Code). This is because SACE treats educators as a self-governing group of professionals. Harris (1997) asserts that professionalism in the field of education has changed from a technical-rational model to the new model (new professionalism) that considers educators as reflective practitioners. The new professionalism embraces the fact that construction of knowledge is done through engagement with problems that are experienced in the practice of teaching and the one that is built through inquiry-based learning and reflection (Harris, 1997). The new professionalism gives educators an opportunity to have input in the process of redefining the practice of teaching (Harris, 1997). In the light of this, 'new professionalism' supports positive educator images as 'instruments to empower teachers (democratic professionalism) [not] instruments to control teachers' work (managerial professionalism)' (Wits EPU, 2005:7-8). Furthermore, the ELRC Collective Agreement 8 states:

> the purpose of evaluation by member(s) of the Development Support Group is to provide the opportunity for constructive engagement around what teachers should learn and how the school can support teachers in terms of mentoring and support, and what in-service training (INSET) and other programmes need to be provided by, for example, the department.

The type 2 activities of the CPTD Points Schedule, such as participation in mini conferences and school community action research, promote inquiry and dialogues. In a study conducted in Gauteng province, Gomba (2019) found that type 2 and 3 activities of the CPTD are neglected by educators. As indicated above, IQMS and CPTD are programmes that intend to promote inquiry-based learning and constructive dialogue. These are not realised in South African schools because of challenges facing the implementation of IQMS (Malema, 2013, Mtapuri, 2014) and CPTD (Gomba, 2019, Johns & Sosibo, 2019). The

following section of the study analyses and discusses how education law and education policies regulate collaborative learning. It also discusses how education law and education policies that encourage collaborative learning and team learning for educators have been translated into practice.

Collaboration and team learning for educators

The Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011-2025 (ISPFTED) provides for the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs are:

> communities that provide the setting and necessary support for groups of classroom teachers, school managers and subject advisors to participate collectively in determining their own development trajectories, and to set up activities that will drive their development. The key players in the establishment of PLCs will be the province, districts, teacher organisations, subject-based professional teacher associated associations and, equally important, the teachers themselves (ISPFTED, 2011: 14).

The above statement shows how the DBE and Department of Higher Education and Training are in the process of encouraging educators to be involved in collaboration and team learning. Regarding the implementation PLC, in 2017, VVOB (2017) indicated that the DBE report showed that six provinces have already started with the implementation process while three provinces were on a preparatory phase. On the other hand, Nkengbeza and Heystek (2017) conducted a study in the three areas of the North West Province about the perception of educators and principals of their schools as PLCs. They found that educators and principals of rural and township schools have a low perception of their schools as PLCs compared to their counterparts in urban areas. They are of the view that PLCs have not been implemented as required in rural areas and townships. Hence, the process of implementing the PLC programme in schools has not been implemented successfully in other schools in South Africa.

The type 2 activities of the CPTD Points Schedule, such as school twinning, networks, professional learning communities and subject cluster meetings, promote collaboration (SACE, 2014). As indicated previously, Gomba (2019) indicates that educators do not implement type 2 and 3 activities according to the requirements. The section that follows discusses the contribution that this study is making to teaching and learning

CONTRIBUTION TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in teaching and learning by providing findings and recommendations. These findings may be used by the DBE, principals and educators to change their schools into learning organisations. The following section of the study provides the findings of this study.

Findings

This study presents two main findings. Each main finding has sub-findings that support it. The first main finding is that there are sufficient education law and policies that regulate and guide SLOs in South Africa. Education law and policies that regulate and guide SLOs for educators include but are not limited to: the Constitution, NEPA, NSE, ELRC Resolution 7, SACE Act, SACE Code, CPTD Points Schedule, PAM, LRA, RRTCEE, ELRC Collective Agreement 8 and ISPFTED. These education law and education policies provide for programmes that guide schools on the implementation of one or more of the components of SLOs for educators such as continuous learning, inquiry-based learning, constructive dialogue, collaboration and team learning for educators. These programmes include but are not limited to induction, CPTD, IQMS, PLC and mentoring. The fact that education law and education policies regulate SLOs for educators does not guarantee the success of educator development. It depends on how education law and education policy

are translated into practice. The paragraph that follows discusses the findings on how these education law and education policies that regulate and guide SLOs have been translated into practice.

The second main finding is that the existing education law and education policies that regulate and guide SLOs for educators has not yet been realised. Progress towards the realisation of the legislation and policy that encouraging educators to be lifelong learners has been made but not to the fullest. There is still much to be done. Even though there is a small improvement between 2011 and 2019, some of the educators do not spend enough time on professional development. The implementation of CPTD is not yet effective in schools. The conflicting views from SACE stakeholders might be essential but they are delaying the progress of educator development. The lack of induction and mentoring policies and lack of formal structures for induction and mentoring is not a good practice for schools which want to be learning organisations for educators. The implementation of IQMS is faced with challenges that are hindering progress in the development of educators. Due to challenges facing the implementation of CPTD and IQMS, inquiry-based learning and constructive dialogues cannot take place as envisaged. The process of implementing PLC programmes is not effective in some of the South African schools. Educators end up being confused as to which programme should be implemented to improve their knowledge, skill and values in teaching.

Recommendations

All schools should become SLOs for educators which provide continuous learning, inquiry-based learning, constructive dialogue, collaboration and team learning activities for their educators.

The existing educator development programmes such as induction, IQMS, CPTD, PLC and mentoring, should be integrated into one integrated educator development programme rather than having many separate developmental programmes for educators. This integrated educator development programme should consist of developmental activities for newly appointed educators and educators who have been in service. It should consist of all-important aspects that are found in the induction, CPTD, IQMS, PLC and mentoring programmes. It will reduce the repetition that is taking place during educator development in schools. It should be designed in such a way that there are no clashes in the implementation of activities and there should be no overloading of educators with development activities.

Where required, the existing education law and education policies on educator development should be amended to avoid the confusion that is caused by education law and education policies and by the implementation of various separate educator developmental programmes that have different standards and characteristics. For instance, there should be one set of standards for educators in South Africa that inform the development of all educators instead of having various sets of standards for educators such as the Norms and Standards for Educators (2000) and IQMS performance standards (ELRC, 2003). The DBE uses key characteristics of PLCs (DBE, 2015). SACE is in the process of developing the SACE Professional Teaching Standards (SACE, 2018).

A maximum of 80 hours per year should be used effectively for compulsory professional development activities of educators. In order to achieve the target of spending 80 hours for developing each educator in a year, these hours should be clearly distributed to allow various service providers to provide educator development programmes. The DBE as the main employer of educators in the public sector working together with stakeholders should decide as to which service providers should be allocated hours to develop educators. It is highly recommended that schools should be allocated hours to develop their educators. SLOs should use this specific number of hours for the development of their educators.

Schools should develop their own SLO policies that will ensure that they become effective learning organisations for educators. School principals should use CPTD Points Schedule as a guideline on how to

develop their educators. They can also select relevant activities for their planning so that whatever they implement will benefit educators in terms of points.

The above-mentioned recommendations will enable schools to be learning organisations and will bring improvements in schools.

CONCLUSION

The success of SLOs is based on having good education law and education policies. Education law and education policies should be translated into practice so that SLOs can have excellent educators. All schools in South Africa should be SLOs for educators. The findings of this study show that in South Africa, there is an existence of education law and education policies that regulate and guide SLOs for educators. The challenge with the existing education law and education policies is that they are not successfully translated into practice. These challenges hinder progress of SLOs. Some of the law and policies will need to be amended and some replaced. The benefits of changing schools to SLOs for educators is that their educators become equipped in terms of skills, knowledge and values. This study will contribute in changing schools to become SLOs for educators.

REFERENCES

Alazmi, A.A., Alazmi, M.S. & Alqahtani, A.A. (2013) The Impact Of High Schools As Learning Organizations On Teachers' Problem-Solving Strategies. *Journal of Teaching and Education* 2(2) pp.523-530.

Arora, V.P.S., Saxena, P. & Gangwar, N. (2017) Project Based Learning (PBL) and Reseach Based Learning. In M.S. Manna (Ed.) *Higher Education Faculty Career Orientation and Advancement* (Ed.) New Delhi: Centre for Education Growth and Research (CEGR).

Barnard, P.A. (2020) Secondary school structure, organisational learning capacity and learning organisations: a systemic contribution. *International Journal of Educational Management.*

Beyerlein, M, Dirani, K.M. & Xie, L. (2017) *A 30-Year Collaboration of Victoria Marsick and Karen Watkins: Learning in the Workplace.* In D.B. Szabla, W.A. Pasmore, M.A. Barnes & A.N. Gipson (Eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Organizational Change Thinkers.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Can, N. (2011) Developing activities of learning organizations in primary schools. *African Journal of Business Management 5*(15) pp.6256-6260.

Centre for Development and Enterprise. (2015) *Teacher Evaluation in South African Schools, Johannesburg:* Centre for Development and Enterprise.

Department of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training. (2011) *Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa*, 2011-2025. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training.

Department of Basic Education (2015) Professional Learning Communities- A guideline for South African schools. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education.

Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2011) *Report on the National School Monitoring Survey (DBE013 conducted in 2011).* Pretoria: Department of Basic Education.

Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2016) *Revised Personnel Administrative Measures*. Pretoria: Government Printer. Gazette No. 39684.

Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2019) *School Monitoring Survey 2017/2018: Qualitative Case Study Report*. Pretoria: Nexia SAB&T for Department of Basic Education.

Department of Education (DoE) (1995) *Regulations Regarding Terms and Conditions of Employment of Educators*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

Department of Education. (2000) *Norms and standards for educators. Government Gazette* 415 (20844). Pretoria: Government Printer.

De Waal, E. & Beckmann, J. (2019) The precarious position of policy implementers in the conundrum of politics, policy-making and implementation in education. In J.P. Rossouw & E. De Waal (Eds.) *Human rights in diverse education contexts* (NWU Education and Human Rights in Diversity Series Volume 1) pp.1-37, AOSIS, Cape Town, doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2019.BK158.01

Education Labour Relations Council. (1998) *Resolution number 7 of 1998. Workload of Educators (School Based)*. Centurion: ELRC.

Education Labour Relations Council. (2003) *Collective Agreement number 8 of 2003. Integrated Quality Management Systems*. Centurion: ELRC.

Ennals, R. (2017) *Björn Gustavsen: Democratic Dialogue and Development*. In D.B. Szabla, W.A. Pasmore, M.A. Barnes & A.N. Gipson (Eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Organizational Change Thinkers*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Geleta, A. & Tafesse, M. (2017) Schools as learning organisations: assessing the organisational learning practices in West Oromia Secondary Schools of Ethiopia. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences* 12(2).

Ghaffari, S., Fazal, J., Jadoon, I.A. & Shar, I.M. (2011) *The analysing of Marsick and Watkins Theory in Comparison with other Learning Theories. Learning & Performance Development*. Johor Bahru: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

Gil, A.J., Carrrillo, F.J. & Fonseca-Pedrero, E. (2019) Assessing a learning organization model: A teacher's perspective. *Management in Education* 33(1) pp.21-31.

Gomba, G. (2019) Challenges Faced by Educators in the Implementation of Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD): Gauteng Province. *Chapters*.

Hamzah, M., Yakop, F.M., Nordin, N.M. & Rahman, S. (2011) School as learning organisation: The role of principal's transformational leadership in promoting teacher engagement. *World Applied Sciences* 14 pp.58-63.

Harris, A. (1997) The deprofessionalisation and deskilling of teachers. In K. Watson, K. Mogdil & S. Mogdil (Eds.) *Education dilemmas: Debate and diversity Teachers, teacher education and training*. Cassell: London.

Johns, L.A. & Sosibo, Z.C. (2019) Constraints in the implementation of continuing professional teacher development policy in the Western Cape. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 33(5) pp.130-145.

Jokıć, S., Ćosıc, L., Sajfert, Z., Pečujlıja, M. & Pardanjac, M. (2012) Schools as learning organizations: empirical study in Serbia. *Metalurgia International* 17(2) pp.83-89.

Kajee, F.A. (2011) *An exploration of the induction and mentoring of educators: a case study*. M.Ed dissertation.

Kools, M. & Stoll, L. (2016) *What Makes a School a Learning Organisation? OECD Education Working Papers, No. 137*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Kools, M., Gouëdard, P., George, B., Steijn, B., Bekkers, V. & Stoll, L. (2019) The relationship between the school as a learning organisation and staff outcomes: A case study of Wales. *European Journal of Education* 54(3) pp.426-442.

Kools, M. (2020) Schools as Learning Organisations: the concept, its measurement and HR outcomes.

Kools, M., Stoll, L., George, B., Steijn, B., Bekkers, V. & Gouëdard, P. (2020) The school as a learning organisation: The concept and its measurement. *European Journal of Education 55*(1) pp.24-42.

Livingston, K. (2018) Teachers' professional learning within learning systems. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 41(4) pp.415-417.

Malema, P.W. (2013) *The implementation of Ingrated Management Systems in Mopani District secondary schools, Limpopo Province*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus), South Africa.

Marsick, V.J. & Watkins, K.E. (2003) Demonstrating the value of an organization's learning culture: the dimensions of the learning organization questionnaire. *Advances in developing human resources* 5(2) pp.132-151.

Moloi, K.C., Grobler, B.R. & Gravett, S.J. (2002) Educators' perceptions of the school as a learning organization in the Vanderbijlpark-North District, South Africa. *South African Journal of Education* 22(2) pp.88-94.

Moloi, K.C. (2010) How can schools build learning organisations in difficult education contexts? *South Africa Journal of Education* 30 pp.621-633.

Moloi, K. C. (2019) Implications of a Learning Organisation for Social Justice in Poverty Stricken Communities: A Theoretical Perspective. *Africa Education Review* 16(6) pp.111-127.

Mtapuri, O. (2014) Teachers' perceptions of the integrated quality management system: lessons from Mpumalanga, South Africa. *South African Journal of Education* 34(1).

National Planning Commission (NPC). (2012) *National Development Plan: A vision for 2030*. Pretoria: National Planning Commission.

Nkambule, G. & Amsterdam, C. (2018) The realities of educator support in a South African school district. *South African Journal of Education* 38(1) pp.1-11.

Nkengbeza, D. & Heystek, J. (2017) Professional Learning Communities: A Comparative Study of Three Educational Areas in the North West Province of South Africa. Open Journal of Social Sciences 5 pp.98-119. https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2017.54010

Onwu, G.O. & Sehoole, C.T. (2015) Why Teachers matter: Policy issues in the professional development of teachers in South Africa.

Oosthuizen, I.J. (2019) The legal environment. In I.J. Oosthuizen (Ed.) Introduction to Education Law, pp.1-25, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Oxford South African Concise Dictionary (Second Ed.) (Eighth Impression). (2015) Edited by the Dictionary Unit for South African English. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, Southern Africa (Pty) Ltd.

Recepoğlue, E. (2013) Analyzing teachers' perceptions on learning organizations in terms of different variables. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 93 pp.618-623.

Rehman, D.S. (2004) *The school as a learning organisation: educators' perceptions at a high school in the central Durban area*. M.Ed dissertation.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). (1995) *Labour Relation Act 66 of 1995*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). (1996a) *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). (1996b) *National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Republic of South Africa (RSA). (2000) *South African Council for Educators Act 31 of 2000*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Sharratt, L. & Planche, B. (2018) A symphony of skills. *The Learning Professionals* 39(1) pp.26.

Smith, B.L. & MacGregor, T.L. (1993) *What is Collaborative Learning?* Washington: Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education.

Silins, H., Zarins, S. & Mulford, B. (1998) *What Characteristics and Processes Define a School as a Learning Organisation? Is This a Useful Concept To Apply to Schools?*

South African Council for Educators. (SACE). (2002) Handbook for the code of conduct of professional ethics. Centurion: SACE.

South African Council for Educators (SACE) (2014) *Professional development points schedule*. Centurion: SACE.

South African Council for Educators (SACE). (2018) Sace Draft Professional Teaching Standards (PSTs). Centurion: SACE

Tan, C. (2019) The school as a learning organisation in China. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*.

VVOB (2017) Professional Learning Communities in Education. Belgium: VVOB.

Wallace, J. & Wild, S.E. (2010) *Webster's new world law dictionary*. Houghton: Mifflin Harcourt.

Watkins, K.E. & Marsick, V.J. (1993) *Sculpting the learning organization: Lessons in the art and science of systemic change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wits Education Policy Unit. (2005) The state of teacher professionalism in South Africa. *A paper prepared for South African Council for Educators*. Johannesburg: Wits Education Policy Unit.

Motivating Grade 12 learners at a quintile 3 secondary school in South Africa[1]

Thaabit Ismail, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa[2]
Thobeka Mda, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa[3]
Nomakhaya Mashiyi, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa[4]

ABSTRACT

This study identifies factors that motivated Grade 12 learners at a quintile 3 secondary school in post-apartheid South Africa. A phenomenological qualitative approach was adopted. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from Grade 12 learners. Human Motivation theory and Self-determination theory were synthesised to form an underpinning theoretical structure. The results of the research study identified various factors that motivated Grade 12 learners: parental involvement, affirmation, and enjoyment of subjects. Knowing about such factors and applying motivational interventions at schools in poor areas affirms learners and empowers them to escape destitution, despair, cycles of illiteracy and poverty, and the bonds of a racist past. Teachers and parents should be cognisant of such important factors. School communities, particularly those in economically challenged areas, need to be made aware of the value of such motivating factors.

Keywords: extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, motivation to learn, self-actualisation, self-determination

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is essential in any learning process and fundamental for academic success (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017). Teachers, parents and the school community as a whole need to be made aware of the value and power of motivation as a primary means of encouraging, affirming and empowering learners, and ultimately giving them the self-confidence and skills to lift themselves out of poverty, and break free from the sense of worthlessness which apartheid imposed upon so many households. Well-considered motivational interventions initiate, enhance and sustain authentic acquisition, personal assimilation and ownership of new knowledge (Ghaedi & Jam, 2014).

Researchers in South African and international contexts have identified numerous factors that can affect learner motivation, such as socio-economic conditions, parents, classmates, friends and teachers (Nel,

1 Date of submission 26 June 2020
Date of review outcome: 18 November 2020
Date of acceptance 7 January 2021

2 ORCID: 0000-0002-8254-6888

3 ORCID: 0000-0002-0877-7848

4 ORCID: 0000-0001-7606-4586.

2000), test anxiety, nervousness about academic evaluation, a fear of failing tests, or an unpleasant experience of learners in various situations (Rastegar, Akbarzadeh & Heidari, 2012). There is considerable uncertainty concerning which factors stimulate learners in South African schools. Since schools are arranged according to the income of parents, traditionally white schools have been allowed to flourish almost as semi-private schools since liberation in 1994. Schools which were classified as non-white under apartheid received the lowest level of funding before 1994 and have seldom been able to escape the privations of that era since. South African public schools are categorised into five different groups termed 'quintiles'. Quintile 1 schools serve learners from the poorest parts of a province. Quintile 5 schools are fee-paying and serve learners from the most prosperous areas (Hall & Giese, 2008). According to Grant (2013), these quintiles or rankings are determined according to the poverty levels and indicators of the community around the school as well as certain infrastructural factors. Contrary to its liberatory intentions, post-apartheid government has inadvertently constructed a classist, capitalist system of schooling not dissimilar to the public versus comprehensive school structure in England. Instead of enabling education to achieve egalitarian priorities, the quintile system has entrenched privilege at quintile 5 level, and cycles of illiteracy and hopelessness at quintile 1-3 levels. This research project reveals motivational factors that grant learners the self-belief and skills to escape such cycles. The ultimate success of such initiatives lies with the school community, that range of concerned and committed individuals who are determined to reverse the deprivations of the past and deploy education as the vital means to do so. According to Horgan (2007), learners at disadvantaged quintile 1-3 schools are mainly motivated to find a path to secure employment in order to escape the destitution with which they are familiar. Learners from advantaged schools are more motivated to use better education as a means to attain a high-paying professional job. This invidious distinction in post-apartheid South Africa has replaced racist distinctions before 1994 with a classist education system which enables the new multiracial rich to become wealthier while the quintile 1-3 areas welter in continuities of impoverishment, humiliation, unemployment, drug abuse, crime and despair.

The project noted a significant decrease in the Grade 12 pass rate from 82% in 2015, to 79.5% in 2016 and 62% in 2017 (DBE, 2017). This poor performance caused concern among teachers and management at the school. Researchers on this project sought to detect whether motivational issues of Grade 12 learners at this school were related to the low pass rate. At the quintile 3 secondary school selected for this research, it was observed that Grade 12 learners ranged from a few who worked hard to achieve success, to many learners who did the minimum. It was noted that in the same classroom, some learners were evidently highly motivated, while others were demotivated, although the learners were from relatively similar backgrounds. This study provides teachers, school management and parents with a better understanding of why learners in the same classroom are interested in learning and others not. Once the school and parents are made aware of these factors, appropriate strategies can be implemented to motivate learners to learn more readily, prevent learners from being demotivated towards their academic studies and enable them to succeed and reach their full potential. Little research has been conducted in the broader national and international context to investigate motivation of Grade 12 learners from communities similar to this one. This study is unique, pertinent and useful to schools, not only in the Western Cape and South Africa, but also to schools with similar social contexts in other developing countries outside of South Africa, and developed countries which manifest severe social/racial stratification such as the UK or USA.

In order to establish what factors intrinsically or extrinsically motivate or demotivate Grade 12 learners to commit themselves to learn, the following research question was posed:

- How do Grade 12 learners at a quintile 3 secondary school explain what motivates or demotivates them to learn?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several national and international studies investigating motivation underline the two key types of motivation: namely, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Since the early 1970s, research has been conducted to determine the impact of these two main types of motivation. Researchers such as Deci (1972), Deci & Ryan (1980, 1985, 1991, 2000) have constantly revised the theoretical parameters and philosophical understandings of the terms 'intrinsic and extrinsic motivation' in their Self-determination theory (SDT). Unlike other researchers who emphasise the amount or level of motivation, Deci and Ryan (2000) concentrate the focus of their research upon the different types of motivation that determine motivated behaviour. Their research confirms that the type or quality of motivation is more important than the amount of motivation for predicting many significant outcomes such as 'psychological health and well-being, effective performance, creative problem-solving, and deep or conceptual learning' (Deci & Ryan, 2008: 182).

