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# THE INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

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# The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning

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# Editorial

**Dolina Dowling**

Africanisation has been at the forefront of debates in higher education at various times especially since 1994 with the advent of the first democratically elected government in South Africa. In the early stages of the debate the focus was on advocacy; why there should be Africanisation. There was the expected outcry from the more conservative quarters of the Academy. A refrain being that it would nullify research that had previously taken place or at least impact negatively on research agendas as well as make obsolete the teaching and learning programmes being offered. This showed *inter alia* a misunderstanding about the meaning of the term. However, in subsequent years there were signs of acceptance and in some cases an embracing of the notion of 'Africanisation' in the higher education institutions. Now practically two decades later the debate has matured from whether there should be Africanisation to how best to Africanise our higher education institutions and thereby the curriculum.

This is at the heart of the first contribution in this eighth edition of *The Independent Journal of Teaching and Learning*. Mindful of the continuing debate around 'Africanisation' and ways in which this can be applied, the author begins by examining the literature and the different interpretations of the term. She then explores and makes a robust argument for the endogenisation rather than the indigenisation of Africanisation. This, she holds, would ensure an inclusive approach to Africanisation.

While at first blush there appears to be a disjuncture between the second article with its focus on school improvement and culture and the first article on higher education a closer reflection makes it clear that this is not the case; the two are not only complimentary but are also inextricably linked. Education is not divided into discrete parts which takes place in a silo in which the provision in schools and the provision in higher education have no bearing on each other. The types and ways of learning that occur in schools has profound implications for those entering higher education institutions. If the emphasis is on rote learning in basic education, for example, and little critical thinking is injected into the curriculum, how can institutions of higher learning expect students to participate successfully in higher education study?

In a similar vein, questions around culture in schools are just as important as in universities. What kind of culture and ethos do we expect to find in schools and in institutions of higher learning? Education does not take place in a vacuum. It is important for schools and universities to share global best practice but when it comes to implementation it needs to be context dependent. The culture and values of the wider community and of the country need to be reflected. Hence the second article argues that for significant long-term school improvement to occur there needs to be engagement with four cultural arenas by school leaders and teachers.

When we consider the South African context, the aligning of the culture of the school and those of the families which it serves is about Africanisation. Just as the universities in South Africa were Eurocentric in outlook, in structure and in form so were the schools. Africanisation in the university sector is not the end point indeed it is just the beginning. Schools also need to ensure that their practices and ethos reflect that they are not only located in Africa but of Africa.

Another instance of the interconnectedness between university education and school education is to be found in the third article in which the author explores the experiences of distance education students with regards to mentorship during teaching practice. Good mentorship is found to be highly important. The author highlights a number of challenges that need to be addressed to improve the students' teaching practice experience.

Schools are expected to have a culture of learning. For this to be the case a number of aspects need to be present; one of which is a respectful safe and disciplined learning environment. However this is not always easily achieved, particularly in secondary schools. The centrality of a culture being reflective of the communities and the country that the schools serve is pivotal here. If the culture of the school is alienating then discipline is much harder to instil. In the fourth article, the author explores the management of behaviour through the participation of representatives of the council of learners in a school governing body. He identifies barriers to participation as well as makes a number of recommendations.

The fifth article is concerned with the prevalence of gender stereotyping in a predominantly rural province in South Africa – a significant aspect of the wider discussion of culture in this volume of the journal. The author investigates to what extent gender stereotyping exists among adolescents in a rural area. He finds that the prevalence of gender stereotyping is similar to that found in countries with large urban populations. He considers the implications of gender stereotyping in terms of the construction of the identity of self, educational attainment and decision making with regard to subject and career choices.

Lastly, in Practitioners' Corner, the author advocates for a robust approach to combat plagiarism. She does this through the lens of a case study in a faculty in a South African university. Her findings show that policies alone do not address this seemingly intractable problem. Not only do policies need to be consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated but also there needs to be a multi-prong approach to tackle this issue. The author makes a number of recommendations in this regard.