Motivation

Bakar (2014:723) asserts that motivation influences how much time and energy learners devote to learning and how long they will persist to complete a task. The lack of motivation, on the other hand, is an obstacle in learning and a reason for the decline of education standards (Awan, Noureen & Naz, 2011). When learners lack academic motivation or are demotivated to learn, both teaching and learning activities are negatively affected. A demotivated learner is generally uninterested in learning and has a strong interest in non-academic activities (Bannatyne, 2003). Motivation is the inborn potential power of human beings that energises, directs and sustains behaviour and is a trigger that transforms thoughts into action (Wang, 2007; Ormrod, 2008). Learning cannot take place without some form of inner determination, purposeful commitment or motivation (Rehman & Haider, 2013). Every learner possesses some form of motivation, whether it is towards school activities, extramural activities, being part of a peer group or participating in mischievous activities.

Motivation is fundamental to successful construction of knowledge, self-knowledge and academic achievement (Gbollie & Keamu, 2017). Motivating resistant, indifferent, reluctant or recalcitrant learners is challenging, especially in a poor area where families have submitted to hopelessness, drugs, crime, prostitution and social dependency. Identifying and providing motivation in such situations is a difficult and time-consuming task that requires considerable effort (Rehman & Haider, 2013). When considering learners' motivation to assimilate and own new knowledge, it is important to identify precisely the type of motivation they respond to best.

In their self-determination theory, Deci and Ryan (1985-2000) provide clarity on the different types of motivation. They distinguish between autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomy involves acting voluntarily and the opportunity to experience a sense of choice (Gagné & Deci, 2005); intrinsic motivation is an example of autonomous motivation. On the other hand, controlled motivation involves acting under pressure when an individual is compelled or obliged to engage in a certain action (Hagger et al., 2014: 566). Autonomous motivation and controlled motivation are in contrast to amotivation, which involves a complete lack of desire to apply effort (Howard et al., 2016).

Autonomous motivation

Intrinsic motivation is a form of autonomous motivation which is considered by Ryan and Deci (2000) to be the highest and ideal type of motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000: 56) note that 'intrinsic motivation is the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction, for the fun or challenge entailed, rather than because of external pushes, pressures, or rewards'. In a school context, intrinsically motivated behaviour is manifested when learners are motivated to learn on their own, without external rewards or prompts, and gain pleasure and satisfaction from their performance (Deci et al., 1991; Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). High-quality learning and creativity are a result of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) because learners are ready

to own, acquire and re-formulate knowledge out of a spontaneous enthusiasm and hunger for it. Working with intrinsically motivated learners is an ideal experience for teachers because they are so enthused about their area of interest that they do not need to be disciplined or watched. For them, the work itself is rewarding and they derive pleasure and a sense of satisfaction from working on a task (Davids, 2010).

Controlled motivation

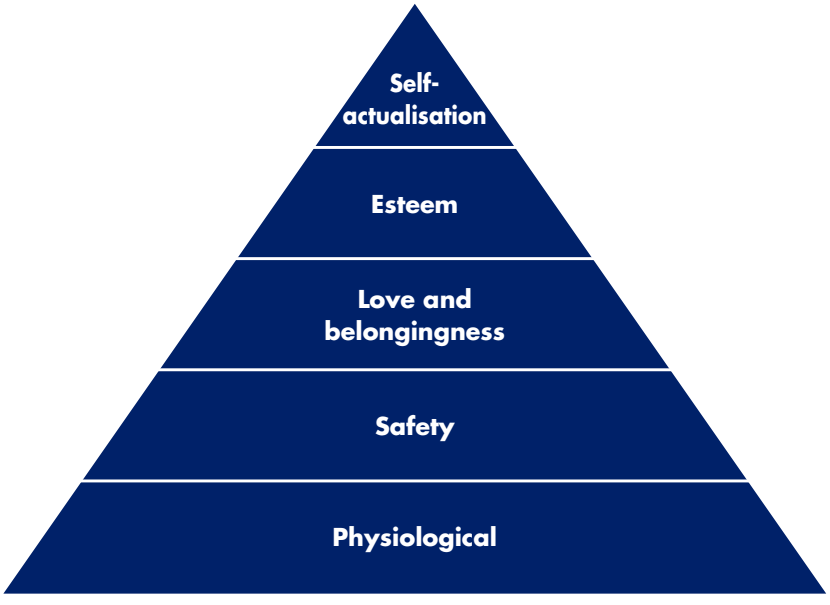
Extrinsic motivation is a form of controlled motivation which, in contrast to intrinsic motivation, is not performed out of interest but because learners are encouraged towards some separable consequence (Deci et al., 2017). Tasks or activities are performed because of an instrumental value and not because it is interesting and enjoyable: 'The extrinsically motivated student normally wants the good grades, money, or recognition that particular activities and accomplishments bring' (Ford & Roby, 2013: 102). Teachers do not always comprehend the importance of extrinsic motivation: many teachers perceive extrinsic motivation as a reward for good behaviour and punishment as the correct penalty for bad behaviour.

Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that although extrinsic motivation is understood as a weaker type of motivation, it is essential for teachers who cannot always rely upon intrinsic motivation to develop extrinsic motivational teaching strategies. Many of the tasks that teachers want their students to perform are not intrinsically interesting or enjoyable. When learners perceive a task to be uninteresting, difficult or irrelevant, they may neglect to engage with or complete the task or become academically disengaged (Legault, Green-Demers & Pelletier, 2006).

Conceptual Framework

This study made use of two theories: Maslow's (1943-1954) theory of human motivation as well as Deci and Ryan's (1985, 2000) self-determination theory (SDT). These two theories intertwine as both explore human motivation and the role played by human needs in motivation. Maslow's theory of human motivation places human needs in a five-level hierarchy that humans strive to satisfy; one level leading up to the next in a pyramidal structure of attainment and personal fulfilment. Maslow describes the different needs learners are motivated to satisfy in order to reach the ultimate goal of self-actualisation: physiological needs, safety, love and belongingness, and esteem.

Figure 1:
Hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954)



According to Maslow (1943; 1954; 1970), to be motivated towards achieving at your full potential, these needs must first be satisfied. This theory was used to establish a link between the motivational needs described by Maslow and what learners explain as their motivation to learn, to determine what needs in the hierarchy learners have difficulty satisfying, and how these motivational needs affect their motivation to learn. For learners to commit themselves to achievement, they need to take the initial steps to succeed academically and to try to achieve status within the esteem needs. They need to have satisfied their fundamental physiological needs, safety needs and their yearning for love and belonging. The ideal is for learners to reach and satisfy the need for self-actualisation so that they are able to realise their potential and achieve to the best of their abilities. This observation links with the theory of Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) regarding the psychological needs that learners will be motivated to satisfy in order to gain self-determination in their academic work. The concern of the theory is the inherent motivation of human beings and how humans internalise motivation to become self-determined.

Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) focus on two different types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These types, largely determine the origin of behaviour towards academic activities. The theory considers these two types of motivation as a continuum that extends from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. Motivation towards a task becomes an embedded part of the learner's psyche. This belief is described as internalisation and it defines how an individual's deepest motivation or behaviour can range from being unwilling (amotivation) to compliant through external means (passive compliance), to active personal commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The SDT suggests three basic psychological needs that are innate in humans: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. In order to facilitate the internalisation process, these needs should be relatively satisfied. Competence involves the need to feel effective and capable of attaining various outcomes in a given situation (Legault, 2017). Learners have the need to feel competent when engaging with others. Relatedness involves the need to connect and develop secure and satisfying relations with others (Legault, 2017). Autonomy refers to taking responsibility for one's own actions. Learners need a sense of control over their learning and want to engage in learning activities of their own volition and enthusiasm for the knowledge area. All these needs interact with one another and constitute self-determination. The SDT helps to understand what basic psychological needs learners have to satisfy to gain intrinsic motivation.

Four types of extrinsic motivation emanate from the self-determination theory which results from the internalisation process: External regulation, Introjected regulation, Identified regulation and Integrated regulation. These types of extrinsic motivation exhibit the degree to which autonomy is experienced by learners. They range from External regulation which is considered the least self-determined and determining type of extrinsic motivation, to Integrated regulation, the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, since the regulatory process is completely integrated with the learner's sense of self (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When the regulatory processes are integrated, the behaviour is an expression of who the person is, what is important to, and valued by, the individual. Learners perform tasks willingly and of their own because the work is important to them.

METHODOLOGY

This study is set within an interpretive paradigm. An interpretive paradigm allows the researcher more scope to investigate issues that influence and characterise academic motivation; to gain a better understanding of factors affecting Grade 12 learners' motivation to learn. This study adopted a phenomenological design and deployed a strictly defined and adapted type of qualitative research methodology, and applied recognised qualitative methods to collect data. Qualitative research seeks to establish how individuals make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in order to understand the social reality of individuals (Mohajan, 2018). Phenomenological studies are concerned with describing in-depth understandings and meanings of individuals' lived experiences about certain phenomena (Creswell, 2013).

A purposive sampling method was used to select the sample for the interviews. Purposive sampling is the process by which a researcher purposefully selects a sample, based upon its characteristics (Pascoe, 2014). This sampling method was chosen as the most appropriate method because it allowed the researchers to include a variety of participants based upon certain characteristics representative of the population. A sample of 10 Grade 12 learners was selected: five male learners, and five females. These learners ranged from 17 to 18 years of age. In this specific year, all Grade 12 learners were Coloured learners.

The learners for the sample were identified from a pilot study the main researcher conducted, to gain a social and academic profile of the Grade 12 learners. Participant learners were selected to capture a fairly diverse academic and social background profile, and the result was 10 learners with the following characteristics:

- One learner was selected because this learner was the top Grade 12 learner at the school and lived with a single parent in low socio-economic conditions.
- One learner lived in the school's student residence and maintained a relatively high academic performance.
- One learner was selected based upon high academic performance and because the learner lived with a single parent.
- One learner lived in a neighbouring town with both parents in relatively good socio-economic conditions but performed below average.
- One learner lived with both parents in relatively good socio-economic conditions but performed below average.
- Three learners were selected who performed at an average level and lived in low socio-economic conditions with their grandparents.
- Two learners were selected who performed at an average level and were drawn from a low to middle class socio-economic background.

Six Grade 12 teachers and three school management team (SMT) members were selected to provide insight into teachers' and management's understanding of Grade 12 learners' academic motivation, and factors that motivate or demotivate learners to learn at this school. The SMT members included the principal and the two deputy principals who are also Grade 12 teachers. The remainder of the six teachers in the sample were selected based upon their teaching experience and the different subjects they teach.

The use of a small, carefully selected sample allowed the researcher to devote more time to participants, so as to excavate the contextual situations that affect learner motivation identified by participants, such as the home, the classroom, teachers, poverty, hunger, lack of computer access or a place to study undisturbed. This study is concerned with the motivation of Grade 12 learners and seeks to explore factors affecting their motivation to learn.

The study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions for all learners. This interview method allowed the researchers to probe questions and dig more deeply into learners' responses, to gain a better understanding of factors that motivate or demotivate learners to learn at a quintile 3 secondary school. The researchers ensured that all the questions were answered by elaborating upon questions or rephrasing questions to ensure that the participants understood the questions and to eliminate potential bias answers. The interview schedule was arranged, starting with questions pertaining to learners' backgrounds, to deeper questions relating to personal issues affecting motivation at their home and school environment. All learners were interviewed using the same interview schedule as a guide. Teachers and SMT members were interviewed through a Focus Group.

Qualitative researchers choose the concepts 'trustworthiness', 'rigour' and 'quality' in the qualitative paradigm to establish validity and reliability which are associated with quantitative research. Trustworthiness can be achieved by ensuring the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study (Gunawan, 2015). Credibility refers to how accurately the researcher interprets the data provided by participants (Koonin, 2014). This credibility indicates whether results of the study are believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. Credibility was ensured by collecting data that were relevant to the research questions. Participants were made to feel at ease during the interview process and were ensured that they were free to express themselves in total confidentiality; so that the data truly reflected their opinions and feelings. To further ensure credibility of the findings, the researchers applied the use of source triangulation which involves reliance upon various informants so as to verify individual opinions and experiences against others (Shenton, 2004). In this study, source triangulation was achieved by interviewing learners, teachers and the SMT. Data collection methods were triangulated by conducting individual interviews with Grade 12 learners and a focus group interview with Grade 12 teachers and the SMT. This process allowed the researcher to construct a rich overview and understanding of the attitudes, needs and behaviours relating to learners' academic motivation, based upon the contributions of various participants.

The researchers ensured construct validity by virtue of having spent enough time in the context of the participants and respecting the context of the study. The researchers were sufficiently steeped in the culture, mores and language of the school community. It was therefore possible to detect nuances in the language, as well as to comprehend the significances of what was not stated overtly. As the researchers were familiar with the participants' various learning profiles and circumstances generally, they were able to interpret facial and bodily expressions when learners responded to sensitive questions and the researchers were able to adapt questions quickly to avoid any discomfort, awkwardness or pain which the questions might otherwise have caused.

Transferability and dependability were enhanced by providing thick descriptions of the research design, data collection methods and procedures. According to Pitney (2004), dependability is based upon the question of whether the findings are reasonable, based on the data collected and not whether similar findings can be reproduced by another researcher.

To ensure confirmability, the researcher made sure that the findings objectively represent the results of the explanations and experiences of participants, and not the preference of the researcher. When reporting upon the data, the researcher included interviewees' actual words. Data from different sources were triangulated to confirm the responses of participants.

Ethical considerations were adhered to. Permission was granted by the Western Cape Education Department to conduct the research at the secondary school. All participants were informed regarding the purpose of the study, the value of their contribution, how the findings were to be used and their contribution to the field of knowledge. Details of learners were provided by the school with the assurance that all information would be kept confidential. All participants were informed that their details and the information provided would remain confidential, and anonymity was maintained throughout the study. Participants signed a consent form agreeing to participate in the study voluntarily without any rewards. Participants under 18 were given a consent form to be completed and signed by them and their parents or guardians to grant permission to participate in the study. All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, or withdraw any data provided by them if they so wished.

Data were analysed using an inductive content analysis approach which indicated that the researchers garner raw data and allows themes to emerge, without attempting to fit the data to suit a preconceived

conceptual framework (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014). The inductive approach allowed the researchers to include all key themes that emerged from the data. An open coding method was used to identify the themes. The researchers examined several transcripts in detail, identified common data and created codes to link these related patterns in the data. Atlas.ti version 7 was used as a tool to identify the themes and patterns, and created codes using the build in coding function. The conclusion provided the researchers with insight into motivation of learners under similar conditions or backgrounds.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Four themes were identified in the analysis of the data collected from participants, namely: breaking the cycle of poverty, parental involvement, acknowledgement, and enjoyment of subjects. These themes are presented with reference to the actual responses of the participants. The literature and conceptual framework were linked to the findings in order to discuss and interpret the themes. Although findings from this study cannot be generalised, they can be related to other learners with similar conditions.

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

The learners responded that the poor socio-economic conditions at home influenced their motivation to learn. Some learners responded that the living conditions at home demotivated them to learn. They lived in relatively small houses along with many family members that included young siblings and at times members of the extended family. Consequently, finding a place where learners could learn and study in silence was seldom possible. One learner mentioned,

> Our house is very small and my siblings are very active in the house during the day when I want to study.

Another learner remarked,

> I study late at night when everybody is asleep, then the next day I'm tired and unproductive at school.

Many breadwinners were single mothers or grandparents who struggled to make ends meet. These breadwinners often had to provide for the entire extended household and at times struggled to put food on the table. Learners often experienced difficulty learning on an empty stomach. A learner noted,

> I come to school hungry and then cannot focus in class…I hear the words, but nothing goes in.

A few learners remarked that hardship and social deprivation motivated them to work harder at school in order to get out of their current living conditions. One learner stated,

> Seeing how hard my mother as a single parent works to look after me makes me want to work harder so that I can give her a better life.

Another learner mentioned,

> I work as hard as possible to get good marks so that I can get out of the conditions that we live in. I don't have to live in these conditions for the rest of my life.

It is evident from the responses that some Grade 12 learners attended school on an empty stomach due to lack of food at home. When learners sit in class craving food, they struggle to focus and become demotivated to learn. To address this challenge, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) developed a National School Nutrition Program to provide learners with meals from the school feeding scheme at

quintile 1-3 schools (Munje & Jita, 2019). Similarly, systems have been put into place in the UK to provide meals to learners from low-income families (World Food Programme, 2013). This predicament is thus not unique to South Africa. Munje and Jita (2019) note that too often in SA schools, meals are not available at the scheduled time and this results in an increase in learner anxiety and hinders concentration and learning abilities.

Learners struggled to study at home during the day due to various distractions and had to catch up with their studies at night; consequently, learners often lacked sufficient sleep. These learners were frequently exhausted or sleepy in class, which resulted in them being demotivated to learn at school. They were, in many cases, more motivated to satisfy the need to sleep than to learn. Such learners struggled to focus on any learning, which in that situation was not a priority for them. In line with Maslow's theory, it is evident that the lack of basic needs such as food and adequate sleep emanated from the data as reasons for learners' demotivation. These needs, according to Maslow, have to be satisfied first before learners can be motivated towards higher planes of existential significance. It can, therefore, be inferred that learners who have satisfied their physiological needs are more likely to be motivated to learn than their counterparts who are struggling to satisfy their physiological needs. Learners from poor households are limited from functioning at higher levels because they are forced by poverty to devote their time struggling to satisfy physiological and safety needs, leaving them little time or energy to develop self-respect or their own potential (Dos Reis, 2007). These negative and demoralising factors render it difficult for learners to fulfil their goal of escaping the degrading cycle of historically imposed poverty, exploitation and hardship.

Living under these difficult and unjust socio-economic conditions, one might expect learners to be universally demotivated to learn. Instead, the data revealed that Grade 12 learners were in many instances motivated by these very conditions to learn at school as a means of escaping degradation, suffering and humiliations; in order to live a better life in the future. This observation of learners' positive reaction to destitution is in line with the findings of a study by Igwe (2017) which reveals that learners are frequently motivated to achieve academically in order to free themselves from the confines and sufferings of poverty. Identified regulation as a form of extrinsic motivation, according to the SDT, was most relevant in these situations. Learners accept the regulatory process as their own and begin to value the consequences and significance of their own behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Though some learners were found to become demotivated, others became motivated by similar conditions. In line with the SDT, these motivated learners have identified the value and personal importance of learning for them. They realised that studying at school was the only viable and realistic hope of avoiding the hardships of their parents' lives and of escaping from their own crowded and poor living conditions.

Parental Involvement

The majority of the learners indicated that they were motivated to learn by parents who were involved in their academic activities; by checking homework, attending parent-teacher meetings and enquiring about their academic performance from teachers. A learner remarked,

> My mother and grandmother will ask me every day if I have schoolwork.

Learners revealed that they were motivated by their family; supporting them in their education and going out of their way to provide them with the necessary facilities that they needed to learn. A learner mentioned,

> It motivates me to know that my mother would do anything for me when it comes to my schoolwork.

Another learner concurred,

> …they will never think twice to buy things I need for school.

On the other hand, lack of parental involvement was perceived by many learners in this study to be a lack of care, concern and support from parents who seemed uninterested in their schoolwork. Parent apathy was found to demotivate learners to learn; that is within the parameters of this selected study. A learner attested,

> nobody checks my homework or worries about my schoolwork.

One might have expected that learners preferred to be left alone to work on their own and take responsibility for their own work, but the opposite emerged from the data. Learners desired to learn in a controlled environment and became demotivated when nobody checked their homework or when nobody enquired about their progress or activities at school. Usher and Kober (2012: 4) agree that learners develop 'feelings of competence, control, curiosity, and positive attitudes about academics' when parents create an environment at home that motivates learning and remain actively involved in their children's education. Seemingly, if parents are concerned about learners' schoolwork, it is an indication to learners that they are interested and concerned about their future. Parental concern could thus be cited as a motivating factor.

From the participants' remarks, it is clear that learners were motivated to learn when their parents were involved in their schoolwork. This involvement includes physically helping learners with homework, attending school functions, encouraging them to learn and providing positive feedback. When parents or guardians were involved in learners' academic and social lives, learners perceived them as interested, and concerned for their future and tended to adopt similar concerns and commitment to study. Learners feel connected to their parents and guardians and experience a sense of belonging. These acts of love, care and involvement contribute to the satisfaction of the need for relatedness according to the SDT. This stems from satisfying the love and belonging needs according to Maslow. Relatedness is one of the needs that facilitate the internalisation process, in addition to the autonomy and competence needs (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). In line with Niemiec and Ryan's study, these learners are inclined towards identified and integrated regulation. They were motivated to learn on their own because they had identified the value of learning. The value of learning for these learners was a means of showing appreciation and love to their caregivers. They were therefore motivated to return the love and care by making their parents or guardians proud through learning in order to achieve academically. Although this is a form of controlled motivation, it is relatively self-determined because learners do it willingly, even if partially for personal reasons. Such action towards the acquisition of knowledge is more authentic and self-fulfilling than action driven by the threat of punishment or the lure of reward. However, these learners have not completely integrated the regulation of their motivation. There is a possibility that if their parents neglect to show interest and care for their academic work, they might become demotivated and would require external regulation to motivate them to learn.

Acknowledgement

Learners mentioned that receiving positive feedback, rewards and being recognised for their performance motivates them to learn and maintain high academic performance. Prizegiving (diploma evenings) was one of the factors highlighted by the majority of the learners as motivation to learn. One learner mentioned,

> Just to receive a certificate for good performance and being able to show everybody at home motivates me again to do better and to get a certificate again.

On the other hand, when learners were not acknowledged for their hard work and performance, they became demotivated to learn. A learner revealed,

> I put in so much and I feel that I've done well, but when I get home my mother will say I could've done better.

Another learner mentioned,

> My father will never tell me he is proud of me.

From the participants' views, one can establish an important link between acknowledgement, and the motivation to learn and achieve. The data revealed that many learners were motivated to learn in order to gain an external reward and recognition for their performance by peers, parents or teachers. Learners craved recognition; they wished others to regard them as intelligent and hardworking. This craving is aligned strongly with Maslow's (1954) theory of human needs: learners, in their effort to satisfy their needs for esteem and social recognition, desire reputation, status, attention, importance or appreciation. Learners want to be acknowledged for their efforts to gain status and respect in the eyes of those in their family, learning or work environment and society at large. This impulse was evident from observing that learners who receive recognition and who gained a reputation for good performance, were further motivated to learn in order to uphold and increase their standing in the community. In agreement with the SDT, competency needs play an important role in the motivation of these learners. The SDT suggests that learners desire to be seen by others as competent and want to feel competent when engaging with other learners. These learners experience a sense of competence when they are acknowledged by others for their good performance. When they satisfy their need for competence, they are likely to internalise their motivation, learn out of their own volition and exhibit attributes of self-determination.

A corollary to this point was that data from this study indicated that learners whose efforts were not recognised at home often became demotivated to learn. In terms of Maslow's theory, these learners experienced difficulty satisfying their need for esteem. To satisfy this need, learners selected for this investigation at a quintile 3 semi-rural school often resorted to seeking attention and recognition in less orthodox, non-academic or even undesirable areas; further diverting their focus away from a ladder of achievement and steady progress in learning. It is therefore evident from the responses that learners who are acknowledged for their achievements are more motivated to learn than those who do not receive the necessary acknowledgement.

Enjoyment of subjects

A few of the learners reported that they were motivated in subjects that they enjoyed and found interesting. A learner commented,

> I'm motivated in Physical science, because this is one of the subjects I enjoy.

Another learner had a similar response,

> I love computers; I find the subject interesting.

One learner highlighted,

> Afrikaans I would learn on my own, not because I have to, but because I enjoy it.

Another learner mentioned,

> I like challenging problems. I enjoy struggling with a difficult problem so that when I solve it I feel proud of myself and that motivates me to continue trying.

On the other hand, when learners did not enjoy the subject, they became demotivated in the subject. A learner made the following comment:

I feel like I have to force myself to study Life Sciences because I don't really enjoy learning this.

It is clear from the responses that when learners found subjects interesting and enjoyable, they were more motivated to learn and study for subjects; of their own volition and enthusiasm for new knowledge. Schukajlow and Krug (2014) note that finding connections with a subject or building up an interest in one area is key for sparking and sustaining a learner's short-term and possibly long-term love of a particular area of knowledge. Finding such a connection and spark of enthusiasm for one particular area or point of fascination is strongly linked to academic achievement. In line with the SDT, the study found a link between the enjoyment of subjects, the needs for competence and autonomy and learners' motivation to learn. When learners find subjects interesting and enjoyable, they tend to work harder to understand the work and feel proud of themselves when completing a difficult task. They, therefore, exhibit a sense of satisfaction towards their need for competence. These learners feel competent when engaging with the work and with others and attempt more challenging tasks, because they believe in their abilities to master the work.

When learners enjoy the work, they develop a sense of autonomy. In this instance, they take responsibility for their own actions and do not need a controlled regulation, since they will learn on their own because they enjoy what they are doing and find interest in acquiring knowledge. It is apparent that these learners have relatively satisfied the needs for competence and autonomy, which is essential in facilitating the internalisation of their motivation to learn. These learners learned because they were authentically driven by a passionate interest in a certain subject - they enjoyed learning new content, persisted until they understood the challenging content, and wanted to figure out solutions for challenging problems on their own. This pattern of knowledge acquisition is aligned with findings from a study conducted by Singh (2011) who claims that intrinsically motivated learners enjoy challenges, and do not readily give up when facing challenges; they are likely to persist and complete assigned tasks. From the findings of this investigation, it may be implied that in confirmation of the SDT, these learners were intrinsically motivated.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Motivation, whether controlled or autonomous, is undoubtedly a crucial part of learning and academic success. This study found that learners from impoverished households, who have managed to satisfy their basic needs, were motivated to learn as a means to escape their harsh living conditions and achieve a better future. The study further revealed that when learners were acknowledged for academic achievements, they became more motivated to learn to continue receiving these acknowledgements. When parents were involved in learners' schoolwork, learners became motivated to learn to make their parents proud as a means of returning the love and care they perceived when parents were involved in their studies. Learners who found enjoyment in subjects often learned from their own volition because they enjoyed the work, found the work interesting and wanted to increase their knowledge.

The compelling factor that emerged from the findings was that these motivating factors allowed learners to identify the purpose and benefit of learning for them; whether it was working towards a better future to please their parents, gain recognition, or internal satisfaction. Once they understood why they had to learn, they often appreciated the value of learning. Learners should thus be encouraged to set goals that are relevant to their circumstances and interest so that they can comprehend the greater purpose of learning for their future. Parental involvement and academic acknowledgement should be encouraged as it adds intrinsic value to learning. Learners must be provided opportunities to be acknowledged for their academic abilities, to be seen as competent, and to be valued by others. Teachers and parents should be cognisant of factors that contribute to learner motivation and need to provide clarity and indicate to learners, in the classroom and at home, how learning would add value to aspects of their lives which coincide with their life goals.

REFERENCES

Awan, R., Noureen, G. & Naz, A. (2011) A Study of Relationship between Achievement Motivation, Self concept and Achievement in English and Mathematics at Secondary level. *International Education Studies* 4(3) pp.72-78.

Bakar, R. (2014) The effect of learning motivation on student's productive competencies in vocational high school, West Sumatra. *International Journal of Asian Social Science* 4(6) pp.722-732.

Bannatyne, A. (2003) *Student characteristics*. http://www.bannatynereadingprogram.com/BP13CHAR.htm (Accessed 07 July 2015).

Bezuidenhout, R. & Cronje, F. (2014) Qualitative data analysis. In F. Du Plooy-Cilliers, C. Davis & R. Bezuidenhout (Eds.) *Research matters*. Cape Town: Juta.

Creswell, J.W. (2013) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davids, R. (2010) Practices which contribute towards grade 6 learners' reading motivation (Unpublished master's dissertation). Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Mowbray, South Africa.

Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1985) *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.

Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R. M. (2008) Self-Determination Theory: A Macrotheory of Human Motivation, Development, and Health. *Canadian Psychology* 49(3) pp.182-185.

Deci, E.L., Olafsen, A.H. & Ryan, R.M. (2017) Self-determination theory in work organizations: The state of a science. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 4(1) pp.19-43.

Deci, E.L., Vallerand, R.J., Pelletier, L.G. & Ryan, R.M. (1991) Motivation and Education: The Self-Determination Perspective. *Educational Psychologist* 26(3 & 4) pp.325-346.

Department of Basic Education. (2017) *The 2017 National Senior Certificate Schools Performance Report*. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Dos Reis, K.M. (2007) The influence of gangsterism on the morale of educators on the Cape Flats, Western Cape (Unpublished master's dissertation). Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa.

Ford, V.B. & Roby, D.E. (2013) Why do high school students lack motivation in the classroom? *Global Education Journal* 2013(2) pp.101-113.

Gagné, M. & Deci, E.L. (2005) Self-determination theory and work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 26 pp.331-362.

Gbollie, C. & Keamu, H.P. (2017) Student Academic Performance: The Role of Motivation, Strategies, and Perceived Factors Hindering Liberian Junior and Senior High School Students Learning. *Education Research International* 2017 pp.1-11.

Grant, D. (2013) *Background to the national quintile system*. http://wced.pgwc.gov.za/comms/press/2013/74_14oct.html (Accessed 7 September 2016).

Gunawan J. (2015) Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *Belitung Nursing Journal* 1(1) pp.10-11.

Hall, K. & Giese, S. (2008) Addressing quality through school fees and school funding. In S. Pendlebury, L. Lake, & C. Smith (Eds.) *South African child gauge 2008/2009* pp.35-40. Cape Town: Children's Institute, UCT.

Hagger, M.S., Hardcastle, S.J., Chater, A., Mallett, C., Pal, S. & Chatzisarantis, N.L.D. (2014) Autonomous and controlled motivational regulations for multiple health-related behaviors: between- and within-participants analyses. *Health Psychology & Behavioural Medicine* 2(1) pp.565-601.

Horgan, G. (2007) *The Impact of Poverty on Young Children's Experience of School*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Howard, J., Gagné, M., Morin, A.J. & Van den Broeck, A. (2016) Motivation profiles at work: A self-determination theory approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 95 pp.74-89.

Igwe, I.O. (2017) Influence of socio-economic status of parents' income and motivation on the academic achievement of chemistry students. *International Journal of Current Research* 9(4) pp.49627-49633.

Klatte, M., Bergström, K. & Lachmann, T. (2013) Does noise affect learning? A short review of noise effects on cognitive performance. *Frontiers in psychology* 4(578) pp.1-6, doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00578

Koonin, M. (2014) Validity and Reliability. In F. Du Plooy-Cilliers, C. Davis & R. Bezuidenhout (Eds.) *Research matters*. Cape Town: Juta.

Legault, L., Green-Demers, I. & Pelletier, L. (2006) Why do high school students lack motivation in the classroom? Toward an understanding of academic amotivation and the role of social support. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 98(3) pp.567–582.

Legault, L. (2017) Self-determination theory. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T.K. Shackelford (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences* pp.1-9. New York: Springer.

Maslow, A.H. (1943) A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review* 50(4) pp.370-396.

Maslow, A.H. (1954) *Motivation and Personality*. (3rd ed.) New York: Harper & Row.

Maslow, A.H. (1970) *Motivation and Personality*. (2nd ed.) New York: Harper & Row.

Mohajan, H.K. (2018) Qualitative research methodology in social sciences and related subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People* 7(1) pp.23-48.

Munje, P. & Jita, L. (2019) The implementation of the school feeding scheme (SFS) in South African Public primary schools. *Educational Practice and Theory* 41(2) pp.25-42.

Nel, W.N. (2000) Faktore wat verband hou met die leermotivering en leerhouding van leerders in sekondêre skole in die Upington omgewing. (Unpublished master's dissertation). University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

Niemiec, C.P. & Ryan, R.M. (2009) Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice. *Theory and Research in Education* 7(2) pp.133–144.

Ormrod, J.E. (2008) *Educational psychology: Developing learners*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Pascoe, G. (2014) Sampling. In F. Du Plooy-Cilliers, C. Davis & R. Bezuidenhout (Eds.) *Research matters*. Cape Town: Juta.

Pitney, W.A. (2004) Strategies for Establishing Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *Athletic Therapy Today* 9(1) pp.26-28, January.

Rastegar, M., Akbarzadeh, M. & Heidari, N. (2012) The Darker Side of Motivation: Demotivation and Its Relation with Two Variables of Anxiety among Iranian EFL Learners. *International Scholarly Research Network* 2012 pp.1-8.

Rehman, A. & Haider, K. (2013) The impact of motivation on learning of secondary school students in Karachi: An analytical study. *Educational Research International* 2(2) pp.139-147.

Ryan, R.M. & Deci, E.L. (2000) Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25 pp.54-67.

Schukajlow, S. & Krug, A. (2014) Are interest and enjoyment important for students' performance? In C. Nicol, S. Oesterle, P. Liljedahl & D. Allan (Eds.) *Proceedings of the Joint Meeting of PME 38 and PME-NA 36*. 5th ed. Vancouver, Canada: PME.

Shenton, A.K. (2004) Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information* 22 pp.63-75. January 6.

Singh, K. (2011) Study of Achievement Motivation in Relation to Academic Achievement of Students. *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration* 1(2) pp.161-171.

Usher, A. & Kober, N. (2012) *Student Motivation - An Overlooked Piece of School Reform*. Center on Education Policy. Washington: The George Washington University.

Wang, Y. (2007) On the cognitive processes of human perception with emotions, motivations, and attitudes. *International Journal of Cognitive Informatics and Natural Intelligence* 1(4) pp.1-13.

World Food Program. (2013) State of School Feeding Worldwide. https://www.hst.org.za/publications/NonHST%20Publications/wfp257481.pdf (Accessed 01 February 2021).

Teachers' strategies to develop leadership skills in Foundation Phase learners[1]

Shonisani Agnes Mulovhedzi, University of Venda, South Africa[2]
Ina (Jacobina Christiana) Joubert, SANTS Private Higher Education, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This research paper focused on the strategies employed by teachers in the development of leadership skills in learners at the Foundation Phase. The study aimed at exploring the strategies which teachers employ in developing Foundation Phase learners to embrace sound leadership attributes as young learners must develop and assume leadership roles at an early stage. A purposive sampling procedure was followed to select eight Grade 3 teachers from four government primary schools. The study was qualitative in nature and data were collected through focus-group discussions, capacity building workshops and observations. Data were merged into relevant themes using thematic analysis. The study was grounded in participatory action research with Erikson theory of psychosocial development and transformational leadership theory as its theoretical framework. The main finding was that the strategies suggested and adopted by the participating teachers in the development of leadership skills in the Foundation Phase showed a significant effect on the learners' behaviour, performance, willingness and readiness to perform in various leadership roles.

Keywords: Foundation Phase learner, leadership, skills, teaching and learning, transformational

INTRODUCTION

A passionate active teacher as a leader shares a set of personalities and attitudes with other teachers in schools. The Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (2009: 1) indicates that these teachers are 'energetic risk-takers whose integrity, high efficacy, and content knowledge give them credibility with their colleagues'. As teachers, they must be able to lead, enthuse, and inspire learners on a daily basis. Leadership skills are an essential part of the role, regardless of one's position or experience (Randstad, 2019). Teaching leadership or providing opportunities for learners to lead helps them with personal and social skills that are in demand. Teachers who are natural leaders are usually on the lookout for colleagues who share their positive intentions as partners in the classroom. These may value a variety of approaches and ideas for developing leadership skills in Foundation Phase (FP) learners. Teachers reflect on their own experiences, learn from others, and gain the resilience to continue the process while developing leadership skills in young learners (Cahill et al., 2014).

1 Date of submission 3 June 2020
Date of review outcome: 15 December 2020
Date of acceptance 12 May 2021

2 ORCID: 0000-0002-8355-3377

Teachers have different strategies for developing leadership skills. Welch et al. (2016: 3) posit that 'leadership is learned through using best strategies, such as going full force in training and developing an edge and execution'. From the above point of view, it follows that even born leaders have to learn some leadership qualities in order to become effective leaders. Such qualities can be acquired with the aid of facilitation, training and practice. Penn (2012) points out that there has been debate among scholars for some time about whether young learners learn to be leaders from their experiences or whether leadership is an inborn trait. Some leadership skills, therefore, are learned at school levels, while others are inherent components of their personality (Mulovhedzi, 2017).

Mahanta (2019) asserts that teachers need to come up with effective teaching strategies and implement innovative solutions to meet every learner's individual needs in the class. There are several factors affecting the effectiveness of strategies used by teachers, during teaching and learning, for the development of leadership skills that are appreciated by the young learners, parents, peers and the community. Room 241 Team (2013) contends that teachers as leaders are continuously practising teaching strategies while also improving their facilitation of related techniques. They must be good listeners during class activities and outside of the classroom when interacting with the young learners, parents, peers and the community so that they can discern needed areas for teaching. One teachers' strategy that can develop leadership skills is to make learners in charge of their learning as stated by the Education World (2021). Teachers could include young learners in leadership opportunities in the classroom by engaging them in discussion opportunities, daily, in the lessons.

A collaboration of teachers is the most desired strategy for successful work in creating a quality learning environment. Teachers are aware that they can hardly make huge achievements by themselves, as such, they seek the assistance of others with the right skills to support in developing young learners' leadership skills (Room 241 Team, 2013). Teachers may choose to work on several projects with others in the school system to:

- research the best professional development opportunities for teachers
- study existing school appreciation policies and make suggestions on additional reward for teachers' benefits
- establish an internal teaching-team programs for alternative teaching strategies.

As part of a Participatory Action Research (PAR), the teacher as a leader can contribute to developing leadership skills in learners by giving some excellent leadership examples and talks, frequently, during teaching and learning. It is important to provide lessons in leadership by explaining what leadership is and its role in future. Teachers should allow learners to invest in the best leadership culture of the schools to find ways of being leaders. Allowing learners to take part in extracurricular activities that encourage learners to learn how to lead is one strategy. FP teachers should give learners the opportunity to learn leadership skills, particularly, when they offer to do so; teachers should keep on supporting them.

Teachers came together during the focus-group discussions in the collaborative PAR team. Rule and Vaughn (2011: 66) state that 'in focus groups the researchers engage a group of six to twelve participants together and facilitates a discussion among participants'. A set of semi-structured questions was used to initiate the discussion that the researchers facilitated. The purpose of focus-group discussions was to initiate interaction among participants and create a dialogue with the researchers.

In the capacity building workshops, teachers suggested some strategies that had helped to guide the development of leadership skills in the school. The strategies were identified collaboratively through PAR and developed to empower the teachers in the cultivation of leadership skills, during class and extramural

activities. It is, for example, through the work of teachers in the FP that leadership skills in young learners are nurtured and facilitated for them to live in a mature and dignified manner (Hay & Dempster, 2004; Bush, 2011).

Objective

The main objective of this study was to investigate teachers' strategies used to develop leadership skills, in FP learners, and the factors affecting the effectiveness of these strategies.

The research question which guided this study is:

What strategies do teachers use to develop leadership skills in FP learner?

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Leadership skills are taught in various ways, both in South Africa and internationally. Life Skills (one of the subjects in the FP) is used for this study to look at how teachers enable learners to achieve leadership skills. In the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE), the Life Skill's policy, known as the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) (2011) states that the subject of Life Skills is central to learners' holistic development and focuses on the social, personal, intellectual, emotional and physical growth and integration of learners into the system of education. Education should provide every child, according to Dewey (in Mooney, 2000), with the opportunity to develop freely, pleasantly and in all respects. Teaching and learning in the school system should give all learners honest respect for appropriate work and participation. Dewey (in Mooney, 2000) believes that the observation of children and what type of experience the children are interested in and prepared for, are essential for teachers. The development of special leadership qualities among young students must, therefore, be taken into account and the FP teachers should follow teaching approaches that are the basis for the curriculum.

Dewey further argues that a growing child's passion and focus should be identified and developed during teaching and learning and that their needs must be satisfied by every subject taught in school. Teachers do not only teach the topics and how-to live-in society, nor only teach individual children, but they also create a society (Dewey in Mooney, 2000). By enhancing the skills of leadership in schools, learners can be guided to act in and outside of school in an acceptable manner, respect others as well as act responsibly and acceptably (DBE, 2011). The teaching of leadership knowledge to learners in the class is essential. In addition, teachers can develop and support the leadership skills of young learners by training them in a group and engaging them in class discussions, according to Helmrich (2015). Teachers should give learners time to choose in order to build a sense of responsibility and trust, through formal and informal teaching, by modeling good conduct.

A system for the development of young leaders should be organised. The aim of education is to promote the development of skills, knowledge and willingness for learners to be responsible leaders at a tender age so that they will become responsible adults (Manktelow, 2014). Some of the most controversial questions are, whether teachers can effectively develop leadership skills, and what strategies and factors affect the process, in the classroom, during teaching and learning; this has motivated me to conduct this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical foundation

This study is framed by two theories namely, transformational leadership of Bass and Avolio (1994) and psychosocial development of Erikson (1959). The psychosocial development theory supposes that leadership skills develop through a series of stages (Erikson, 1959). It also contends that a situation of

conflict should exist to trigger the development of leadership skills. Transformational leadership relates to the need for teachers to engage in the development of leadership skills, in learners to accomplish certain life-long goals (Barthold, 2014). Cherry (2021: 1) states that the 'concrete operating phase' is the third stage of child development; is a period that extends from the middle age of 5 to approximately 11 years and is characterised by the development of logical thinking. Erikson presents the stages of age development in various phases (Karcher & Kristine, 2007). The most critical stage includes the early years of schooling beginning around five to eleven years, hence, this study focused on teachers of Grade 3 learners. It is believed that strategies that teachers use should promote transformational leadership skills in FP learner.

The FP is a period in which learners are ready to learn the materials taught both at school and in society; it is at this stage that young learners begin to grow a sense of confidence. FP learners master leadership abilities in the form of social interaction when they communicate and relate to their teachers and peers. Erikson (1959) posits that learners who are motivated and encouraged by their peers, parents and teachers are quick to develop competence, interest and confidence in their capabilities compared to those getting little or no encouragement. Learners who are not helped by their significant others to develop leadership skills tend to doubt their propensity to be successful. The psychosocial theory of development highlights the early period of development and the role of teachers in assisting learners to grow confidence in their leadership skills. In this study, Erickson theory was used to show the stages in terms of the age development of learners from their initial phase of learning and the assistance teachers can provide in inspiring their leadership abilities.

The theory of transformational leadership falls within the contemporary leadership theory which is often adopted for education in the 21st century (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Denmark, 2012). This theory posits that leadership strategy can transform people and subordinates into leaders (Bass & Bass, 2008). Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (1994: 7) explain that transformational leadership is a strategy that 'implies major changes in the form, nature, function and/or potential of some phenomenon applied to leadership'. In the same vein, Denmark (2012) posits that a leader checks for potential, motivates learners, seeks to satisfy greater demands and engages people in their entirety. Burns (1978) describes transformational leadership as a method which leads to change in people and in this study, pertains to the role of teachers in helping young learners to grow or change towards the mastery of leadership skills, for the accomplishment of desired goals (Barthold, 2014). This approach to leadership views leadership abilities as a continuous and dynamic process in which one or more persons interact with one another in such a way that leaders and followers motivate and moralise one another (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Fox (2012) states that the theory of transformative leadership also motivates learners to surpass expectations by encouraging the pursuit of common objectives, for example, to take action in the expectancy of the learner to reciprocate or react.

In this study, both theories stress the importance of the development of the leadership skills of young learners with the help and strategies of their teachers. Learners are followers who can be transformed into leaders by teachers as leaders, through the teaching and learning process, in an academic environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research

This study adopted qualitative research, using a PAR to establish the way in which teachers facilitate the development of leadership skills in Foundation Phase (FP) learners. PAR as a qualitative research methodology was appropriate as interpretive research has rich content. Interpretative investigators see themselves 'inside the circle' and interpreting the world around them. 'Interpretive researchers aim to interpret their results and detail the meaning to people, rather than just understanding what they have

researched' (Essays: 2015: 1), hence, the approach comes with a form of knowledge development that is interactive (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). PAR needs to be applied in a committed and collaborative way; this form of participation is inherent within the activities of research to yield practical outcomes for positive change. PAR was employed to draw on personal experiences of participants in the development of content and strategies for the generation of leadership skills in the schools under study.

Stages of Participatory Action Research

The researchers used the stages of PAR which adopted from James, Milenkiewicz and Bucknam (2008).

Stage 1 Diagnose: Participatory groups of teachers assess what is currently known about the topic to be studied. They state their assumptions about the topic and research, as well as evaluate factors that contribute to the current state of affairs. Members of the team conduct research into theory and literature to learn what others have done in similar situations.

Step 2: Action: Teachers work in groups to plan possible courses and ways to measure their effectiveness based on research. The teachers design their plans.