# Revisiting the debate on the Africanisation of higher education: an appeal for a conceptual shift<sup>1</sup>

**Tebello Letsekha - Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa**

## ABSTRACT

*Forming part of post-colonial discourse, Africanisation is often described as a renewed focus on Africa and entails salvaging what has been stripped from the continent. Applied to higher education it can be viewed as a call to adapt curricula and syllabuses to ensure that teaching and learning are adapted to African realities and conditions. Given the decontextualised state of curricula and dependent nature of knowledge production and dissemination in South African higher education, the concept of 'Africanisation' may be worth revisiting. This article reviews the literature in the debate on the Africanisation of higher education highlighting the strengths and weaknesses in the discourse; the paper also makes a case for endogenisation as an alternative to indigenisation.*

## INTRODUCTION

The debate on the Africanisation of higher education forms part of the larger discourse on the restructuring and transformation of these institutions. Issues of transforming higher education institutions have been on the agenda of the government and other key players, particularly in the decades following colonial independence. The driving forces, goals and effects have not been uniform over the years and some authors (Singh, 2001; Gibbons, 1998) have argued that the discourse on higher education transformation is being watered down and reduced to terms of market responsiveness.

In the South African context the transformation agenda was largely driven by the need to undo decades of injustice caused by apartheid as well as the need to align higher education institutions with the principles and philosophies outlined in the constitution, which took effect in 1997 (Pityana, 2012). Infiltrating the discourse on higher education transformation have been issues around curriculum reform, internationalisation, the role of higher education in a newly democratic country and, at crucial moments, the issue of Africanisation.

## CONCEPTUALISING AFRICANISATION

Different authors writing on Africanisation offer varied viewpoints on what they understand Africanisation to mean or entail. Makgoba (1997: 199), for instance, emphasises culture and identity, noting that

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Africanisation is a process of inclusion that stresses the importance of affirming African cultures and identities in a world community. He (*ibid*) states:

[I]t is a learning process and a way of life for Africans. It involves incorporating, adapting and integrating other cultures into and through African visions to provide the dynamism, evolution and flexibility so essential in the global village. Africanisation is the process of defining or interpreting African identity and culture. It is formed by the experiences of the African Diaspora and has endured and matured over time from the narrow nationalistic intolerance to an accommodating, realistic and global form.

One of the most commonly cited definitions of Africanisation by proponents of the process is offered by Ramose (1998) in his foreword to *Black Perspective(s) on Tertiary Institutional Transformation*. He states that Africanisation embraces the understanding that 'the African experience' is not only the 'foundation' of all forms of knowledge, but also the 'source' for the construction of that knowledge. Ramose (1998) goes on to assert that while the 'African experience' is non-transferable it is indeed communicable, but only by the African. Having made this assertion he goes further, stating:

Africanisation holds that different foundations exist for the construction of pyramids of knowledge. It disclaims the view that any pyramid is by its very nature eminently superior to all others. It is a serious quest for a radical and veritable change of paradigm so that the African may enter into genuine and critical dialogical encounter with other pyramids of knowledge. Africanisation is a conscious and deliberate assertion of nothing more than the right to be African.

Ramose's conceptualisation of Africanisation has come under scrutiny from Horsthemke (2004a), who argues it is lacking in clarity as to the meaning and content of the 'right to be African' and may lead to a false sense of belonging. Secondly, he argues this characterisation fails to do justice to diversity. This definition is not only confusing but contradictory as well. While proclaiming that there are no superior pyramids of knowledge, Ramose seems to suggest that the knowledge held by Africans is indeed superior. His version of Africanisation appears to warrant a need to define who or what is African, a process that can easily lead to marginalisation and exclusion which proponents of Africanisation are trying to avoid. It is also important to note that Ramose offered this definition 15 years ago, and while a radical and veritable change of paradigm may have been necessary then, the conceptualisation would require some revision if it is to be applied in the current context.

Higgs (2003) suggests a much more inclusive approach stating that if we turn to the notion of 'Ubuntu', a southern African philosophy focusing on human allegiances, we might move towards a better conceptualisation of Africanisation. This suggestion is challenged by Parker (2003) who holds that it results in a lack of understanding of what Africanisation in education entails. Parker proposes instead that Africanised scholarship ought to include the notion of a 'critical activism' concerned with justice and human rights. These descriptions of an African philosophy of education are similar as they both accentuate collectivism and humanistic ideals.

Louw (2010) views Africanisation as a way of transcending individual identities, seeking commonality, as well as a way of recognising and embracing our 'otherness'. In so doing we might be able to connect with the broader African experience and establish curricula that bind us together.