Step 3: Measure: After implementation, participants' work is evaluated in order to ascertain whether they have achieved learner-level outcomes. Teachers use a variety of methods to determine how their actions have impacted the recipients they are studying.

Step 4: Reflection: As individuals and as a group, participants reflect on their process, their actions, and their outcomes. They also brainstorm alternative situations and additional steps during the reflection.

How participants applied each stage of PAR

During the diagnose stage, teachers raised questions to collect data that led them to identify strategies of developing leadership skills in FP learners. PAR does not mean work only for the participant, but rather working in partnership with others to identify challenges and strategies. In this study, comments and suggestions from the participants were combined in all cycles of the PAR. During this stage, teachers also developed learner activities that involved leadership roles.

In the action stage, teachers worked together in groups to integrate activities. This improved the relationship between the roles of the PAR participants and their productivity. Teachers implemented the teaching strategies that they discovered to help them facilitate the development of leadership skills in the classrooms, both during class group discussions and during extramural activities. Learners were given different tasks that required them to think critically, make a decision, work as a team or solve a problem; this led to learners understanding each other by communicating effectively.

During the measurement stage, teachers used multiple forms of measurement to study how their actions affected the learners with whom they were working. Learners completed different tasks that could be used to measure their leadership performance. At this point, teachers showed improved learners' work that encouraged leadership; they discussed successes, shared challenges and found ways to improve existing gaps. They summarised by outlining strategies that had worked; the leadership roles they had taught during group discussions and extramural activities and how they evaluated the learners' suggested solutions. The teachers developed professional programmes that they could share with other schools.

During the reflection stage, the PAR practitioner acknowledges the growth in competence that had accumulated during every cycle. The reflection stage helped teachers to examine what they had done in great detail. Daily, they paid attention and reflected on what they imparted to young learners, hence the

participants reflected on their process, their actions and their outcomes as individuals and as groups. They also investigated alternative situations and additional steps. This was a further source of qualitative data that guided their process. Teachers assisted one another if there was a need to change a practice and shared ideas on the solutions, they found during their group discussions and other ideas that they thought they could include in the planning and implementation phase of the intervention. They discussed the professional development programme that could assist the Department and policy makers to train teachers to impart qualities of leadership at the FP.

Research design: Participatory action research (PAR)

An interpretivist paradigm was used, as proposed by Patel (2015); this requires researchers to interpret the components of a study. This means that realities are mostly interpreted using the qualitative method in order to get multiple realities. This paradigm depends on where people see themselves in relation to the world around them, as well as their views and thoughts. The participatory nature of action research allows each participant to contribute his / her expertise to the project, which empowers the research and leads to improvement and changes at work-place level. Morales (2016) states that PAR is characterised by a collaboration of researchers and their ability to appraise the entire research. The paradigm also provides rich evidence about participants' circumstances, feelings and thoughts. The roles of the various participants in the research process are clearly defined, with the goal of carefully determining whether or not the desired outcomes were achieved. Meetings and workshops were planned by the researchers as the participants came from various selected schools, although, all the participants are teaching Grade 3 learners.

Data generation methods

The researchers employed three data-generated methods, namely, capacity-building workshop, classroom observation and focus-group discussions to collect formal data as these were quick and convenient. The researchers also thought it would be suitable to view relevant documents related to strategies that teachers used to develop leadership skills in FP learners. These above-mentioned instruments helped to confirm all the findings as they converged to inform the main phenomenon - to develop leadership skills in the FP learners.

Below is a description of the data generation methods to obtain a picture of the new strategies which were developed. Participating teachers were exposed to four stages of capacity development workshops. After each workshop, a focus-group discussion was conducted with the participating teachers where they gave responses to the semi-structured interview questions that were prepared for them. Their responses were recorded, and pictures were taken.

Focus-group interviews were conducted after each workshop to gather data on the current strategies for the development of leadership qualities. Each capacity-building activity had its own purpose. The first one was for the joint designing of teaching strategies; reflections on and sharing what should be implemented and checking whether it would work through observation, joint redesigning and implementation. In the second stage, the teachers implemented the teaching strategies as discussed, reflected on them and shared what will be implemented next and checked whether it would work or not through observation, and redesigned where necessary. At the third stage, teachers reflected and shared ideas and reported back on flip charts to help teachers who were still experiencing difficulties and finalised the capacity-building experiences when enough data were available. Focus-group discussions were conducted after each workshop to gather data about the various strategies that teachers could use to develop leadership skills in learners and to widen the range of responses during capacity building workshops. The purpose of the focus group discussions was to encourage interaction among participants and create dialogue with the researchers. Data were also collected through observation of classroom activities and the researchers

was a non-participant observer, so as not to influence the participating teachers when they were trying to develop leadership skills of the FP learners.

Selection criteria of research participants

The participants were purposefully selected, and the sample include eight teachers. Data were obtained from experienced teachers who had been teaching in Grade 3 classes. Only Grade 3 female teachers participated in the study because of two reasons. Firstly, from the selected school, there were only female teachers who were teaching Grade 3 classes. Secondly, Grade 3 teachers were selected as they are teaching exit grade in the FP to Intermediate Phase (IP). In IP, most of learning activities learners learn independently and the leadership skills would be developed in advanced. Selection criteria included school, experience and language. The participants were selected from lower primary phases that contained two or more Grade 3 classes. All four selected schools are sited in a rural setting and had more than one Grade 3 class and ranged from Grade R to Grade 4. The schools are located within 12 to 18 kilometres of each other. The selected teachers used Tshivenda as a language of instruction in the classroom. Life Skills is one of the subjects that are taught in mother tongue.

Data analysis

An analysis of data involves striving for a deeper understanding of the collected information through the process of organisation and interpretation (Creswell, 2013). Data analysis is 'the process of observing patterns in data, asking questions relating to such patterns, seeking more data and furthering the analysis by sorting, questioning, thinking, constructing and testing conjectures' (Mayan, 2001). The analysis of data was done through an application of the guidelines for constructivism as given by Charmaz (2000). The inductive approach to data analysis was used in this research. To understand teachers' strategies on how leadership skills can be facilitated for learners in the FP, it became central to document the entire discussions and comments and group them according to resultant themes. Creswell (2012) advises that a study requires an immediate and ongoing analysis of data while it is still fresh, rather than waiting until all data has been collected. To identify themes, the researchers read through the transcribed data so as to see the emerging themes. Coding for patterns was done by looking at phrases and statements.

Ethical consideration

The research recognised the institutional ethical principles. The research was submitted to the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee for ethical clearance. Then the researchers sought permission from the Department of Basic Education of the Vhembe District in Limpopo and the participants in order to adhere to ethical issues. All participants were requested to sign informed consent form after the aim and nature of the study was explained to them. Confidentiality was also observed; participants were assured that their identity will not be revealed, and that the information provided would remain confidential. Participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they were free to discontinue with the participation if they feel so.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness relates to the stance adopted in a study to ensure the findings are convincing and believable; this establishes rigour in qualitative studies. Qualitative research does not perceive quality in terms of validity and reliability, which are characteristic of quantitative research. Korstjens and Moser (2018) state that trustworthiness focuses on the criteria to enhance the research findings. The criteria consist of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability.

RESULTS

The section presents and discusses the strategies that emerged from the finding, that teachers can employ towards assisting learners to develop leadership skills. The participating teachers were empowered

during the capacity training workshop which enabled them to contribute relevant information during the focus-group discussions. The researchers used a video recorder to capture the activities and to interpret the comments made during the oral discussions. There were field notes on the perceptions of teachers regarding their strategies used to develop leadership skills in Foundation Phase learners. The discussions are presented according to the research questions asked.

The participants were coded as follows: T1 – T8, which stands for teacher 1 to 8; SCH A- D, which stands for school A; FGI 1 to 4, which stands for focus-group interview; and lastly CBW 1 to 4, which stands for capacity-building workshop.

The teachers identified and discussed several strategies that can be adopted to facilitate the development of leadership skills in young learners during classroom activities and extramural activities. The teachers highlighted the following strategies during the focus group interview (FGI 3 and 4) - that learners who are struggling and lazy should be given a lot of class activities to keep them occupied as well as assist them to attain expected goals; learners should be given remedial teaching when necessary; teachers must motivate learners to assume roles such as class representatives or managers; the emotions of teachers should be monitored in their interactions with learners, that is, they need to be patient with learners, thus, avoiding being short-tempered. Young learners effectively engage in class activities when provided with conditions where they are loved and catered for by their teachers (Mulovhedzi, 2017).

It emerged in the discussion that teachers should be passionate leaders during the facilitation of leadership skills among young learners. This resonates well with the description provided by the Department of Education (DoE) (2008), which presents passionate teachers as those who believe in caring, are achievement-orientated and committed, show trust and work collaboratively. Teacher leaders who are passionate actively promote - critical thinking, effective communication, swift decision making, problem-solving skills and teamwork - as an ongoing skills development agenda in the classrooms.

The themes emerging from the participating teachers on strategies to develop leadership skills among learners are discussed hereunder.

Engaging teachers in continuous capacity-building training

The teachers suggested some capacity-building strategies that might help them to nurture leadership skills among young learners at school. Gregory and Hine (2013) describe capacity-building strategies as tools to support and complement existing activities and to offer guidance on school practices. Such tools are used in conjunction with Departmental strategy documents to ensure they are operationalized, defined and monitored as expected. The contributed strategies are necessary for FP teachers to build and transform leadership capacities in young learners in the classroom. together, and benchmark at neighbouring schools. Through engaging teachers in continuous capacity-building training, teachers can build strong content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and skills on how to develop leadership skills in learners and understand learners and their development; this would include general abilities for organizing, observing, explaining ideas, thinking diagnostically, and having adaptive expertise for forming opinions in light of learner' needs (Darling-Hammond, 2012).

This was confirmed by T1- SCH B,

> Teachers' training can be put to efficient use. We often focus on learners and their needs when we talk about effective teaching, however, it is necessary for the Department of Basic Education to also concentrate on the training of teacher because learners improve when the teacher has the necessary knowledge on how to make learners, leaders.

T5- SCH C also added,

> That is true, learners receive a high-quality education from well-trained teachers.

FGI 2- T2- SCH A explained,

> It depends, we can be trained but some of the teachers are lazy that they even fail to implement the developed CAPS policy.

T7 – SCH D also explained,

> Knowledge has prompted the teacher to seek out more effective teaching methods. For this, the teacher must have a specific set of knowledge and skills in order to understand how and when to use various tools of developing and transform leadership skills to leaners and makes them followers.

It is paramount that the new interventions be infused into the school system with the crafting of supporting goals and aims. In most instances, it is presumed that new interventions can change poor approaches to developing leadership skills in schools. Teachers can be given additional opportunities to facilitate workshops, which would raise their teaching standards. This study identified capacity-building experiences as strategies such as education programmes and new policies – designed to transform the behaviour of learners in terms of displaying leadership skills (Muhdi, 2019). It was also suggested, from this study, that teachers must facilitate the growth of leadership skills at school through understanding learners and meeting their needs (Mulovhedzi, 2017). Teachers may place the targeted learner next to him/her and use leadership identifiers in the classroom, thereby, training teachers on how to facilitate leadership skills and blending the old policy with the newly amended one. Teachers should be exposed to training, workshops and continuing professional-development programmes, as these play a major role in implementing curriculum innovations. They assist teachers to gain more experience and learn how to transform the leadership abilities of learners. The training workshops, hence, would assist teachers to gather more knowledge which allows them to instil skills of leadership in learners according to the norm.

Educational transformation of leadership skills to FP learners

Teachers are expected to keep in mind the most appropriate approach in developing leadership skills, such as problem-solving skills, teamwork, good decision-making skills and confidence (Mulovhedzi & Mudzielwana, 2016). This is also supported by IQualify UK (2020) which states that learners, particularly young ones, are usually in the process of gaining an understanding of their skills. The teacher, on the other hand, has enough experience to recognise when a learner possesses a particular skill which requires nurturing to develop. As a result, once the teacher has identified the needs of the learner and provided the necessary support for their development, the learners are able to discover and grow them.

T3 and 4 - SCH B confirmed,

> Skills become needs to learners because they require nurturing to develop. As a result, once the teacher has identified the needs of the learner and provided the necessary support for their development, the learners are able to discover and grow them.

T6 – SCH D also explained,

> Once we are familiar with our learners' individual needs, we can easily plan our day-to-day classroom activities to accommodate them all. For example, if we are aware on how to organise individual

> tutoring, group interactions, and overall supervision it will be easy for us to develop leadership skills. In other words, each activity is tailored to the needs of specific learner, so that by the end of the day, all of the learners' needs have been met.

A transformational teacher-leader is expected to model leadership skills to young learners which will prepare them for the assumption of leadership roles within and outside the school premises (Mulovhedzi, 2017). Mills (2020) avers that teachers' transformational leadership skills should result in increased participation and identification of potential in the classroom among learners. Some learners need added support to adopt some leadership functions and to exhibit desired leadership attitudes. Teachers must assist learners to deal with leadership difficulties during extramural and classroom activities by offering support and adapting instructions. It is possible for a teacher who is observing class activities to notice transformations and commonalities in the behaviours of learners. This occurs in cases where the practice of leadership escalates to the level where it involves a responsible way of life for the learner.

Make learners to own their learning

Involve learners in classroom leadership opportunities, such as leading a lesson discussion or handing out papers. According to Paterson (2020) such opportunities should be incorporated into daily classroom procedures. It benefits both the learners who is working and their peers who must collaborate with the peer leader. Activities involving learner leadership in the classroom will assist learners most when teachers give them positive feedback on how they handled their given responsibility. There is, usually, a group of learners that require special attention in every class; the teachers must remember them when developing leadership skills.

During CBW 3- T4, 6 and 7 further explained,

> It is not easy for the learners who required special attention to own their learning as they require more help from the teacher. They need strong learning support to adopt leadership skills.

During FGI 2- T1 and 2 confirmed,

> When learners are given leadership opportunities, we as teachers need to give them freedom to struggle and even fail, we should support them.

Teacher who participated in the study suggested that the DBE should allow two teachers in one class as it is not easy to develop leadership skills due to overcrowded classes. Having two teachers in one classroom also decreases the number of playful learners during teaching in the classroom. This approach places one teacher in a leading role, while the other is functioning as a support to the class by monitoring learners' work, addressing behavioural issues, answering questions posed by the learners and also developing instruction.

Engage learners in leadership positions

Teachers must make sure that learners are provided with the opportunity to participate in many leadership capacities. This can be done by giving them leadership identifiers such as scribe, reporter, timekeeper, class-captain and group-leader. Fulton (2019) suggests that one learner could be the scribe, another the reporter, another presenter of visual materials, and so on. Each leader would be in charge of guiding the rest of the group in establishing a clear goal and delegating specific tasks. The teacher should rotate the practice of leadership positions, daily or weekly, to enable learners to experience a multitude of functions.

T1 and 2 from SCH A and T5 &6 from SCH C revealed,

> It is possible to engage learners in leadership positions although we have a challenge of overcrowded class. But we need to encourage them to work very hard encourage others to complete their tasks and pay attention to what others are saying.

The teachers also indicated that it essential to locate and observe learners who are shy, lazy and those with learning difficulties. The use of leadership identifiers will also help teachers to develop the necessary leadership behaviours in learners. It is easy for teachers to monitor learners in a given leadership role; leadership identifier also enhances a sense of responsibility and belonging in the classroom context. In this context, learners are inspired to deliver as expected in the leadership tag or identifier that they occupy (Mulovhedzi & Mudzielwana 2016). Some learners show their developed leadership skills during extramural activities, hence, showing the holistic development of learners in an academic environment.

T2 from SCH B and SCH D said:

> Extramural activities make learners engage in critical thinking, such as identifying different leaders around them and also identifying good leadership qualities from these leaders that are worth emulating and imitating.

Informal classroom activities offer balance to the academic side of education by making the learners physically active, develop new behavioural skills such as participating in teams, developing problem-solving skills and critical thinking. Consequently, the participation of learners in areas such as netball, traditional dancing, and soccer, helps them to grow leadership skills inclusive of self-confidence, responsibility, self-esteem and belongingness (Mulovhedzi, 2017).

DISCUSSION

The literature by Murray (2014) confirms the findings of this study, that teachers are aware of the strategies that need to be used to develop leadership skills in the Foundation Phase learners. The findings were also in agreement with statements in the literature that the best time to foster leadership skills in learners is during their early childhood; this will influence their behaviour, both inside and outside the classroom and help them to grow into responsible future citizens as asserted by (Carmichael, 2016). Findings also showed that developed strategies can improve learners' social skills through extracurricular activities, which are a crucial part of their overall development and complement formal learning, Welch (2016). The strategies discussed above were suggested by the participating teachers because they became familiar with how to facilitate leadership skills among young learners. Developing leadership skills in young learners will prepare learners to be responsible for their future, thus, enabling them to take up responsible positions in business, as well as in the academic, religious and political worlds.

Murphy (2011) proposes that leadership skills and capabilities only become evident in naturally occurring situations; for instance, such skills could reduce the crime rate as learners would have learned how to love and respect one another through their group tasks and extramural activities. Young learners are future leaders and teaching them leadership skills from an early age will prepare them to act responsibly and make good decisions now and in the future. This is in line with Barthold's (2014) argument that childhood serves as the most opportune time to instil leadership skills. The teaching of young children implies teaching the whole nation, as today's children are the leaders of tomorrow. It also helps learners to exhibit sound ethical standards and a degree of competence in dealing with cultural, personal and social matters of life. Inculcating leadership skills and moral behaviours in learners makes them more efficient and effective in activities of life (Ornstein et al., 2014).

The findings showed that teachers were able to participate in activities that allowed them to experience the use of the five leadership skills which were discussed in the study, therefore, critical thinking skills in

learners were stimulated by requiring learners, for example, to identify the leaders they admire and give a typology of the skills associated with such leaders. The young learners were also asked to list the names of five huge animals with their portraits on the bank notes of South Africa and to discuss the ones they consider the strongest and why. Northhouse (2013) established that teachers need to develop and instil leadership qualities in their learners during their classroom operations, however, it appeared that those leadership qualities seemed to differ from one teacher and school to others.

This study has delivered significant results on an assessment of the development of leadership skills as an essential strategy used by teachers to engage learners in activities during class and extramural activities; this process inspired learners to assume assigned functional roles. This is consistent with what had been found by Fox (2012) who concluded that FP teachers play a powerful role in influencing leadership development in learners, as they can either encourage, support or discourage and ignore learners' leadership behaviours. Learners were able to solve problems through engaging in effective communication in teams and come up with final decisions.

Teachers need to be very passionate about developing leadership behaviours among learners in classrooms. In this regard, the DoE (2008) advocates that teachers as leaders must exhibit passion for commitment, trust, collaboration and achievement as they work with young learners. Participants in the study encouraged learners to practise what they learned in class in the form of homework and projects which they were to complete in leadership context. Overall, these findings are in accordance with Murphy (2011) who agreed that it is the best to start promoting leadership skills to young learners. Transformational leadership and integration of leadership styles essentially improve the teaching processes. Teachers with a moral value system lean more towards a transformational leadership style and teachers with a pragmatic value system lean more towards a participatory leadership style. The study shows that effective leadership can be provided by searching for correlations between the value systems and leadership styles.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found that strategies used to develop leadership skills have become a priority for the teachers, as these skills led learners to focus more on their classroom activities. Furthermore, this development should take place at an early stage instead of attempting it later in their school years when harm may already have been done. The paper offers strategies to be adopted in the facilitation of leadership skills during classes and extramural activities, thus, the study concluded that the integrated transformational leadership style in a school context enables teachers to facilitate leadership skills for young learners. When young learners develop and assume leadership roles, it gives evidence that learners can become transformational leaders. The five leadership skills highlighted in this study were inculcated in young learners by their teachers who adopted various strategies from the capacity-training programme and the focus-group discussion. This research has identified several leadership skills for a learner, such as being a leader in class group discussion, and being a reporter of outcomes from group meetings; these might be developed in young learners in the Foundation Phase. Reflection on the implementation of participatory-action research is that it improves practice and the creation of knowledge in social groups; it created new ways of working, interaction and knowledge. PAR created knowledge (leadership qualities) that was useful and meaningful to the participants; the process also helped the researchers, to 'close the gaps' by implementing appropriate strategies.

Recommendation

FP teachers should be encouraged to employ teaching strategies that will enhance the development of leadership skills for their learners. The study showed that learners' performance was improved by leadership strategies adopted by the FP teachers during classes and extramural activities. I, therefore,

recommend that task-based activities - classroom discussions, sports, and traditional dance should be actively employed to enhance the development of leadership skills in young learners.

Areas for further research

More research is needed to determine how to facilitate the development of leadership qualities in learners from Grade 4 through to 12. The results would determine if the capacity-building strategies used in this study in Grade 3 can be applied to other grades. Teacher training courses and workshops should include facilitation and support for the improvement of young learners' leadership abilities.

REFERENCES

Barthold, S.K. (2014) *The Emergence of Leadership in Young Learners: The Role of Play, Athletics and School*. Senior Theses Claremont: McKenna College, http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc-theses/859 (Accessed 18 June 2015).

Bass, B. & Stogdill, R. (1990) *Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership*. 1st ed. New York: Free Press.

Bass, B.M. & Bass, R. (2008) *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*. 4th ed. New York, NY: Free Press.

Bush, T. (2011) *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*. 4th ed. London: Sage.

Cahill, H., Beadle, S., Farrelly, A., Forster, R. & Smith, K. (2014) Building resilience in children and young people. *Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne*, pp.16-21 (Accessed 26 December 2020).

Charmaz, K. (2000) Grounded Theory, Objectivist and Constructivist Methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Ed.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Carmichael, S. (2016) *Five Student Leadership Qualities to Practice in your Classroom*. https://www.classcraft.com/blog/features/5-student-leadership qualities/ (Accessed: 27 December 2020).

Cherry, K. (2021) The Concrete Operational Stage of Cognitive Development. https://www.verywellmind.com/concrete-operational-stage-of-cognitive-development-2795458 (Accessed: 09 January 2021).

Creswell, J.W. 2013. Research Design: *Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods*. 4th ed. Thousand Oak: Sage Publication.

Denmark, V. (2012) Transformational Leadership - a matter of Perspective: a Behaviorial Approach. *Journal of Management Review* 25(2) pp.237-248.

Department of Basic Education (DBE). (2011) *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)*. Government Printing: Pretoria.

Department of Education (DoE). (2008) *Foundations for Learning. Government Gazette, 513:2008*. Government Printing: Pretoria.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2012) *Creating a Comprehensive System for Evaluating and Supporting Effective Teaching*. Stanford, CA. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (On-line). http://edpolicy.stanford-edu/sites/default/files/publications/.../pdf (Accessed 9 July 2018).

Education World. (2021) *Strategies for Teaching Students Leadership Skills*. https://www.educationworld.com/tips-teaching-students-become-tomorrow%E2%80%99s-leaders (Accessed 5 February 2021).

Erikson, E. (1959) *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York: Norton.

Essays, UK. (2015) *Positivist and Interpretive Paradigms*. https://www.ukessays.com/essays/education/two-main-paradigms-namely-positivist-and-interpretive-education-essay.php (Accessed 14 April 2018).

Fox, D.L. (2012) Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership in Young Learners. University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations. Scholar Works: UNO. http://scholarworks.uno.edu/td (Accessed 22 February 2019).

Fulton, J. (2019) *How to teach leadership skills to your students*. https://www.classcraft.com/blog/how-to-teach-leadership-skills-to-your-students (Accessed: 16 February 2021).

Gregory S.C. & Hine, G.S. (2013) The Importance of Action Research in Teacher Education Programs. *Issues in Educational Research* 23(2) pp.151-163.

Hay, I. & Dempster, N. (2004) Student Leadership Development through General Classroom Activities. *Language and Special Education* 2(1) pp.141-150.

Helmrich, B. (2015) *Ways to Define Leadership. Business News Daily*, 19 June. http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/3647-leadership-definition.html (Accessed 17 February 2019).

IQualify UK. (2020) *Why is it important to identify and meet individual learner needs when teaching*? https://www.iqualifyuk.com/library/teacher-training-section/why-is-it-important-to-identify-and-meet-individual-learner-needs-when-teaching (Accessed 16 February 2021).

James, E.A., Milenkiewicz, M.T. & Bucknam, A. (2008) *Participatory Action Research for Educational Leadership: Using Data-Driven Decision Making to Improve Schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Karcher, M.J. & Kristine, J. (2007) *Erik and Joan Erikson's Approach to Human Development in Counseling*. Bennehttp://michaelkarcher.com/School_connectedness_files/Karcher_ 08_EriksonsCH07.pdf (Accessed 11 February 2018).

Korstjens, I. & Moser, A. (2018) Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice* 24(1) pp.120-124.

Leithwood, K., Begley, P.T. & Cousins, J.B. (1994) *Developing Expert Leadership for Future Schools*. London: Falmer.

Manktelow, J. (2014) *The Leadership Process Model: Leadership Qualities from Mind Tools Team*. http://www.mindtools.com/page/articlel leadership (Accessed 23 February 2019).

Mahanta, P. (2019) Five effective teaching strategies to help students in school. https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/5-effective-teaching-strategies-to-help-your-students-in-school/ (Accessed: 20 February 2021).

Mayan, M.J. (2001) *An Introduction to Qualitative Methods: A Training Module for Students and Professionals*. Alberta: University of Alberta Press

Mills College. (2020) *How to Be a Transformational Leader in Education*. Mills School of Education. Oakland. https://online.mills.edu/blog/transformational-leadership-in-education (Accessed 10 February 2019).

Mooney, C.G. (2000) *Theories of Childhood: An Introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erickson, Piaget and Vygotsky*. St Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.

Morales, M.P.E. (2016) Participatory action research (par) cum action research in teacher professional development: A literature review. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science* 2(1) pp. 56-165.

Muhdi, M. (2019) Framework for Implementation of Education Policy in the Perspective of Education Management in Indonesia. *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 7(12) pp.2717-2728.

Mulovhedzi, S.A. (2017) *Facilitating the development of leadership qualities in the Foundation Phase*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Mulovhedzi, S.A. & Mudzielwana, N.P. (2016) Importance of teaching leadership skills in the foundation phase. *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 13(2) pp.202-207.

Murphy, S.E. (2011) *Providing a Foundation for Leadership Development. Series in Applied Psychology: Early Development and Leadership – Building the Next Generation of Leaders*. New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.

Murray, J. (2014) *Types of Leadership Style: An Essential Guide*. Legacee. Available at http://www.books.google.co.za/books? (Accessed 27 June 2015).

Nieuwenhuis, J. (2007) Qualitative Research Designs and Data Gathering Techniques. In *First steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Northhouse, P.G. (2013) *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 7th ed. Western Michigan University. Michigan: Sage.

Ornstein, A.C., Levine, D.U., Gutek, G.L. & Vocke, D.E. (2014) *Foundations of Education*. 12th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Patel, S. (2015) *The Research Paradigm – Methodology, Epistemology and Ontology – Explained in Simple Language*. http://salmapatel.co.uk/academia/the-research-paradigmmethodology-epistemology-and-ontology-explained-in-simple-language (Accessed 28 December 2020).

Paterson, J. (2020) Strategies for Teaching Students Leadership Skills. https://www.educationworld.com/tips-teaching-students-become-tomorrow%E2%80%99s-leaders/ (Accessed 15 January 2021).

Penn, S.E. (2012) *Building Leadership Skills in Young Learners*. Somerset Country, http://agsci.psu.edu (Accessed 3 March 2015).

Randstad Solution. (2019) *Developing leadership skills in teaching*, https://www.randstad.co.uk/career-advice/job-skills/developing-leadership-skills-teaching (Accessed 15 June 2019).

Room 241 Team. (2013) *Five School Leadership Skills Every Teacher Possesses*. https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/leaders-link/5-school-leadership-skills-every-teacher-possess (Accessed 17 March 2017).

Rule, P. & Vaughn, J. (2011) *Your Guide to Case Study Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Welch, D., Grossaint, K., Reid, K. & Walker, C. (2016) Strengths-based Leadership Development: Insights from Expert Coaches. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 66(1) p.31. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/cpb0000002 (Accessed 20 March 2021).

Enriching the professional identity of early childhood development teachers through mentorship[1]

Keshni Bipath, University of Pretoria, South Africa[2]

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to highlight three professional identity tensions that are experienced by beginning teachers: the change in role from student to teacher; conflicts between expectations and realities of mentor support given to students (mentees), and contradictory notions of learning to teach. Research shows that Early Childhood Development (ECD) is losing many highly qualified teachers due to the perceived lack of proper mentorship in developing professional identity. This article outlines a study to explore the mentoring needs of ECD teachers in developing a positive professional identity. Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) as a data collection method, which relied heavily on interpretivism as epistemology was conducted. The research sample consisted of all fourth year (final-year) undergraduate BEd students (n=713), who had to attend the compulsory teaching-practice component of the teacher training programme for the first time during the second and third quarters of the academic year. The BEd (Foundation Phase) students' completed matrices (maps) were transcribed, coded and categorised through thematic analysis. As a result, two dimensions of the participants' identity construction emerged: (1) Positive Role Modelling and (2) Missed Opportunities. It is suggested that mentor training, as well as scheduled talk-time and reflection opportunities between the mentors and mentees could transform the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) landscape and enrich the professional identity of Early Childhood Education teachers.

Keywords: early Childhood Education teachers, mentoring, professional identity, teacher education programme

INTRODUCTION

It is important that universities pay serious attention to tensions such as helplessness, frustration and anger which are related to beginning teachers' professional identity during Work Integrated Learning (WIL). Three professional identity tensions that are experienced by beginning teachers are the change in role from student to teacher; conflicts between expectations and realities of mentor support given to students (mentees), and contradictory notions of learning to teach (Pillen; Beijaard & den Brok, 2013). There has been an increase in the number of studies conducted on teacher professional identity (Al-Khatib & Lash, 2017). However, very few studies have been done with the early childhood development (ECD)

1 Date of submission 22 July 2020
Date of review outcome: 15 December 2020
Date of acceptance 17 March 2021

2 ORCID: 0000-0003-0588-9905

teachers, especially student teachers in this field (Thomas, 2012). The battle for the appreciation of the professional status of early childhood education teachers has been a challenge. The lack of achieving common qualifications, unqualified teachers, low pay, and poor public understanding that the work of early childhood practitioners is wasting time through play, have led to instabilities surrounding professional identity (Bipath & Joubert, 2016). This gap in research exists despite the growing demand for teachers at this level. Early childhood education teachers are faced with a number of challenges; among them is lack of professional identity and the mentorship needed to develop such an identity (Botha & Onwu, 2013).

Many countries are striving to improve the qualifications of teachers in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) phase. Such momentum is aimed at producing better equipped ECD teachers (Gibson, 2015), who are able to facilitate the holistic development of young children. Commencement of teaching is a particular and compound stage of teacher identity development (Avalos, 2011). Research shows that ECD is losing many highly qualified teachers (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009), at times due to the perceived lack of professional identity mentoring (amongst other factors).

This article outlines a study to explore the mentoring needs of ECD teachers in developing a positive professional identity. Nurturing of the ECD teachers' identity alone is not sufficient; it is through mentoring that desired change in the ECD teachers' professional identity will be accomplished. The process of mentoring teacher identity begins during the years student teachers spend in teacher training institutions and lasts for a lifetime (Osgood, 2006). I argue further that the sustainability of ECD teachers' professional identities relies on the continuation of mentoring by schools (Urban, 2015) and for this reason, I illuminate how effective mentoring enriches the professional identity of early childhood education teachers during WIL.

The next section provides a brief overview of developing professional identity; training mentors for effective professional identity development; mentoring to develop professional identity and the influence of mentoring on ECD.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While teacher professional identity does not develop without being nurtured, the questions raised are how then should such nurturing, and mentoring be done? Fraser (2018: 7) discovered that student teachers complained about their mentor lecturer interactions, and criticised 'the absence of moral and spiritual support, lack of involvement and poor communication styles'. Bouwer, Venketsamy and Bipath (2021: 28) suggest that 'collaborative, comprehensive and critically constructive discussions should be held by mentor lecturers after lessons are taught during WIL'. This could perhaps assist student teachers in moulding their professional identity.

ECD teacher professional identity entails 'exploring, understanding and finding one's own style in teaching' (Abongdia, Foncha & Dakada, 2015: 495). Professional identity is influenced by one's past, present and future experiences in relation to how they are viewed by those around them. Professional identity is 'an intricate and tangled web of influences and imprints rooted in personal and professional life experiences', says Bukor (2015: 306). He argues that professional identity reflects the values and beliefs of all the interrelationships and connections that human beings experience. This includes the professional, educational, and pedagogical aspects of being a teacher. Jackson (2017: 15) considers

> professional identity as a complex phenomenon spanning awareness of and connection with the skills, qualities, behaviours, values, and standards of a student's chosen profession, as well as one's understanding of professional self in relation to the broader general self.

Societal expectations, field placements during their pre-service course as well as previous experiences of teachers and teaching has moulded the professional identity (Beltman et al., 2015). Friedman (2004: 312) describes the 'shattered dreams' that teachers experience as they journey between the potentially conflicting worlds of expectations and reality. The tensions they experience cause teachers to resign after a few years, as they realise that teaching is regarded as a low status job.

The future of the profession rests on our ability to develop new… methods to help individuals cope with the new organisation of work that is becoming increasingly less predictable, regulated, stable, and orderly (Savickas: 2019: n.p.).

Developing professional identity

At the start of the profession, it is essential to carve a strong, coherent teacher identity in beginning teachers. This is related to teacher retention, resilience and effectiveness (Mansfield, Beltman & Price, 2014). Boydell (1986) alerted us to the three main role players in the WIL relationship: namely, the student teacher, the mentor lecturer and the mentor teacher. Understanding how mentee teachers' professional identity develops during the WIL in teacher education programmes will allow mentor lecturers and mentor teachers to formulate guidelines to prepare mentee teachers for the reality of teaching. Mentee teachers should this be enlightened on how to engage in 'a productive process of constructing their professional identities' (Izadinia, 2013: 712).

Training mentors for effective professional identity development

A variety of tasks and tools as well as personal and contextual factors come into play for effective mentoring. Beutel and Spooner-Lane (2009) point out the importance of training mentors for their roles. The University of Tampere (Finland) ensures that mentor training occurs before mentor teachers are tasked with mentoring. Without the training, they are not permitted to mentor students.

Preschool teacher training involves lectures, seminars, small group exercises, and practicums in a preschool. In Finland, each practicum has different goals. The ethics and professional identity of the preschool teacher, as well as observing the learning environment and the children from the focus of the first practicum. The pedagogy and curriculum work of ECD is part of the second practicum. The holistic responsibility in the preschool teachers' work, including cooperation with the preschool's multi-professional team and the children's parents is realised in the third practicum. This practicum also allows the students to investigate the development process in the preschool. It is the responsibility of the university lecturer (mentor lecturer) and a preschool teacher (mentor teacher) to guide practicums.

Student teachers (mentees) develop professionally during the three practicums. A mentee's first years of practice is well documented, as the growth and development is referred to during the later practicums. The first year is regarded as crucial as this is where the construction process of professional identity begins, and students grow into their future roles as teachers. Moreover, Pendergast, Garvis and Keogh (2011) state that students are given an opportunity to face the reality of a teacher's role during these practicums. Trained and motivated mentors are thus essential in the development of a mentees' professional identity (Balduzzi & Lazzarri, 2015; Leshem, 2012; Ukkonen-Mikkola & Turtiainen, 2016).

The mentor is looked upon as an example of a professional and a role model (Johnson, 2007). In Russell and Russell's (2011) study, mentors also viewed themselves as guides and individuals offering resources. These roles have an impact on the professional identity development of the mentee. A good relationship with the mentor supports the student's professional identity construction (Johnson, 2007). Mentorship and professional identity is studied more in the school context (Heikkinen, Jokinen & Tynjälä, 2012).

Mentoring to develop professional identity

Professional identity (PI) consists of four characteristics (Al-Khatiba & Lash, 2017). PI depends on an individual's experiences. It is influenced by the interaction of an individual and their surroundings. The involvement between the mentors and mentees themselves is of importance in the development of their professional identity.

Mentoring to develop professional identity among ECD teachers is essential for beginning teachers (Rhodes, 2006). Rhodes (2006) posits that though professional identity is developed by one's interaction with families and cultures, interaction with colleagues in the workplace is prominent. Encounters teachers have with their managers on a day-to-day basis are likely to form part of professional identity mentoring. Professional identity mentoring, according to Thomas (2012), is a process that involves its construction and reconstruction. He reiterates that mentoring professional identity is not a once-off experience, but rather a process that lasts a lifetime. Langford (2007) states that acknowledgement of the importance of diverse prerequisites is central to the construction and reconstruction of early childhood education teacher identities.

Teachers with low self-esteem could be bound to experience lack of professional identity, hence the significance of mentorship. Teacher development happens throughout one's teaching career, indicating the need for developing professional identity in schools. In this light, Moloney (2010) argues that in ECD, professional identity is awkward due to lack of obligatory training prerequisites.

The influence of mentoring on ECD

The battle for the appreciation of the professional status of early childhood has been unending and challenging in Australia as elsewhere. Underqualified and unqualified practitioners, very low wages and poor public opinions that the job of an early childhood practitioner is one of babysitting and play rather than work have led to uncertainties surrounding professional identity. A positive professional identity has the prospective to reduce attrition rates for novice ECD teachers (Cattley, 2007), who make up the majority of those who resign from the profession (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001). Teacher identity is related to how teachers teach and their growth as professionals, and it influences plans to leave the profession (Schepens et al., 2009).

Langford (2007) views professional identity as the result of a cultural pact, interference, blending and disjuncture. The extent to which a teacher is valued and respected by society impacts on her professional identity. Teachers are influenced by their cultures, and this forms a significant aspect of professional identity. Culture impacts on our way of doing things in life, so it is the situation with the professional identity of ECD teachers. Mentoring of teachers during WIL can emancipate ECD teachers from aspects of culture that lead to devaluing and undermining of their professional identity.

Mentors in schools need to have an interest in school activity and have adequate knowledge and skills regarding the curriculum and how to execute it, (Kupila, Ukkonen-Mikkola & Rantala, 2017). They hold that not mentored, teachers might be frustrated, unstimulated and non-participative in terms of integration into a variety of school activities. Fraser's (2018: 9) study concurs with this statement when he quotes a comment from a 4th year student teacher after a mentoring experience:

> We have learnt to think outside the box. We have learnt to work with one another, which will help us in the workplace in order to be able to work with other teachers…

An ECD teacher should be able to work collaboratively with other teachers. Such a level of teamwork and support requires influencing professional identity of teachers by the school managers. Professional

identity development gives teachers an opportunity to merge theory with practice in their classes. In a study conducted by Botha and Onwu (2013: 7), the findings revealed that the novice teachers who were mentored during their teaching in terms of relating theory to practice at the workplace, experienced 'positive mediating influences that grew and sustained their identity formation'.

The purpose of this study was to determine the mentoring needs of student teachers and the mentoring responsibilities of the mentor lecturers and teachers in order to enrich the professional identity of early childhood development teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Paradigm

The qualitative design of the study, with specific reference to PRA school-based activities, relied heavily on interpretivism as epistemology. The framework that provided the structure to the study lay vested in Engeström's Activity Theory. This framework represented the broad base of teaching practice which should be regarded as the main activity or event defining WIL. It embraced WIL as 'unit of analysis' capturing the experiences of student teachers over period of time. In the context of this study, mentorship during WIL played a sound instrumental role.

Participatory Reflection and Action (PRA) as Data Collection Method

The decision to use PRA as the research method was built on two premises. The first premise ensured the emancipatory and empowering nature of participatory research as data collection strategy. Von Maltzahn and van der Riet (2006: 110) refer to the 'strong social justice orientation' of participatory research, as well as the value of participatory research to construct knowledge within a particular social context. The second premise sought security in addressing emerging profession-related challenges and problems as they emerge. When we decided to use PRA, we were guided by Von Maltzahn and van der Riet's (2006: 110) observation that it 'gives people an opportunity to articulate what they feel the problems are and to generate relevant solutions'. This became the cornerstone of PRA as a data collection and capacity building strategy. I decided on a strategy that would allow participants to reflect on the development of their professional identities, report on emerging challenges, and also to allow them to introduce measures that could strengthen areas of concern. Ferreira and Ebersöhn (2012) explain that PRA is built on three premises, namely, the participants working in the field are not experts, those local problems require local solutions, and the actions to be taken in solving these problems, would result in empowerment.

Research Sample

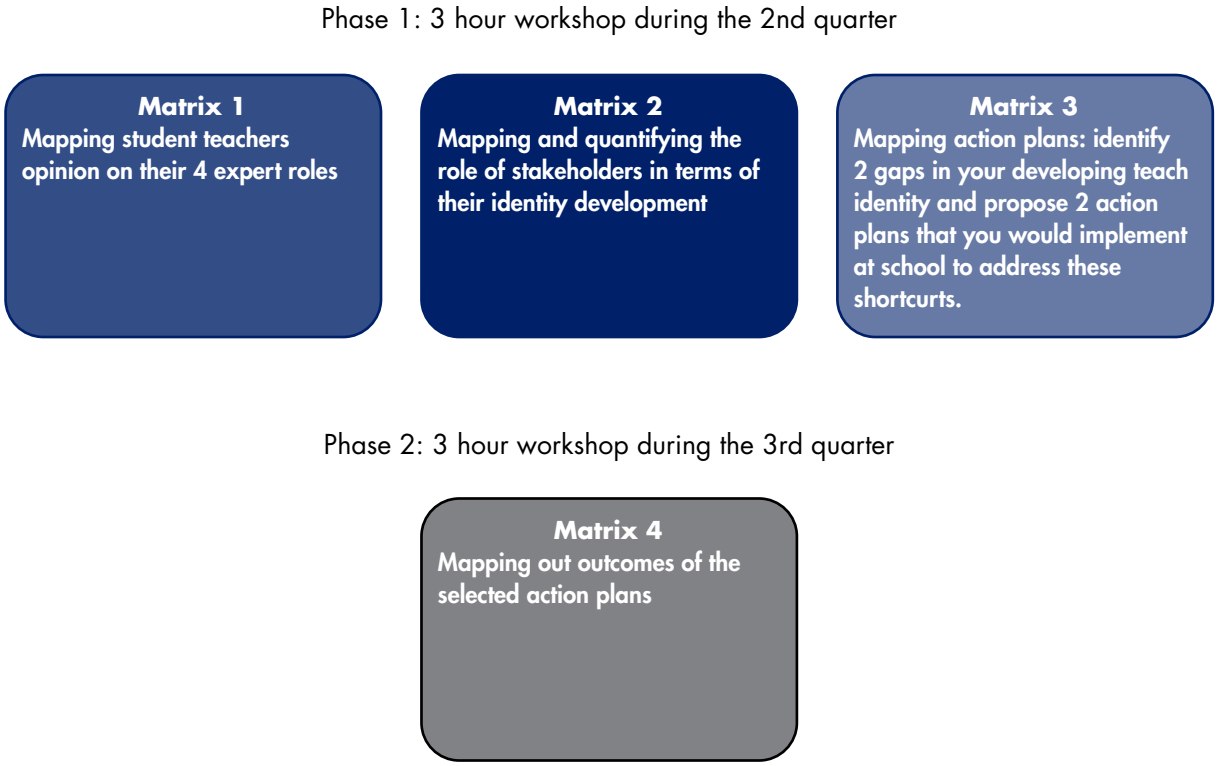
The research sample consisted of all University of Pretoria fourth year (final year) undergraduate BEd students (n=713) who had to attend the compulsory WIL component of the teacher training programme for the first time during the second and third quarters of the 2015 academic year. What made this intake unique is the fact that it was the participants' first school visit in four years and many students thought this to be extremely challenging and uncertain. The majority of the participants (79%) were female, while 21% of the sample were male. The selected sample for this study included all fourth-year students enrolled for the foundation phase (n=100).

Data collection method

Student teachers attended the first three-hour workshop on campus one month into WIL followed by a second workshop at the end of their three-month WIL period. At the workshops, they formed groups of 10 according to their specialisations and participated in the first PRA data collection exercises. Hence 10 groups of 10 (n=100) foundation phase mentees' matrices were used as data for this article. Figure 1 describes the main tasks of the data capturing instruments or matrixes. Matrix 2 was mostly used for the

capturing of data for this article. A two-phased data collection approach which occurred during the 2nd quarter and 3rd quarter of the year follows:

Figure 1: Data collection procedure outline and the data instrument used



Data analysis procedure

Thematic analysis was used to make sense of the data. Matrix 2 used for this article required students to rank and state the importance of mentors to the development of their professional identities. This specific dimension of identity coincided well with so-called professional identity defined by Day, Elliot and Kington (2005: 263) as the expectations of a 'good teacher' as well as the 'educational ideals' of the teacher. The completed matrices were transcribed, and the collected data coded classified and categorised according to themes. Member checking was done during the 2nd phase of the data collection which occurred after three months.