Pointing out that the debate on Africanisation has been ongoing for several decades, Nkoane (2002) interprets an Africanised educational system as one which maintains African awareness of the social order and rules by which culture evolves; fosters the understanding of African consciousness; facilitates a critical

emancipatory approach to solve the problems of their lives; and produces the material and capacities for Africans to determine their own future(s). Such an educational system would result in the production of knowledge which is relevant, effective and empowering.

While various scholars offer different conceptions of the notion of 'Africanisation' there appears to be similarities in emphasis, such as the need to seek out our commonalities, affirm African culture, traditions and value systems, foster an understanding of African consciousness and finding ways of blending western and African methodologies.

The kind of Africanisation argued for in this paper is essentially part of generating and redefining educational standards in South African higher education to ensure that teaching and learning occurs within appropriate contexts of relevance.

Greenstein (1997) argues that Africanisation poses what may well prove to be the greatest challenge to the renewal of education in general and curriculum policies in particular. While this may be true, it is important to note that until the processes of knowledge production and dissemination are consistent with the contexts and cultural orientation of the people our universities represent, the transformation of higher education institutions remains incomplete. Crossman (2004) contends that such a process would entail transforming not only the external factors but also the internal principles and priorities that define orientation, values and practices of our universities.

Having begun the article with an attempt at conceptualising the notion of 'Africanisation', this paper proceeds to examine the rationale behind the calls for Africanisation, followed by an interrogation of the implications of Africanisation for internationalisation. It examines the renewed focus on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and questions whether this focus adequately addresses the problem that proponents of IKS are trying to address. In this paper IKS is understood as local knowledge, which is unique to every culture or society, embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals, and is commonly held by communities rather than individuals (Battiste, 2002). The article concludes with the suggestion of an alternative to indigenisation in the form of endogenisation.

## HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULA: CHARACTERISTICS OF ACADEMIC DEPENDENCY

The discourse on African higher education that has appeared in the last decade depicts the inappropriateness and irrelevance of current curricula, which was introduced during the colonial era. This has led to various calls for Africanisation of higher education, which can be understood as the adaptation of the subject matter, and teaching methods geared to the physical and cultural realities of the African environment. Moulder (1995) contends that the Africanisation of higher education encompasses four kinds of changes:

1. changing the composition of student, academic and administrator bodies
2. changing the syllabus or content
3. changing curricula
4. changing the criteria for what is excellent research.

This paper argues for the transformation of higher education curricula and is therefore focused on 'changing curricula'. The conception of the curriculum offered by literature and discourses on educational theory contain a number of similar elements. Some authors refer to the curriculum as a formal course of study, emphasising *content* or subject matter (Phenix, 1962; Pinar, 2012). Others define it in terms of *experiences* of each learner (Teba, 1962; Reid, 2012). Here the stress is on how subject matter is learned, the process outcomes and *behavioural objectives* (Bloom 1956; Odendahl, 2011). Behavioural objectives are typically identified within some framework such as the subjects offered in school curricula. Some

authors (e.g. Goodlad, 1994) describe the curriculum as *a plan for instruction* specific to a particular school or student population. Others (e.g., Lockett, 2001) advocate a wider conception of curriculum - a non-technical and more philosophical, social, and personal approach.

In the higher education context, curriculum refers to what knowledge is included or excluded in university teaching and learning programmes (Le Grange, 2004). The concept of 'teaching/learning' according to the Council for Higher Education [CHE] (2004: 93) encompasses the activities of teaching and learning in the classrooms of higher education institutions. It also encompasses policies, strategies, plans, and infrastructure both at the higher education system level, and at institutional level, to support these activities (CHE, 2004).

In the South African context, the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI) attempted to put the issue of Africanisation onto the curriculum agenda in 1992, but the theme has been practically absent in succeeding policy documents. In the introduction of the NEPI report, the authors note that in the post-secondary sector only 12% of the staff was black and mostly male, with the result being:

The type of knowledge disseminated could be 'white male knowledge' because it either reflects the cultural heritage of white males or serves mainly their interests. In Foucaultian terms, white knowledge, connected to European 'universal' knowledge, has become a 'totalising discourse' that has silenced and marginalised local knowledges. ...The vast majority of students in South African PSE, who are in the humanities and social sciences, receive this white European cultural knowledge, which in most cases contributes to alienation and separation (NEPI, 1996: 6).