Ethics

Managing the Research Process prior to the commencement of the PRA workshops and the required permission to conduct the study was sought from faculty management as well as from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education of the university. Student teachers were informed about the workshop date and times by mail and short text messages. Participants were briefed on the purpose of the workshop prior to the commencement of each workshop. They gave their written consent before participating in the workshop.

FINDINGS

Two dimensions of the students' experiences that contributed to their identity building emerged for consideration; (1) Positive Role Modelling and (2) Missed Opportunities.

Positive Role Modelling

Group 1 complimented their mentor teacher for 'changing their perspectives of life skills' and for 'giving them positive feedback regarding their teaching' and showing them how to change 'bad situations into good ones'. Group 2 was positive regarding the advice about improvement of teaching that was given to her from the mentor teacher.

> They always encourage us to do better and take charge of our lives.

Group 3 described their experience of their mentor teacher as

> They were transparent, did not hide the challenges. They hinted on things that work and do not work in school and teaching in the day we are living in. They taught us how to focus on different types of learners, not just focus on the gifted ones only.

Group 4 described their mentor teacher as a 'second parent'. They elaborated:

> They were the first role models we were ever exposed to. They helped us with being respectful and most disciplined. They helped and motivated us to do better and believe in ourselves and they build our knowledge and created a solid foundation for us.

Group 5 mentioned their positive experience as

> They involved us more, encouraged us to be more open about our past struggles and victories. They encouraged us and gave us tips and ideas.

Group 6 praised their mentor teacher by saying

> …they provided helpful guidelines to teach, demonstrated effective administrative strategies, gave us tips on dealing with troublesome learners, taught us different methods of teaching and offered realistic examples and expectations of actually being a teacher.

Group 7 said that their mentor teachers

> gave us guidance, tips, moral support, feedback and were our educators too.

Group 8 described their experiences as follows:

> …they exposed us to the real demand of teaching that includes setting of question papers, and they gave us guidance in lesson preparation and other admin issues.

Students in Group 8 valued the mentor lecturer as the greatest contributor to their positive identity. They said:

> My mentor lecturer is playing a significant role that is contributing to shaping our teacher identity. She is a doctor and well educated. She advised me well and was the stamp of approval in praising me for choosing the best career. She gave me 'rare high marks' which showed her framing our identity in a positive, reflective manner.

This statement shows that the mentor lecturer can make a difference to students in their final year. However, it could be that the marks given by the mentor lecturer was the reason for this positive comment by this group. Group 9 also praised the mentor lecturer as follows:

> They motivated us through their way in which they present themselves and inspired us through their passion for education.

Thus, role modelling and praise for effort proved an important factor in developing a positive professional identity.

Missed Opportunities

Missed opportunities in developing professional identities amongst student teachers was prevalent in the findings. Groups 9 and 10 complained about their mentor teachers:

> The mentor teachers take advantage and overload us with their work

and

> Although our mentor teachers' characters motivate us as student teachers, they give us their work to do while they are sitting and chatting on phones.

The student teachers considered their mentor lecturer to have played the least significant role in their professional identity building. Group 1 recommended that

> We feel that it can be wise and very helpful if the mentor lecturers can visit at least 5 to 6 times to the schools, just for 'sit ins' in the student lessons to render motivational words before and after assessment.

Group 2 questioned

> Why hasn't the university taught/shaped us accordingly in some aspects?

They stated that the university could have

> focused more on practicals from the first year.

Clearly, this statement shows that these 10 students in this group realised the benefits of WIL but were wondering why teaching practice does not occur from the first year. Group 3 echoed the same sentiment stating that

> They should have made us do the practical part earlier, exposed us more to the real world and they should have designed modules to be more practical and focused on what is done in schools.

Group 4 saw the lack of preparation on the part of mentor lecturers who

> instead of guiding us on becoming teachers…they encouraged us to continue with our studies.

Perhaps this is due to some mentor lecturers not being in schools themselves and having adequate training as a schoolteacher before they became lecturers. Group 5 complained that instead of being helpful and supporting them, they 'emphasised weaknesses'. However, they mentioned that their mentor lecturers

> gave us positive criticism, appreciated and encouraged us.

Group 6 recommended that mentor lecturers

> must provide us with more practical opportunities and expectations should be realistic.

This group complained that theory was quite repetitive. Group 7 complained that their mentor lecturer was very disrespectful to them and showed a

> lack of communication, poor people skills, lacking expertise, inadequate knowledge and poor punctuality.

However, Group 10 complained about the lack of preparation by the mentor lecturer:

> He is not eager to shape me as a student teacher. During his first visit he did not assess my file. He did not fill page 9 of the reader of which he was supposed to fill.

The possible reason for this is that due to lecturers being so overloaded with tasks and research loads, the university hires outside people - previous teachers or retired teachers to assist in assessing the students. However, if the mentor lecturer is not trained by the university on how to shape the professional identity of students, this was an opportunity wasted.

So, it was clear that the mentees valued the input from their mentor teachers more than their mentor lecturers. Most students also ranked their mentor teachers' impact on their professional identity development higher than that of the mentor lecturer.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to investigate whether mentorship during WIL enriched the professional identity of ECD teachers. Unfortunately, the missed opportunities by the mentors proved to be challenges in enriching the professional identity development. Therefore, transformation efforts to improve the WIL experience needs to be implemented. The themes from the data highlighted the practical implications for enriching the mentorship of student teachers during WIL.

Train the mentor teacher and mentor lecturer

The two important mentors (mentor teacher and mentor lecturer) for the optimal development of a student teachers' professional identity, need to be trained. At universities, student teachers are assigned mentor teachers and mentor lecturers. These mentors are given manuals from the WIL office, on how to assess and support students. Contact sessions for training are provided for mentor lecturers; however, these are not compulsory. Furthermore, these mentor lecturers are assigned an average of 10 students, over and above their general workload. Perhaps, university lecturers find themselves inundated with postgraduate students as well as research activities that they do not have time to attend training sessions as mentor lecturers before going out for WIL assessments. Training sessions should be available online and should be compulsory for both mentor lecturers and teachers.

Unawareness of expectations from the mentor lecturers during WIL

The lack of mentor lecturer training regarding expectations from student teachers is clear from the negative responses from students on mentor lecturers. One group requested that mentor lecturers come more often, '5 to 6 times for sit ins' on teaching. This confirms that the students need to prove to lecturers that are converting theory to practice. Students seem to want to see their lecturers in their classrooms. Students expressed their discontent about being exposed to WIL very late in their teaching degree. Maybe exposure to schools in their first year through practical held in classrooms or having teaching schools linked to universities could prove beneficial.

Students enter their schools and listen and learn from their mentor teachers as these teachers will provide a final mark for their practice teaching. The mentor teachers sometimes take advantage of the students and

use them 'as markers for the work that they marked for the term' (communication from 4th year mentee). This practice should not be encouraged, and mentor teachers need to realise their importance as a role model for the mentees. They have the power to create unhappiness and demotivation in the mentee and this can severely impact their future careers. Universities need to warn mentor teachers to refrain from using their power over their mentees ruthlessly.

The importance of motivation and positive professional identity development

Group 9 showed how the mentor lecturer made a difference to their professional identity. The way their mentor lecturer

> presented themselves, inspired us through their passion for education

showed them that they had chosen the right profession. The students say that due to positive professional identity development and moulding, they felt confident that they were in the right profession and were going to make a difference in learner's lives.

Talk-time between mentor teacher and mentee teacher

Adequate time should be scheduled for the meet and greet (initial meeting) between mentor and mentee teacher. This relationship building activity is very important when establishing a cooperative, collaborative learning relationship. Establishing a trusting communication channel between mentors and mentees would allow each to share their experiences in a safe and trusting environment. Bouwer, Venketsamy and Bipath (2021 : 29) agree that safe learning spaces for students would 'ensure Grade R student teachers' experiences of WIL are positive for teaching and learning to occur'.

Development of Trust

The 'only vehicle on which the journey can be made is trust' (Sgroi, 1998: 26). By valuing each other's ideas and opinions and having an open commitment to in-depth discussions, collaborative expansion of ideas is possible. By working as a Community of Practice (COP) with the mentor teachers and lecturers, modelling and experimentation of lesson plans can occur. When mentors and mentees are paired, the mentee would begin to form ideas of how she or he needs to perform or behave as a teacher. Mentees are wanting to emulate good practices, and mentors therefore need to be aware that how they behave and what they believe is being scrutinised and this could make an indelible impression on the minds of the young teacher. Mentee teachers need to be well informed and encouraged to challenge currently held ideas. Explicit guidance is required from mentor teachers. This needs to be discussed in the first mentoring session. Adequate time is required to consider the deeper implications on a mentor –mentor partnership. Further time spent in stimulating discussion about teaching and learning is as important as time spent teaching and observing learners in classrooms.

Reflection opportunities between mentors and mentees

Reflections after every lesson taught or activity facilitated is an expectation of work-integrated placements. It is assumed that these reflections would refine their personal philosophies of teaching and learning. The students have their personal philosophies in their portfolio files. The mentor lecturer will need to spend time reading this and allowing time for the student to reflect on whether the lesson observed showed the characteristics of his philosophy as recorded. The students will also realise the importance of the reflections for his /her growth as a professional teacher and will pay more attention to planning and preparation of the portfolio file as this file becomes a teaching resource when he/she is a fully fledged teacher. It is hoped that mentees would develop reflections of lessons as a habit that they would take through in their daily practice as teachers.

Field and Field (1994) provide narratives where the student teachers have felt alienated and uncomfortable with their mentor teachers. These mentee teachers are afraid to divulge their negative feelings because of their fear of being judged by the school and mentor teachers. Compliance is seen as the 'safer' option, since open and deep discussions are sometimes not entertained. The mentee feels devalued and this leads to helplessness, and disenchantment with the job. Therefore, the mentor lecturer needs to ensure that reflection occurs in a safe space with respect for mentees and mentor teachers.

Reflection on one's own practices, experiences, perceptions and beliefs is a core activity for all teachers, pre-service and in-service, in schools and universities. The concepts of both teacher role and teacher identity are integral to create a zest for life-long learning in the 'becoming teacher' (Mayer, 1999). The 'intellectual dimension of expert practice is, for most teachers, reflection' (Mayer, 1999: n.p.). The reflections of their responsiveness and reciprocity in the classrooms with their learners, as well as the choice of the resources for stimulating the learner, needs to be discussed in an open and trusting way. By doing this student teachers begin to realise that he or she is responsible for quality teaching and thus would be more responsible when drawing up lesson plans and setting up learning environments for learner achievement.

Portfolio File as a tool for professional development

Student teacher portfolios are available, effective, and appropriate tools in documenting teacher growth and development and in promoting reflective, thoughtful practice. Mentors should be given clues on how to analyse portfolios in a professional way in order to develop students' professional identities positively. The mentee teacher needs to begin to take responsibility for his actions in the choice of resources, the context, as well as the cultural diversity of learners in the class. Positive teacher identity is promoted when mentees and mentors dedicate sufficient time to empowering mentee teachers to make their own decisions, learn through research in action and understand that the children in the class are reliant on their methods of teaching to learn optimally. Thus, the mentor teacher should promote a collegial relationship, based more on mentoring rather than supervision. This would enhance the capacity and identity of the mentees. They would feel empowered to make a difference to learning and thus feel a sense of pride in becoming a professional.

CONCLUSION

This article aimed to explore the mentorship opportunities and challenges of ECD teachers in developing a positive professional identity during WIL. Due to the problem of many teachers leaving the profession at an early stage, the importance of an excellent mentoring relationship between mentor teachers/ lecturers and mentees is essential for developing a strong professional identity. The findings of this study showed that positive role modelling and missed opportunities within a mentor–mentee relationship led to disenchantment and devalued professional identities. Higher Education Institutes will need to train their mentor lecturers and mentor teachers so that they realise their motivational role and the deep impression that they create in future careers of young teachers. Future training models for mentors need to be created where mentees and mentors from schools and higher educational institutions form new habits and work as communities of practices (COPs), providing a safe environment for mentee teachers to value their professional identity as ECD teachers and become life-long learners. Individuals in a COP share ideas and activities, as well as ways of communicating and acting in the profession (Morrell, 2003). Hawkins and Rogers (2016) discovered that working in a COP helped student teachers to develop professionally and that COPs can be customised to improve WIL experiences. Thus, if we are to transform the WIL landscape, mentors cannot only work vertically (top-down) with student teachers. It has become more urgent to work horizontally, understand problems and provide the space for students to interact and express themselves freely in COPs. This horizontal approach could embrace student teachers' professional identity and thus enrich the mentoring experiences of education graduates at higher educational institutes.

REFERENCES

Abongdia, J.A., Foncha, J.W. & Dakada, A. (2015) Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Identifying Learners with Learning Barriers: Toward Inclusive Education. International *Journal of Educational Science* 8(3) pp.493-501.

Al-Khatib, A.J. & Lash, M.J. (2017) Professional Identity of an Early Childhood Black Teacher in a Predominantly White School: a Case Study *Child Care in Practice* 23(3) pp.242-257.

Avalos, B. (2011) Teacher Professional Development in Teaching and Teacher Education over Ten Years. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27 pp.10-20, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.08.007

Balduzzi, L. & Lazzarri, A. (2015) Mentoring practices in workplace-based professional preparation: a critical analysis of policy developments in the Italian context. *Early Years: An International Research Journal* 35(2) pp.124-138, https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2015.1022513

Beltman, S., Glass, C., Dinham, J., Chalk, B. & Nguyen, B. (2015) Drawing identity: Beginning pre-service teachers' professional identity. *Issues in Educational Research*, 2015 25(3) pp.225-245.

Beutel, D. & Spooner-Lane, R. (2009) Building mentoring capabilities in experienced teachers. *The International Journal of Learning* 16 pp.351-360.

Bipath, K. & Joubert, I. (2016) The birth of a new qualification for ECD. *Mail and Guardian*. 27th May 2016.

Bouwer, M, Venketsamy, R. & Bipath, K. (2021) Remodelling Work-Integrated Learning experiences of Grade R student teachers. *South African Journal of Higher Education* 35(5).

Botha, M. & Onwu, G. (2013) Beginning teachers' professional identity formation in early science mathematics and technology teaching: What develops? *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* 15(3) pp.3-19.

Boydell, D. (1986) Issues in teaching practice supervision research: A methodological approach in motion. *Historical Social Research* 37(4) pp.191-222.

Bukor, E. (2015) Exploring teacher identity from a holistic perspective: reconstructing and reconnecting personal and professional selves. *Teachers and Teaching* 21(3) pp.305-327, doi:10.1080/13540602.2014.953818

Cattley, G. (2007) Emergence of professional identity for the pre-service teacher. *International Education Journal* 8(2) pp.337-347.

Day, C., Elliot, B. & Kington, A. (2005) Reform, standards and teacher identity: Challenges of sustaining commitment. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 2 pp.563-577, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.03.001

Fantilli, R. & McDougall, D. (2009) A study of novice teachers: Challenges and supports in the first years. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 25 pp.814-825, doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.021

Ferreira, R. & Ebersohn, L. (2012) *Partnering for Resilience*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Field, B. & Field, T. (1994) *Teachers as mentors: a practical guide*. London: The Falmer Press.

Fraser, W.J. (2018) Filling the gaps and expanding spaces – voices of student teachers on their developing teacher identity. *South African Journal of Education* 38(2) pp1-11.

Friedman, I.A. (2004) Directions in teacher training for low-burnout teaching. In E. Frydenberg (Ed.) *Thriving, surviving, or going under: Coping with everyday lives*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.

Gibson, M. (2015) Leadership for Creating Cultures of Sustainability. In J. Davis (Ed.) *Young Children and the Environment. Early Education for Sustainability*. Melbourne: Cambridge Press.

Hawkins, S. & Rogers, M. (2016) Tools for reflection: Video-based reflection within a preservice community of practice. *Journal of Science Teacher Education* 27(4) pp.415-437.

Heikkinen, H.L.T., Jokinen, H. & Tynjälä, P. (2012) Teacher education and development as lifelong and lifewide learning. In H.L.T. Heikkinen, H. Jokinen, & P. Tynjälä (Eds.) *Peer-group mentoring for teacher development* pp.3-30. Abingdon, OX: Routledge.

Izadinia, M. (2013) A review of research on student teachers' professional identity. *British Educational Research Journal* 39(4) pp.694-713, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2012.679614

Jackson, D. (2017) Developing pre-professional identity in undergraduates through work-integrated learning. *Higher Education* 74, doi:10.1007/s10734-016-0080-2

Johnson, W. B. (2007) *On being a mentor. A guide for higher education faculty*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kupila, P., Ukkonen-Mikkola, T. & Rantala, K. (2017) Interpretations of Mentoring during Early Childhood Education Mentor Training. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 42(10) http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2017v42n10.3

Langford, R. (2007) Who is a Good Early Childhood Educator? A Critical Study of Differences within a Universal Professional Identity in Early Childhood Education Preparation Programs. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* 28(4) pp.333-352, doi:10.1080/10901020701686609

Leshem, S. (2012) The many faces of mentor-mentee relationships in a pre-service teacher education programme. *Creative Education* 3(4) pp.413-421, https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2012.34065

Mansfield, C.F., Beltman, S. & Price, A. (2014) 'I'm coming back again!' The resilience process of early career teachers. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 20(5) pp.547-567, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2014.937958

Mayer, D. (1999) *Building teaching identities: implications for pre-service teacher education*. Paper presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education, Melbourne.

Malony, M. (2010) Professional identity in Early Childhood Care and Education: Perspectives of pre-school and infant teachers. *Irish Educational Studies* June 2010 29(2) pp.167-187, doi:10.1080/03323311003779068.

Morrell, E. (2003) Legitimate peripheral participation as professional development: Lessons from a summer research seminar. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 30(2) pp.89-99.

Osgood, J. (2006) Deconstructing Professionalism in Early Childhood Education: Resisting the Regulatory Gaze. *Contemporary issues in early childhood 7*(1) pp.5-14.

Pendergast, D., Garvis, S. & Keogh, J. (2011) Pre-service student-teacher self-efficacy beliefs: An insight into the making of teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 36(12) pp.46-58, https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2011v36n12.6

Pillen, M., Beijaard, D. & den Brok, P. (2013) Tensions in beginning teachers' professional identity development, accompanying feelings and coping strategies. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 36(3) pp 240-260, doi:10.1080/02619768.2012.696192

Rhodes, C. (2006) The impact of leadership and management on the construction of professional identity in school learning mentors. *Education Studies* 32(2) pp.157-169.

Russell, M. L. & Russell, J. A. (2011) Mentoring relationships: Cooperating teachers' perspectives on mentoring student interns. *Professional Educator 35*(1) pp.16-36.

Savickas, M.L. (2019, September). *Designing a self and constructing a career in post-traditional societies*. Keynote address at the 43rd International Association for Education and Vocational Guidance Conference, Bratislava, Slovakia.

Sgroi, A. (1998) Teaching learning partnerships in the arts. In I.M. Saltiel, A. Sgroi & R.G. Brockett (Eds.) *The power and potential of collaborative learning partnerships* San Francisco: CA, Jossey-Bass.

Schepens, A., Aelterman, A., Vlerick, P. & Vlerick, A. (2009) Student teachers' professional identity formation: Between being born as a teacher and becoming one. *Educational Studies* 35(4) pp.361-378 doi:10.1080/03055690802648317

Thomas, L. (2012) New possibilities in thinking, speaking and doing: Early childhood teachers' professional identity constructions and ethics. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood* 37(3) pp.87-95.

Ukkonen-Mikkola, T. & Turtiainen, H. (2016) Learning at work in the boundary space of education and working life [*Työssäoppiminen koulutuksen ja työelämän rajavyöhykkeellä*]. *Journal of Early Childhood Education Research* 5(1) pp.44-68.

Urban, M. (2015) From 'closing the gap' to an ethics of affirmation. Reconceptualising the role of early childhood services in times of certainty. *European Journal of Education* 50(3) pp.293-306, https://doi/10.1111/ejed.12131

Von Maltzahn, R. & Van der Riet, M. (2006) A critical reflection on participatory methods as an alternative mode of enquiry. *New Voices in Psychology* 2(1) pp.108-128.

A case study on the advantages and disadvantages of using Blackboard Collaborate in the Health Sciences Faculty at the University of the Free State[1]

Mojaesi Violet Phejane, University of the Free State, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Using a case study approach, this paper aims to explore the advantages and disadvantages of using Blackboard Collaborate as a tool for achieving increased access to Online education and training. The Health Sciences Faculty at a South African university uses methods of open education practices through Blackboard Collaborate for students in the Free State and across South Africa as well as internationally. The qualitative interpretive paradigm with descriptive research methods was used with seven lecturers and personnel interviewed on the effectiveness of this tool in supporting students' online learning, backed by the Constructivist Learning theory. The use of Blackboard Collaborate effectively assists students who work and cannot attend classes to gain access to information through recorded videos and attending seminars online. Student grades improved in one of the modules: Interprofessional Education (NVER 4518/IPE), which relied on the use of Blackboard Collaborate. Findings show an improvement in student engagement in modules like MBchB_1-5 through the extensive use of Blackboard Collaborate, for not only delivering lessons but also in relaying essential messages. Using Blackboard Collaborate does not only help improve student grades but also opens possibilities of increased access to education and training opportunities. Blackboard Collaborate is used for multiple educational reasons such as broadcasting seminars, Departmental meetings, classes, first-year welcoming into the university as well as hosting tutorials online in aiding student access and success. Recommendations include advantages and disadvantages of using Blackboard Collaborate, feedback on the experiences and improvements in using this online teaching and learning teaching tool to achieve sustainable Open Education practices successfully.

Keywords: learning management system (LMS), Blackboard Collaborate, Open Education, technology

INTRODUCTION

Online learning is a subset of distance education that has always been concerned with the arrangement of access to educational experiences that is more flexible in time and space than campus-based education (Anderson, 2011; Keengwe & Kidd, 2010). One of the goals in higher education in South Africa is to encourage students to be actively involved in their learning (Department of Higher Education and Training, 1997). The internet has become an integral part of higher education instruction. Of the new technological applications to teaching and learning, the most commonly used application is the Learning Management

1 Date of submission: 16 March 2020
Date of review outcome: 14 January 2021
Date of acceptance: 13 August 2021

System (LMS). According to People Fluent Learning, an LMS is a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, and delivery of educational courses, training programmes, or learning and development programmes (Jordaan, 2015). The concept of an LMS emerged directly from e-learning, and the concept was intended to provide a set of tools that support an inquiry- and discovery-based approach to online learning (Eiffelcorp, 2019).

Various LMSs are used in higher education institutions such as Sakai, Moodle and Blackboard Collaborate. Blackboard Collaborate is the LMS used at the University of the Free State (UFS) and it has multiple tools, which can be used for delivering lessons, and supporting online learning. Blackboard Collaborate is an online video conferencing software that is available in every registered module on Blackboard. This tool enables lecturers to implement lessons and activities from multiple locations. Blackboard Collaborate allows instructors to host remote, synchronous sessions in a Blackboard course.

According to Elsamanoudy, Fayz and Hassanien (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has affected education systems worldwide, causing the suspension of school and university activities, and recommendations for social distancing and self-isolation as measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. During the critical period of medical school education during the pandemic, the medical teaching strategy is different from other teaching strategies: a student needs to gradually develop the knowledge and successfully complete one stage before they can enter the next stage.

Blackboard Collaborate was introduced to UFS in 2016. Instructors and students were then trained to use it effectively. As a member of staff at UFS, I have been using Blackboard Collaborate Virtual Classroom to fulfil all course objectives and get the best-desired learning outcomes. The Faculty of Health Sciences prides itself in rendering quality healthcare services to diverse healthcare needs in South Africa with four pillars in (i) teaching and learning, (ii) research, (iii) community service, and (iv) service delivery. The faculty also uses methods of open education practices using Blackboard Collaborate in the school of clinical medicine where Blackboard Collaborate is utilized as a teaching tool for students in the Free State, South Africa at large as well as internationally. Through the Constructivist Learning theory, this paper aims to explore the strengths and weaknesses of using Blackboard Collaborate as a technology tool for achieving increased access to education and training.

The main research question is:

How has Blackboard Collaborate assisted in your teaching in Distance Education?

To begin answering this question, a literature review, the presentation of which follows, was first conducted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational technology is playing a basic function in all fields of instruction. As an electronic establishment of distance education, Blackboard Collaborate was created in 1997 and has been broadly used in online instruction and learning (Ouyang & Nile, 2014). According to educational specialists, learning online should be active, engaging and shared among others, which Eiffelcorp (2019) notes describe the key elements of online technology teaching and that Blackboard Collaborate is the best tool to give real-time lessons in multiple locations with all students logged in at the same time. According to Keengwe and Kidd (2010), online learning is focused not only on the online context but also includes a full range of computerised learning platforms and delivery methods, formats, and media such as multimedia, educational programming, simulations, games, and the use of new media on fixed and mobile platforms across all discipline areas.

According to Picciano (2017), online collaborative learning (OCL) is one of the theories proposed by Linda Harasim that focuses on internet facilities to provide learning environments that foster knowledge building. There are benefits for student success in moving teaching and learning to the internet. The OCL theory derives from social constructivism since students are encouraged to collaborate in solving problems through discourse, with the teacher playing the role of the facilitator as well as a community member (Picciano, 2017).

The essence of student interaction with content and teachers is referenced in the constructivism literature. In addition, the essence of interaction among students, teachers and content is well understood and referenced in many theories of education, especially constructivism (Picciano, 2017: 176). Koschmann (1994: 219) believed that emerging forms of instruction could be supported and enhanced by technology. He then came up with a study known as Computer Support for Cooperative Work (CSCW), which was founded on the notion that computers can be used to facilitate learning and interactions amongst members from various locations. Computers can also provide storage for learning material, which therefore supports knowledge building (Koschmann, 1994: 221). Teaching and learning through the support of computers improves communication through learning in groups, which provides opportunities for exposure to multiple perspectives and interpretations.

Blackboard Collaborate was originally founded in 1997 as an LMS, which comprises a full-featured online instruction toolkit. It also comprises Comprehensive Teaching and Learning Tools such as, 'Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, multi-modal connection, actionable data analysis and reporting, collaborative learning tools, on-the-go mobile connectivity,' and 'Easy-to-use All-in-one web-based learning and engagement' (Ouyang & Nile, 2014: 167).

The 'Comprehensive Teaching and Learning Tools' module furnishes teachers with fully highlighted online instructional devices to structure course guidance, convey guidance substance, and deal with undergraduates' learning accomplishment. These tools, according to Ouyang and Nile (2014: 167), are responsible for providing students with greater access to learning materials and the opportunity to obtain the instruction without the time and location restrictions, complete required learning programme disciplines, and engage in successful life-long learning to fulfil themselves.

Open education respects and empowers students as co-producers on their lifelong-learning path. According to Daniel Ehlers (2011), openness has been conceptualised three-fold: (i) low, (ii) medium and (iii) high. For the significance of this section for the study, I will quote the high level of openness that Blackboard Collaborate as a tool allows teachers to encourage diverse learning pathways through open and experience-arranged techniques, either through the platform and instructional exercise cooperation's (ZPD Vygotskian-enlivened methodologies) or the possibility coaching (procedures of fortification, area or transient possibility). In line with the cited literature, the theoretical framework was developed and is discussed next.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The constructivist hypothesis, according to Linda Harasim (2012: 12), alludes to a hypothesis – or set of speculations – about discovering what arose, to a limited extent, in reaction to behaviourism and cognitivism. Constructivism arose during a time of instructive change in the United States and was impacted by new constructivist mental exploration and patterns rising in Europe, which accentuated the role of the person in understanding the world. Instructive scientists and specialists came to realise that people could not be customised, as robots can, to always respond similarly to a stimulus. Constructivists contended that the mind plays a colossal role in how individuals act when learning. What is more, that role is not straightforwardly and practically identical to a computer programming dependent on discrete strides to devour and process data.

Constructivism, especially in its 'social' structures, proposes that the student is significantly more effectively engaged with a joint undertaking with their instructor and their companions in making (developing) meaning (Harasim, 2012:12). Constructivism alludes both to a learning hypothesis (an exact clarification of how individuals learn) and to an epistemology of learning (a perspective on the idea of information). The subsenses of 'constructivism' must thus be distinguished: (i) the constructivist-learning hypothesis clarifies how students develop meaning while (ii) constructivist epistemology alludes to a philosophical view that information is developed through our associations with each other, the network and the earth, and that information is not something total (Harasim 2012: 12).

Constructivist theory favours allowing students to construct their worldview, philosophy of living, technical expertise, and knowledge structures including emphasizing one's learning initiatives, using social and situational experiences (Ouyang & Nile, 2014). The constructivist approach to learning actively involves students through speaking, writing, interaction and problem solving so that they can relate their learning materials to their own worldview (Eiffelcorp, 2019). This learning approach invites students to participate actively in their own learning process, while lecturers create and facilitate environments that help students engage with real-world problems and learn deeply. The strength of this kind of learning is that material, content and learning are related to students' situation (Eiffelcorp, 2019).

Taking into account the constructivist hypotheses crafted by Bruner, Vygotsky and Feurestein, among others, learning is a structured procedure whereby students build their implications of current encounters from past exposures (Zaki & Zawaidy, 2014). The utilisation of Blackboard in this module was intended to give students the chance to assemble and build information on what was found out in a face-to-face measurement. Supporting the methodology was the primary reason in grasping access, where the utilisation of Writing Board was to permit undergraduates the chance to get similar homeroom data, despite its explained structures from different sources in different configurations spreading over some undefined time frame.

Learning is active and engages learners in problem-solving by allowing them to actively analyse information and create original ideas for providing solutions (Picciano, 2017). A theory is defined as a set of statements, principles or ideas relating to a particular subject. A learning theory is meant to explain and assist in understanding how people learn (Picciano, 2017). A significant limitation of training is that educators cannot just transmit information to students. However, students need to effectively develop knowledge as far as they can – that is, they need to find and change data, check new data against old data, and update rules when they no longer apply (Olusegun, 2015). In this constructivist perspective on learning, the student is considered as a functioning operator during the time spent information securing.

The notion of learning is dynamic as opposed to detached. This dynamism implies that students face their comprehension in the light of what they experience in the new learning circumstance. Students stay dynamic all through this procedure by applying their present understandings, taking note of applicable components in new learning encounters, and passing judgment on the consistency of earlier and rising information, after which, dependent on that judgment, they can adjust information (Olusegun, 2015). Basic characteristics of Constructivist Learning Environments include knowledge and authority shared between teachers and students where the teacher holds the role of facilitator (Schunk, 2013). Constructivism gives undergraduates responsibility for their learning since it depends on inquiries and investigations. Constructivist appraisal connects with the undergraduates' drives and individual interests in their diaries, research reports, physical models, and masterful portrayals (Picciano, 2017:166).

Drawing on innovative impulses builds up students' abilities to communicate information in various ways. The students are additionally bound to learning and retaining new information relative to reality (Picciano,

2017). The ramifications for how educators instruct and figure out how to instruct are gigantic. Until this point in time, attention on undergraduates-focused learning likely could be the most significant commitment of constructivism. This gives them ever-broadening tools to keep learning (Olusegun, 2015: 69). The impact of the Constructivist Theory on the turn of events and usage of instructive innovation is reflected primarily in the spearheading of educators encouraging the instruction and learning condition (Ouyang & Nile, 2014: 162). The Health Sciences Faculty, especially the School of Clinical Medicine, uses Blackboard Collaborate frequently and allows students to actively learn from their comfort zone and in their own time. Therefore, learning has become active for students at UFS through their use of the Blackboard Collaborate tool in attending classes and actively engaging with other students from wherever they are in South Africa.

In considering the theoretical framework outlined above, the methodology was developed. This is discussed next.

METHODOLOGY

In order to report the use of Blackboard Collaborate in the Health Sciences Faculty at UFS, a qualitative interpretive paradigm with descriptive methods was used with 10 lecturers and personnel who were interviewed on the effectiveness of this tool in supporting students' online learning. This purposive sample was based on their modules being the first to use the Blackboard Collaborate tool in the Health Sciences Faculty. The respondents were module leaders and support staff in modules that used Blackboard Collaborate, and the respondents were both male and female from varying backgrounds.

The interviews were conducted telephonically as well as through email correspondence. Lecturers and personnel in the Health Sciences Faculty who had used Blackboard Collaborate were asked six main questions regarding their experiences of using Blackboard Collaborate with the focus of realising the effectiveness of the tool for open and distance learning. The aim of the research is to explore the advantages and disadvantages of using Blackboard Collaborate as a tool for achieving increased access to online education and training. The interview questions were as follows:

Q1: How many times have you used Blackboard Collaborate?

Q2: Please state your reasons for choosing Blackboard Collaborate

Q3: What was your overall experience of using Blackboard Collaborate?

Q4: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Blackboard Collaborate?

Q5: How did using the tool benefit you?

Q6: What is the likelihood that you will recommend using the Blackboard Collaborate tool to others?

The respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary and that, at any stage of the process, they were allowed to withdraw. All lectures and support staff working with the chosen modules were informed through a formal written email of the reasons for this study and their consent to the interviews (both email and telephonic correspondence) was requested. The respondents' identity stayed anonymous and confidentiality was assured.

Through communicating with the Health Sciences Faculty personnel, individual experiences of the use of Blackboard Collaborate were outlined and suggestions were provided in the discussion of the case study results on how the tool can be improved for future successful use in teaching and learning as well as open education. Responding to probing, the respondents also expressed what benefits or returns on investing in using Blackboard Collaborate there were as well as how likely they were to continue using the tool and recommend it to their colleagues.

DISCUSSION OF THE CASE STUDY RESULTS

Blackboard Collaborate is used for multiple educational purposes, such as broadcasting seminars, welcoming first-year students into the university, and hosting tutorials online in aiding student access and success. Blackboard Collaborate, as used within the Health Sciences Faculty, serves not only to facilitate lessons but also for hosting faculty and departmental meetings, including but not limited to events such as the Department of Health Free State Research Day, South African Association of Health Educationalists (SAAHE), and Assessment SIG workshop.

The interview questions and prompt, also cited in the methodology section earlier, that were asked and the responses received to them during the interviews are presented next.

Q1: How many times have you used Blackboard Collaborate?

Most (seven) of the participants who were interviewed have used Blackboard Collaborate more than once between 2018 and 2019. For beginners using Blackboard Collaborate in the Health Sciences Faculty, it was easy and helpful because they had assistance in navigating it.

Q2: Please state your reasons for choosing Blackboard Collaborate.

Instructional designers advised lecturers to use Blackboard Collaborate to assist lessons for on- and off-campus students. Due to a lack of space, Blackboard Collaborate was the best tool used for teaching as venues could not accommodate all students. The live recording to multiple venues was good. For travelling costs to be cut, information technology teaching was one of the best options in delivery. Respondents indicated through quotations that:

> It was the best choice especially when it came to streaming, it is integrated into Blackboard Collaborate, there was no need to look for another software elsewhere.

And that

> It offered opportunities to share audio/PowerPoint with someone elsewhere as if we are in the same venue" in their responses.

Q3: What was your overall experience of using Blackboard Collaborate?

One respondent exclaimed,

> I was very pleased with its overall experience especially the sharing of applications: PowerPoint, its sound quality, video sharing, chat functions and most importantly recording of the session.

Others responded that, apart from internet problems with browsers, they managed to deliver full sessions. Another respondent stated,

> It was a good experience, and my students could even chat with me during the session to ask questions, I could even do an assessment poll during my session.

Q4: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Blackboard Collaborate?

According to the lecturer-participants, the following are the advantages and disadvantages of using Blackboard Collaborate:

All respondents replied and highlighted the advantages they perceived (as quoted) relative to the question as follows:

- Delivering lessons from all areas in the Free State in one live video cam session.
- Sharing screens and videos as part of illustrations in a lesson.
- Financial and logistical problems are not in the way of teaching and learning.
- Access granted for all registered students despite their location.
- Students can revise the lessons through the saved recorded videos.
- Good collaborative tool for distance learning (learning is active).
- An effective modern tool for active learning in a work environment.
- Students' grades improving since they can revise with the material from a lesson saved in Blackboard Collaborate.
- Great ability to record.
- The group work breakout rooms are awesome.
- Polling apparatuses for homerooms and gatherings.
- Recording is boundless.
- The capacity to break undergraduates out into littler gatherings and afterwards take them back to the primary room.
- Having all instruments on one page.
- The Whiteboard highlight is ideal for mentoring. We use it to work out equations, draw outlines, and so on while in the video talk to improve clarifications.
- The document connection include is additionally convenient. This implies we don't need to do a catch up with an understudy utilizing their email to send documents of freebies, and so on.
- It is incredible that we just need to share homeroom access connected for an understudy to enter a meeting. With different items, they needed to set up a username and login with a record. Connection access implies one less problem.
- We are right now starting to utilize the "record meeting" highlight video meetings to use as preparing for new staff.
- I recently attempted to utilize the Share Screen include, which would be incredibly significant for online teaching, however notwithstanding introducing the extra Blackboard Screen sharing application, it won't work, however, it appears to may work when one adheres to the instructions.
- Very easy to utilize. While not domineeringly rich with highlights, there are numerous highlights accessible to complete work processes.
- Takes a favourable position of highlights accessible in browsers such as Firefox and Google Chrome for application sharing; these highlights are not accessible in other browsers.
- The capacity to have various individuals in a gathering and deal with their interest through content and sound.
- The screen sharing highlights permits moderators an opportunity for demonstration methods precisely as shown on the screen.
- Allowing the moderator to grant access to other instructors the ability to share their screens if they co-teach.
- The programming allows you to utilize a whiteboard to draw/exhibit ideas to undergraduates and different workers.

- Whiteboard is mostly used by Professors to clarify subjects by drawing a few graphs on the Whiteboard.
- The teachers to give access of their notes to the class when teaching broadly utilize sharing of Documents.
- Breakout Groups is for Professor to make bunches in the class for certain undertakings.
- The simultaneous condition is incredible for on the web and half-and-half courses, where students can pose inquiries and get input continuously.
- The video alternative is extraordinary, particularly for 100% online courses. It gives a face to the educator's name- - adapts us a smidgen for the undergraduates.
- The recording alternative is awesome for undergraduates who can't be in class, undergraduates with uncommon requirements, enhancement/supplement, and substance surveys.
- Blackboard Collaborate makes it simple to share screens, introductions, and pictures in an advanced session, which is basic when instructing troublesome ideas to individuals who are not in a similar room as the moderator.
- Blackboard Collaborate even takes into account small groups inside a bigger session, where the Lecturer had the option to break students into littler "groups" for little conversations and introduction prep.
- The fundamental controls and modules are anything but difficult to learn and educate with moderators.
- Blackboard Collaborate allows the freedom to use a whiteboard for drawing, writing/demonstrating concepts to students and other employees during meetings. Blackboard Collaborate is appropriate for online classes, to set-up virtual available time and additionally to give web-based preparing.
- Good video recording in big meetings.

The respondents highlighted the following disadvantages relating to their experiential use on Blackboard Collaborate:

- Students in rural areas running out of data due to multiple clicks before connecting to the live stream lesson.
- Cannot share advanced PowerPoint slides (slides with videos or music in).
- Not all lecturers in the faculty are trained for using online collaboration because it has a lot of clicks before getting to join the live sessions.
- When logged in with any browser, the Blackboard Collaborate tool connectivity fails (Only use Google Chrome).
- Not having a Blackboard Collaborate app makes it difficult because students must log in to Blackboard to join the session.
- Pre-loading of presentations is a challenge if there is no technical assistance stability of the video feed.
- Price is high compared to competitors.
- Blackboard Collaborate has an awesome ability to accommodate a large number of people in a meeting while also able to manage their participation through texts and unmute audio.
- The screen sharing allows presenters to demonstrate steps or material exactly as instructed on the screen, which can also allow participants to share their screens if they need clarification of something.

- We, non-technical professors, experience its complexity because it is difficult to use different features of Blackboard Collaborate.
- Video quality is poor if there is a good internet connection in one's area.
- In the recordings, the Audio-Video Synchronization is bad because sometimes the video does not keep up with the audio and you will sometimes see that they are disharmonious.
- Logging in can be tough for students who lack enough data and are computer illiterate.
- Accessing sessions once they have been recorded is difficult, especially for first timers.
- Accessing a virtual classroom can be improved; I would like to see a customizable "button".
- The more advanced features are difficult to understand and use for first timers.
- Troubleshooting at home can be difficult, if it does not open for some reason then there is no ICT member to assist.
- I have been kicked off from a session repeatedly before (although this might be more my own computer functionality, rather than the program).
- Sometimes there is an intermission, which causes the presenter's voice to stop causing me to need to catch up in a meeting.

Q5 How did using the tool benefit you?

Respondents replied as follows to the questions on returns on investing in using the tool as an open education technology teaching method:

Positive returns:

- Able to communicate classes to distant zones of the country.
- We have meetings in our own homes without having to physically be in the office or at work.
- Students are more productive in their studies since they can review recorded live lessons.
- Positive in that its simple to utilize and incorporates with our LMS well.
- Our usage has been slow in the course of the last 2 semesters. Students who have utilized it to get to live scholarly help notwithstanding being not able to drive in for face-to-face meetings have been incredibly optimistic. It is steadily boosting understudy assurance for offsite undergraduates, who have since quite a while ago felt they could not get to administrations that were paid through charges with their educational cost.
- Multiples uphold administrations who have needed to offer online help however were uncertain how they could, are more enabled to do so now. The current state of mind is "what else would we be able to offer online through this, workshops, exhorting, and live transmission of understudy organization gatherings"?
- Blackboard Collaborate Ultra has been the best for us for staff training.
- Faculty have been energized that they can have a far-off visitor speaker in their study hall, and everything they require to accomplish for set up is to email that visitor speaker a connect to join the meeting.
- The program has permitted improved interchanges among instructors and undergraduates with the goal that undergraduates can get continuous coaching and not depend on to–and-fro as it premodifies messages.

- The program gives educators a stage to meet up, take an interest in proficient improvement exercises together, and pose inquiries/make recommendations progressively.
- Has made an "office" like climate online to help re-enact a physical homeroom instructor office where undergraduates can feel good speaking with educators about their interests.
- The positive effect of Blackboard Collaborate is that inaccessible students can likewise go to classes.
- Opens correspondence to the outside world. For instance, a teacher leads a visitor address yet in one way or another a visitor can't be truly present in the class, so he/she gives the talk through Collaborate.
- Makes it simple for students with timetables that clash, or who are in different areas to partake in discussions.
- Recording classes is useful should the understudy need to miss classes or the chance that somebody needs to miss a gathering however needs to make up for the lost time.

Negative returns:

- Negative in that it is more expensive than competitors such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Q6 What is the likelihood that you will recommend using the Blackboard Collaborate tool to others?

The following were responses from the respondents on their likelihood to recommend using Blackboard Collaborate within the Health Sciences Faculty as well as their university colleagues at large:

- Well fit in the study halls, yet perhaps not the best answer for proficient gatherings.
- Across the entire office, we use Blackboard Collaborate for virtual study halls of late.
- It is appropriate for virtual homerooms, however not for gatherings.
- It is valuable for a homeroom video meeting with a teacher, as different undergraduates can get to it on the double (it will stream better if just the educator utilizes video and others simply use talk) and both talk or answer questions, utilizing the Whiteboard include as important. There is a hand raising alternative that students can use to flag that they have an inquiry, or they can simply place an inquiry in on the visiting area.
- It isn't as intuitive as some video mentoring stages I have seen, however, it is something that our help administrations at the college approach with a site permit, so it's ideal for us.
- Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is incredible for available time, virtual preparing, virtual visitor speakers, virtual talks, and then some. While it has a concentration for educational necessities, its utilization isn't restricted to simply that. It additionally bolsters up to 500 individuals in the meeting at once.
- It unquestionably is appropriate for office gatherings and correspondence among undergraduates and teachers for web-based coaching. I figured it could be helpful for an assortment of resources, particularly for representative preparing purposes. It might be a piece excessively confused for conventional correspondences with customers.
- I see it particularly helpful for math teachers because the whiteboard highlight permits image documentation for mathematical questions and undergraduates can perceive how the issues are turned out to be simultaneous. I likewise suggest it in the for-writing conversations in a little gathering setting after class, just as for content surveys before tests.
- Blackboard Collaborate is incredible for huge gatherings, for example, online classes, study gatherings, or distant gatherings.