Making a case for curricula that mainstream local relevance and vocalise silent voices, Lebakeng, Manthiba and Dalindjebo (2006) note that African intellectuals in their teaching continue to be enslaved to the preoccupative benchmarks of the dominant Western scholarship and its methodological paradigms. The result is that African intellectual representations are inconsistent with the lived experiences of the majority of the students for whom the curriculum has been designed. Such curricula continue to be a source of alienation as they do not speak to the experiences of learners nor do they reflect the philosophical, social realities of their communities. While there are institutions of higher learning that have made strides in contextualising their pedagogical structures, curricula still exist that privilege western ways of knowing despite the space offered by the new constitution for retooling educational discourse.

The acceptance of imported curricula incorporates accepting the philosophy of the education from which it is has been copied. In the words of Nyerere (1971: 27):

The ideas imparted by education, or released in the mind through education, should be liberating ideas; the skills acquired by education should therefore be liberating skills. Nothing else can properly be called education. Teaching which induces a slave mentality or a sense of impotence is not teaching at all.

Adésinà (2006) makes a similar observation, stating that a curriculum which honours one spatial zone in the globe as the foundation of knowledge production fails not only in the task of effectively educating students; it generates schizophrenia in most learners - particularly those whose antecedents do not stem from Europe or those who find no significance in imperial heritage. He notes that such a curriculum replicates a form of eradication in which the non-western collective memories that certain students bring to the classroom are declared as non-knowledge. In South Africa the task of a curriculum that is fit for post-1994 is to open the space for 'diverse ontological narratives', not to insist on 'erasure or a Euro-ethnic mono-discourse' (Adésinà, 2006: 144).

Matos (2000) argues that a major 'disease' of education and research in Africa is the systemic attempt to dismiss the intrinsic value of African culture, language, customs, and practices from the curriculum. While it is agreed that 'curricula in higher education should be firmly anchored in the cultural and intellectual environment in which it is located' and that 'it is important to ask critical questions about the knowledge included in curricula' (Van Wyk & Higgs, 2011: 177), it is also important to do this in a way that refrains from further marginalisation.

Reporting on research conducted by The Department of Anthropology, KULeuven on the issue of Africanisation, Crossman (1999) points out that even in the post-independence period, African universities have been effective in Africanising their personnel but not their curricula or pedagogical structures to any real extent. The KULeuven study was based on the observation that African universities have been founded on European models and despite the widespread talk of Africanisation since the 1960s, most African universities maintained fundamentally Western curricula and structures (Crossman, 1999). The study involved consultation of faculties of the human sciences at six universities across the continent in 1996 and 1997. The investigation was based on the calls made by scholars like Ali Mazrui, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Paulin Hountondji and others for the adaptation of education to the African context. The aim of the research was to look for new schools of thought reflecting this objective on the continent.

In the study most academics in the human sciences faculties of the six universities across the continent, recognised this problem and saw it to be an important issue, and yet stated that little has been, and can be, done due to insufficient resources or due to demands to participate in the global system of education and research. The result has been that the type of tertiary level education developed in many African universities has only allowed scholars on the continent to develop a dependent scholarship, which does not encourage independent thinking and theory building resulting in the current peripheral and marginalised position.

According to Nyamnjoh (2004: 160) higher education on the continent has mostly been a journey fuelled by an exogenously induced and internalised sense of inadequacy in Africans, and endowed with the mission of devaluation or annihilation of African creativity, agency and value systems. Such 'cultural estrangement' has served to reinforce in Africans self-devaluation and self-hatred and a profound sense of inferiority that in turn compels them to 'lighten their darkness' both physically and metaphysically for Western indulgence (Fanon, 1967: 169). This quandary has been captured by Nyang'Oro (1994: 434) as 'a pathological case of xenophilia', whereby Africans are brought to value things Western 'not for their efficacy but simply because of their foreignness, and persuaded to consume to death their creativity and dignity, their very own humanity'.

The Pan-Africanist leader, Nkwame Nkrumah (1956), alludes to the elements of an Africanised higher education when he states: 'We must in the development of our universities bear in mind that once it has been planted in the African soil it must take root amidst African traditions and cultures'. For the African university to be truly useful to Africa and the world it has to be grounded in African communities and cultures (Makgoba & Seepe, 2004: 19).

The dependent and decontextualised character of the higher education curricula on the continent calls for a fundamental overhaul of the whole epistemological model underlying the current educational system. Given Africa's history of colonial subjugation, the basic idea of Africanisation of education encapsulating a quest for relevance is not implausible. Moulder (1995) notes that while no one would ever envisage 'Anglicising' Oxford University or 'Americanising' Harvard University, the notion of 'Africanising institutions in Africa' makes sense, on the basis of past fundamental inequalities. Africanisation therefore makes sense not only because curricula are alienating, but also because of the past injustices of our society.

The curriculum has been partly blamed for prohibiting African universities from effectively contributing to the sustained socio-economic development of Africa, a role expected of them by governments. Njumbwa (2003) rightfully asserts that the curriculum designed for the postcolonial era has run its course. To meet the challenges posed by globalisation and ensure that students make a meaningful contribution in their societies it is imperative that academics rethink existing curricula.

## AFRICANISATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

African higher education institutions are increasingly becoming defined by internationalisation, which is one of the dominant characteristics of modern existence. The proponents of the process argue that it brings with it opportunities, benefits and great prospects for prosperity to the marginalised regions and countries. The process is seen as having inherent enormous potential to enhance the rewards of sound social, economic, cultural and political policies (Lebakeng *et al*, 2006).

The imperatives of internationalisation and that of Africanisation are often portrayed in research and in the literature as diverged positions. According to this view, the more you Africanise the less you can internationalise, and vice versa. It is thus alleged that one contradicts the benefits of the other (Botha, 2010: 201). Crossman (2004: 329) notes that in engaging with the notion of 'Africanisation' there is a perception among many African scholars that in Africanising one has forsaken the pursuit of real intellectual activity or knowledge, inasmuch as these are perceived to be determined by international standards. The psychological trap, Crossman (*ibid*) notes is to confuse something of global currency for universal truth and this is difficult to resist. The African academic may even feel that he/she is betraying African scholarship by moving it backwards.

Neale-Shutte & Fourie (2006: 121) however contend that in order to be participants in internationalisation, African universities need to create their own identities and develop their own fortes; in other words if you do not know who you are then you do not have much to offer your international counterpart. It is only when we have a deep understanding of our experiences that we are able to conquer knowledge and concepts that are not part of that experience (Dowling & Seepe, 2003: 196).

Botha (2010: 208) states that some compatibility exists between the notions of 'internationalisation' and 'Africanisation'. Internationalisation takes strong cognisance of the local culture, that, without the local, there would be nothing to offer the other and so a strong local culture would enhance the value of internationalisation. The 'own' and the 'other' culture are, therefore, cornerstones of both internationalisation and Africanisation, this being a strong point of compatibility between them. Le Grange (2007) argues that knowledge production is deeply heterogeneous, because different viewpoints are constantly being added and reconciled, but the common element of all forms of international knowledge systems is their localness. One of the categories of rationales of internationalisation involves the political, which includes national and regional identity. Once again, the implication is that without the regional and the national the purpose of internationalisation is pointless.

Louw and Mayer (2008: 625-626) suggest a four-step process to determine future strategies to facilitate effective internationalisation at universities. These steps comprise (1) understanding the inter- and multi-cultural challenges at an institution, (2) using opportunities wisely, (3) clustering competencies/capacity to optimise these opportunities, and (4) learning and creating knowledge for continuous improvement of internationalisation. The first step implies that local culture(s) is (are) sufficiently embedded in all aspects of the university otherwise this step would not be possible (Botha, 2010: 210).

The internationalisation of higher education has become the norm not only in South Africa but across the continent. In pursuing internationalisation however, it is incumbent on institutions of higher education

on the continent to avoid the potential adverse consequence of marginalising local knowledge and the contribution made by local scholars. While partaking in internationalisation activities universities therefore need to take cognisance of the need to remain 'African' universities.

### ACADEMIC DEPENDENCY AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS: A FEASIBLE SOLUTION?

While most of the scholars writing on Africanisation seem to agree on what Africanisation entails, there are differing views on its practical application. Over the years the Africanisation debate has been deliberately associated with the 'African Renaissance' movement. The term 'African Renaissance' was popularised by former South African president Thabo Mbeki in 1997, and captures his vision of a new wave of cultural and economic development. In a cultural sense African renaissance is closely connected with the revalidation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK). A number of scholars propose that incorporation is the first step in Africanising.