DISCUSSION ON THE EFFECTIVE USE OF BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE

Blackboard Collaborate is an electronic tool that lecturing staff use to further assist students. Lecturers also use it to give information to students in remote areas. University staff and lecturers provided their experiences on the use of Blackboard Collaborate as not only a teaching tool but also as an effective tool for their virtual meetings. Next is a discussion on the important aspects of using Blackboard Collaborate (the advantages as well as the usefulness of the tool). The discussion is driven by the main research question, cited in earlier, regarding how Blackboard Collaborate has assisted lecturers in their distance education teaching at UFS. The discussion is organised according to three themes that emerged from the interview data: (a) teaching with information technology: E-learning; (b) using Blackboard Collaborate as an open education system tool; and (c) using Blackboard Collaborate to support Open Education and blended learning within the UFS.

a. Teaching with information technology: E-learning

As internet-learning situations presently have a built-up nearness in advanced education, we have to pose the question: How powerful are these conditions for understudy learning? Online situations can give an alternative sort of learning experience than customary, up-close-and-personal settings (for nearby students) or print-based materials (for distance students). History has proven that the improvement of instructive innovation affects the advancement of training wherein the utilisation of instructive innovation in the homerooms has opened another page for guidance and learning. In any case, instructive innovation is just an apparatus (Nile & Ouyang, 2014).

The practicality of using Blackboard Collaborate generally depends upon how lecturers treat their undergraduates' learning technique, how they select enlightening advancement-related theories, and how they execute related speculations. OCL expands upon past methodologies yet presents another viewpoint. OCL arose from the development of computer networking and the internet, together with the associative financial move from the mechanical society to the Information Age (Harasim, 2012).

According to Ouyang and Nile (2014), the centre of the experiential learning hypothesis is the individual student's learning investment and their encounters. In this way, the utilisation of instructive innovation in adapting regularly energises students' investment, furnishes students with prompt criticism and vital assistance, and bolsters students with various adapting needs

Instructive innovation-related speculations and practice reflects about the impact of related hypotheses on human consciousness in training and the connections between people and PCs. They accept that instructive innovation authorities, while taking part in the planning of instructive programming and in the curricular turn of events, ought to comprehend students' perplexing take on circumstances from multifaceted viewpoints and take schools' particular condition and undergraduates' social foundation into account (Ouyang & Nile, 2014).

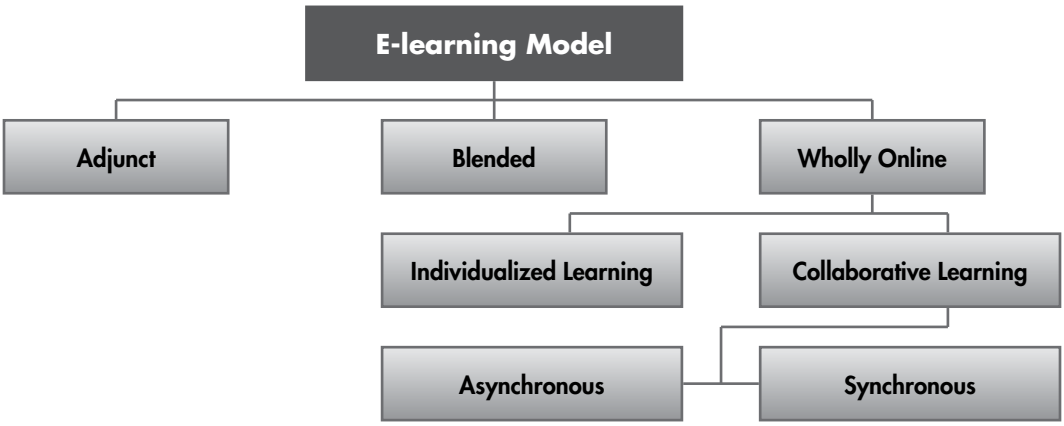
A few researchers in the mid-1980s thought that instructive innovation did not just allude to electronic gadgets and PCs; instructive innovation, likewise, turned into a part of social science. E-learning encompasses the use of the internet and other important technologies to produce learning materials, teach learners, and also regulate courses in an institution. Educational technology specialists, therefore, should not see a PC as an electronic gadget yet should connect instructive innovation near the instructional guidance and learning (Nile & Ouyang, 2014; Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015). The 'adjunct e-Learning is the situation in which e-Learning is employed as an assistant in the traditional classroom providing relative independence to the learners or students' (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015: 32).

The instructional condition fundamentally bolstered by innovation has built up additional guidance and learning and set new training objectives. An instructive computerised reasoning framework is intended to coordinate the artificial intelligence ventures into instructional condition, helping undergraduates learn with figuring re-enacted guidance with the help of an assortment of learning hypotheses. An artificial intelligence framework in training has extraordinarily affected the turn of events and use of instructive innovation. Examination has demonstrated that, since the 1990s, artificial intelligence in training has been created to assist individuals in seeing how to apply instructive computerised reasoning viably in guidance and gaining from its unique use of how to re-enact hypotheses guided study-hall guidance and inclining exercises (Issroff & Scanlon, 2002).

According to Clancey (2010), the development of computing technology suggests that people construct knowledge often, even beyond the classroom, and that learning can often take place through online resources. Therefore, there is a necessity to explore educational technology training to understand and consider learning scenarios and social environments before designing instructional tools and educational software (Ouyang & Nile, 2014: 165).

When looking at teaching with information technology, one can use the E-Learning Model adapted from Valentina Arkorful and Nelly Abaidoo (2015), which illustrates the different types of learning used by different institutions within South Africa and globally. This model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1:
The E-Learning Model (adapted from Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015)



For the purpose of this study, I looked at online platforms on which learning was individualised and collaborative. Using Blackboard Collaborate as a teaching tool at UFS supports Health Sciences students who are not physically present at the main campus. The effectiveness of the tool has been tested on the lecturers, who gave their varying experiences of the tool. Some of the lecturers' responses were positive, while others were negative. Blackboard Collaborate is one of the tools that can be adopted for distance education.

b. Using Blackboard Collaborate as an open education system tool

Various responses highlighted that using Blackboard Collaborate as an open education tool was highly useful because it saved lessons, left space for students to reflect on the lessons, and allowed students to revise the work presented as well as to ask questions if there was a need. The respondents also highlighted that amongst many, this tool helped the shy students to interact in the session as its use removed the physical aspect of having to raise your hand in a class full of students and the accompanying reluctance to engage.

c. Using Blackboard Collaborate to support Open Education and blended learning within the UFS

Other than electrification, today's classroom is remarkably unchanged from the end of the 19th century. The cast of characters and the activities remain virtually unchanged, along with the length of the school day and year and several other parameters. Schools have not adopted numerous innovations: radio, television, and even telephones have minimal presence in today's classrooms. 'Systems that we take for granted outside the school walls – such as computers, the internet, PDAs, and handhelds – are either somnolent or prohibited' (Calfee, 2006: 35 as cited by Harasim, 2012: 12-13).

Immersive Collaborative Learning: "module on the writing board furnishes teachers and students with a foundation of cooperative guidance and picking up, helping, supporting, and sharing amongst one another": (Ouyang & Nile, 2014: 167). It incorporates coordinated and no concurrent talks, groups and enormous gathering conversations, learning and assets sharing, and communitarian learning exercises.

UFS is one of the universities in South Africa that focuses on the effective delivery of material for students in successfully achieving effective teaching and learning. The use of Blackboard Collaborate in the Health Sciences Faculty started between 2017 and 2018. In the beginning, it was not easy for both staff and students to use this teaching tool because teaching with technology has always been problematic for students as well as academic staff. The introduction and use of Blackboard Collaborate within the Health Science Faculty was to assist students registered in the faculty who are not physically at the main campus (Bloemfontein).

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra's virtual classrooms are very useful tools for online interactive lecturing and learning. Allowing students to join sessions through their smartphones encouraged a high attendance rate and good participation. Virtual platforms for learning have the following advantages that can aid the learning process. Firstly, virtual learning improves access to education and the quality of learning. Secondly, it also allows for a full capacity of investment of the tools of information technology in improving the process of teaching and learning. Thirdly, it helps provide educational programmes to large numbers of students at a lower cost: students can study anywhere they can access computers, laptops, or even smartphones and internet connections, so they can take the learning process anywhere. Lastly, a major advantage reportedly is time savings, with no possibility of wasting time.

The expected shortcomings and limitations of virtual learning platforms can be summed up as follows: students who have difficulty keeping in touch with their tutors are very prone to being distracted and negligent. We must consider the issue of complex technical tools. It is sometimes challenging to create a successful e-learning process due to a lack of sufficient data as well as the system going off during a virtual session.

For an illustration of how the sessions on Blackboard Collaborate look like at the Health Sciences Faculty at UFS, see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2:
Example of Blackboard Collaborate session at the Health Sciences Faculty at UFS

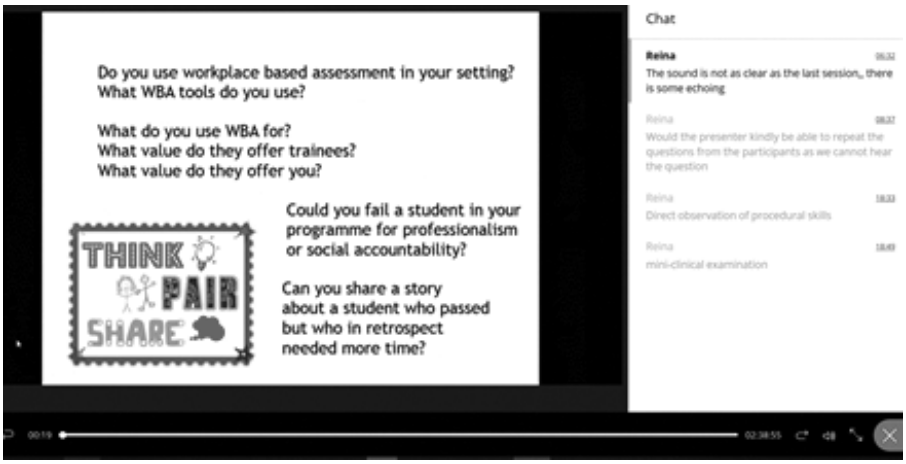


Figure 2 illustrates how a Blackboard Collaborate session looks like during a departmental meeting with all the attendees in their own spaces but together in one room through the use of technology.

Figure 3:
Example of chat tool being used on Blackboard Collaborate at the Health Sciences Faculty at UFS

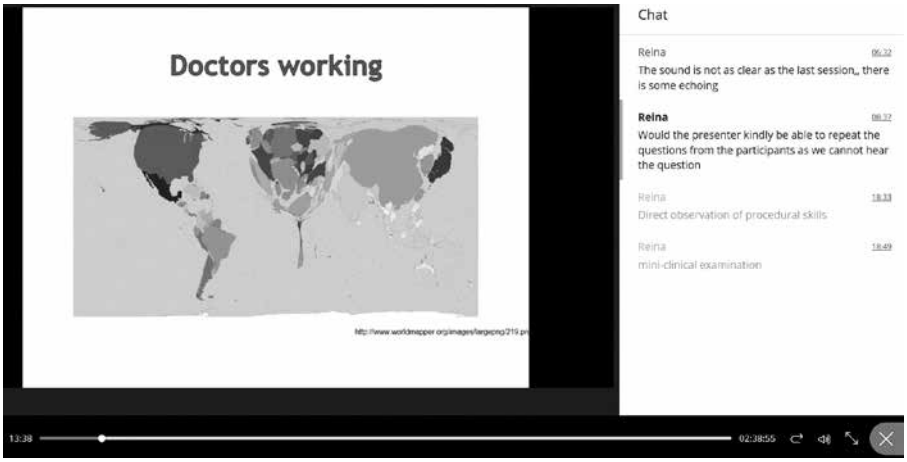


Figure 3 shows the chat tool being used effectively as the presenter displays their presentation on the screen, while the audio is on. For this session to succeed, participants need to activate their microphones so that they can ask questions. All the sessions recordings are available to all the students who could not make the virtual session.

Figure 4:
Example of searching for textbooks on Blackboard Collaborate at the Health Sciences Faculty at UFS

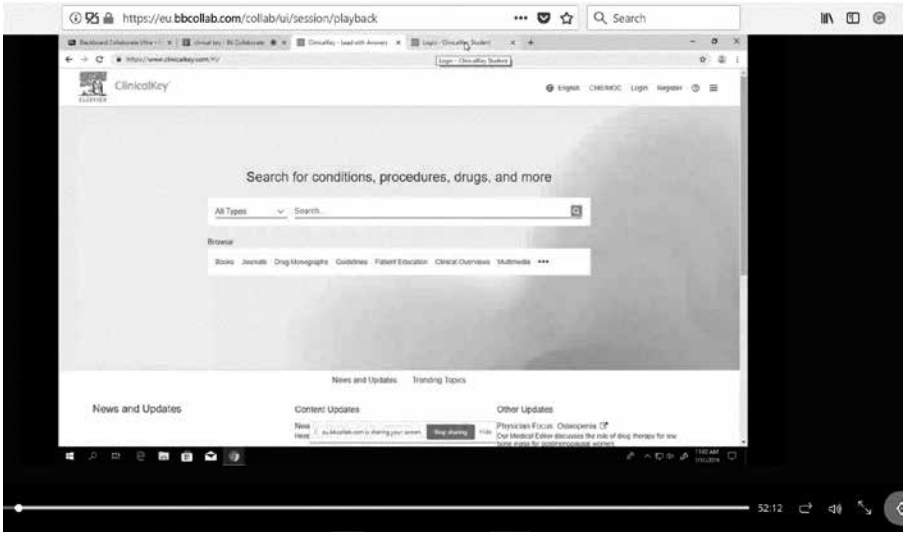


Figure 4 clearly shows how Blackboard is used to show students how to search for a newly released site where they can access their textbooks and still use them in their classrooms. This is for one of the MBChB_1-5 students, who are not in Bloemfontein but still get to access all their learning material as well as textbooks online through the informed sessions they attend on collaborate.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The use of Blackboard Collaborate is successful at UFS. Modules such as MBChB_1-5 and NVER 4815 IPE have received good feedback with an improvement in student engagement and grades since some of the students were able to attend lectures and seminars online, and watch lecture videos later. The use of Blackboard Collaborate also gave students a good sense of learning in their comfort zones without pressure and reported on good grades. Blackboard Collaborate has been highly helpful in delivery for students who are employed full time and who cannot, as a result, always physically attend classes due to time constraints and distance factors. Such students can thus learn at their own pace through the recorded classes as revision.

Cutting data costs for students to be able to afford and sustain logging in and streaming at half price is a recommendation. The Health Sciences Faculty is in the process of removing all internet proxies from lecturer venues for whenever lecturers want to communicate with the students. What is needed is both a much stronger technology infrastructure that will support the tool and a phone-friendly app that facilitates students' access Blackboard Collaborate from anywhere without having to have a computer with them. If the tool could synchronise with PowerPoint, there would not be any need to load sessions in advance.

REFERENCES

Arkorful, A. & Abaidoo, N. (2015) The role of e-learning, advantages and disadvantages of its adoption in higher education. *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning* 12(1) pp.28-42.

Clancey, W. J. (2010) A design framework for integrating instruments, software, processes, and organization in telerobotic mission operations: Experience with the Mars Exploration Rovers. *Presented at the Design Theory Workshop of the International Design Society*, Mines Paristech (School of Mines of Paris), February.

Department of Education. (1997) Policy Document: A programme for the transformation of Higher Education. Education White Paper 3 (July 1997), Pretoria: Government Printers.

Ehlers, U. (2011) From open educational resources to open educational practices. *E-Learning Papers*, 23 pp.1-8.

Eiffelcorp. (2019) *Fundamentals of digital teaching and learning*. Blackboard: Digital Teaching and Learning Series, Johannnesburg, South Africa.

Elsamanoudy, A.Z., Fayz, A.F. & Hassanien, M. (2020) Adapting Blackboard-Collaborate Ultra as an Interactive Online Learning Tool during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Microscopy and Ultrastructure* 8 pp.213-215.

Harasim, L. (2012) *Learning Theory and Online Technologies*. Routledge: New York.

Issroff, K. & Scanlon, E. (2002) Educational Technology: The Influence of Theory. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education* (6), http://doi.org/10.5334/2002-6

Jordaan, M. (2015) Using Blackboard Collaborate as a reflection tool in a service-learning module. Service learning: *9th Annual Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Conference*. Durban

Keengwe, J. & Kidd, T.T. (2010) Towards Best Practices in Online Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching* 6(2) pp.533-541.

Koschmann, T.D. (1994) Introduction: toward a theory of computer support for collaborative learning. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences* 3(3) pp.219-225.

Olusegun, B.S. (2015) Constructivism learning theory: A paradigm for teaching and learning. *Journal of Research & Method in Education* 5(16) pp.66-70.

Ouyang, J. & Nile, S. (2014) Theories and research in educational technology and distance learning instruction through blackboard. *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 2(2) pp.161-172.

Picciano, A.G. (2017) Theories and frameworks for online education: seeking an integrated model. *Online Learning*, 21(3) pp.166-190.

Schunk, D. (2013) *Learning Theories*. Harlow: Pearson Education UK.

Zaki, H. & Zawaidy, H. (2014) Using Blackboard in online learning at Saudi Universities: Faculty member's perceptions and existing obstacles. *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education* 3(7) pp.1-10.

List of reviewers

The editors wish to express their gratitude to the following experts who offered their knowledge and insights in the double-blind peer review process, thus ensuring all authors received valuable feedback:

- Mr J. Botes, University of the Free State, South Africa
- Dr N. Dhanpat, University of Johannesburg, South Africa
- Dr R. Dlamini, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
- Dr S. Esterhuizen, North-West University, South Africa
- Dr S. Govender, University of Zululand, South Africa
- Dr I. Hadhighi, Islamic Azad University, Iran
- Dr A.H.M. Jacobs, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
- Dr T.J. Makhalemele, North-West University, South Africa
- Professor T.S. Mashau, University of Venda, South Africa
- Dr T. Mathebula, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
- Dr A.J. Meintjies, North-West University, South Africa
- Professor V. Mncube, University of Fort-Hare, South Africa
- Dr M. Neethling, North-West University, South Africa
- Dr T.A. Ogina, University of Pretoria, South Africa
- Dr D. Oosthuizen, Vaal University of Technology, South Africa
- Dr R. Rambharose, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- Dr N. Shaikhnag, North-West University, South Africa

Notes for contributors

Articles should be

- in English
- typed in Times New Roman, font size 11, 1.15 line spacing in MSWord (.doc or .docx) format;
- limited TO 6000 words, excluding tables, figures and references;
- complete in every regard – for example, tables and figures should be included **in** the manuscript;

and should include

- an abstract of 150 or fewer words;
- five keywords;

and *may* include

- a title page, which includes the names, institutional affiliations and ORCIDs (where possible) of all authors – the Editorial team ensures anonymisation of the manuscript prior to double-blind peer review;
- short annexures **attached** to the manuscript that may aid reviewers – annexures will not be considered for publication in the journal.

Additionally, Arabic numerals – that is, 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on – must be used when expressing figures or when numbering items. Using bracketed Roman numerals – that is, (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) etc. – is encouraged only in cases where items forming part of a list within a paragraph are numbered.

References, both in the body of the article and in the reference list, must be presented using the Harvard style. References that are cited in the body of the article must be present in the reference list and vice versa. Articles in past editions of the IJTL itself are the best source of practical examples of the preferred organisation of articles and of the heading styles favoured by the IJTL.

Where applicable, authors must include a statement confirming that the necessary ethics clearance was obtained, and that vulnerable individuals, groups and populations are protected. See the section on research ethics and vulnerable populations in the IJTL's Editorial Policy.

The authors of **accepted** articles will be asked to submit short biographies before their articles are published. These biographies should not exceed 150 words.

Proofs will be sent to authors if there is sufficient time to do so. They should be corrected and returned within 48 hours of receipt. The Editor reserves the right to publish without proofs having been signed off by the author.

NOTE: Manuscripts that do not conform to the above requirements do **not** have to be considered for double-blind peer review and therefore publication.

The Independent Institute of Education (Pty) Ltd

The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) is a private higher education institution offering more than 100 registered and accredited higher education programmes from Higher Certificates to a PhD. The IIE has six faculties (Humanities and Social Sciences; Information and Communications Technology; Commerce; Education; Engineering, Science and Health; and Law), and it caters to more than 50 000 students across its 27 sites via four educational Brands: Varsity College, Vega, IIEMSA and Rosebank College. The IIE also offers a range of Short Learning Programmes. The IIE is accredited by the British Accreditation Council as an Independent Higher Education Institution. The IIE has multiple associations and endorsements with leading organisations and professional bodies and works with several other public and private higher education institutions.

The IIE brands have sites across South Africa; qualifications which are offered on the sites are directly linked to their mission and target student market. This means that students on each site will be able to study with other students with similar interests and ambitions. The IIE also offers qualifications in the distance mode of delivery. The flagship programme is a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education.

The IIE has a strong central national academic and quality assurance team based in Sandton that provides academic leadership for the sites and qualifications across the country. The team is also responsible for the registration, curriculum, quality of delivery, and assessment and certification (graduation) of all the qualifications, meaning that students on a site in one city receive an educational experience that is guaranteed to match that which is offered in any other city. This experience includes the same access to key academic resources and facilities. Each site adds to this academic base with its own specific group of well-qualified lecturers who are subject-matter and discipline experts, and collectively have a wealth of knowledge and industry-based experience in the areas in which they teach, as well as the individualised student support that the sites give. An IIE student is, therefore, rounded both academically and socially, thus maximising student success.

The IIE is a founding member of SA Private Higher Education (SAPHE). This is an association of South Africa's leading private providers of higher education which has two objectives. Firstly, to promote the understanding of the general public about the role that private higher education plays in offering choices to students; secondly, to promote the quality of provision and thirdly to play an advocacy role with the regulators. The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning, as a peer-reviewed journal that appears on the DHET's approved list of South African accredited journals, is one of the many ways in which The IIE is ensuring academic leadership within the higher education landscape of South Africa and, in particular, in private higher education.

For more information about The IIE, its academic opportunities, qualifications offered and sites of delivery, or SAPHE, please go to www.iie.ac.za or email info@iie.ac.za

DIGI-LITHO ☎ 011 914 5192 (N002919)