According to Hoppers (2002) the South African parliament asked the country's higher education councils to reconsider indigenous knowledge, and launch a research agenda to correct the 'epistemological disenfranchisement' of local people. Suttner (2006) too has argued for indigenous knowledge, and notes that South Africa needs an inclusive culture that realises the suppressed creativity of African people.

Lebakeng *et al* (2006: 76) also argue for the revival of indigenous knowledge and maintain that the reversal of academic dependency can be achieved through an inscription of indigenous African epistemology. Denying the existence of African philosophy as a basis of maintaining standards is to perpetuate epistemological injustice.

The imperative for the inscription of indigenous African epistemology into the curriculum and underpinning education with African philosophy is, in the first instance, a question of rights, and thus a matter of natural and historical justice. In advocating for the reversal of epistemicide, there is a need to place indigenous knowledge systems on the same level of parity with other epistemological systems in an effort to achieve formal and substantive equality (*ibid*).

While sympathetic to the basic concerns that inform the call/s for Africanisation, Horsthemke (2009) points out that the manner in which the debate has been framed thus far has its limits. He states that neither the idea of 'an African essence, culture and identity', nor the notion of 'African ways of knowing' constitute an appropriate theoretical framework for conceptualising the change required in higher education thought and practice. He notes instead that the transformation agenda can be better met by a different, human rights approach.

In relying on IKS the argument about forms of knowledge may intersect in a troublesome way with identity politics. In a dichotomous discourse that equates 'African' with indigenous ethnic identity, there is no place for significant groups of intellectuals whose African identity has other grounds. These include white writers who shared in the African cultural revival, and struggle against apartheid (e.g. Athol Fugard), members of the black African diaspora (Du Bois, Fanon), intellectuals from Arab Africa (Amin), and the many locally born intellectuals of European, Indian or interracial background who have a role in current projects of reform (Connell, 2007).

The dialogue on the Africanisation of higher education in South Africa (Makgoba, 1997; Matos, 2000; Van Wyk & Higgs, 2011) appears to be concerned with both knowledge and education. Horsthemke (2004) notes that while the two projects are connected it is possible to discuss the Africanisation of

education separately from the Africanisation of knowledge. For reasons of conceptual clarity this may even be advisable as the latter idea is considerably polemical.

Connell's (2007: 105) critique of the indigenous sociology movement that arose in Nigeria during the 1980s can be applied to the indigenous knowledge systems movement. Connell (*ibid*) argues that the movement had a vagueness of method, an implausible assumption of homogenous and static cultures, complicity with nationalism and a difficulty in connecting with an international dialogue except on terms of unequal exchange.

In advocating for Africanising one needs to avoid a reliance on IKS because this tends to lead to IKS being characterised as an exotic subject or discipline (Pityana, 2012). We should rather aim to locate an African method of exploration and to inform the entire knowledge system, rather than to rigidify it as belonging to a part of the knowledge structure. The type of discourse on indigenous knowledge in South Africa and elsewhere often reflects a failure to come to grips with the essence of the problem of academic dependency that its proponents are attempting to address. The crux of the issue may better be evoked by the use of the term 'endogenous knowledge' (following Hountodji, 1997; Adésinà, 2006; Ake, 1997).

Crossman (2004) argues that it does not help to racialise or ethnicise concepts of knowledge and one must therefore find other criteria and definitions for local or regionally-shared knowledge and practices. By making a case for endogeneity instead of indigeniety it is hoped to avoid what Crossman (*ibid*) characterises as counter-productive dialogues on identity – expressed in questions such as: what is African, native, local or indigenous? – or the irresistible tendency to position indigenous knowledge in an archaic, ahistorical and primitive past – as often transpires when one makes use of the term 'tradition' – as though current industrial societies did not possess their own, particular epistemologies.

### **AFRICANISATION AND ENDOGENISATION: FROM ALIENATION TO A RESTORATIVE PARADIGM**

While the integration of indigenous knowledge into higher education curricula may prove challenging in the attempt to transcend academic dependency, there remains a need to identify an inclusive alternative discourse. Alatas (2009: 143) refers to the calls to transcend the Eurocentric and Orientalist elements that inform educational curricula as alternative discourses because they set themselves in contrast with what those who promote them would define as mainstream Eurocentric discourse. They can be understood as a collective term describing the set of discourses that has emerged in opposition to western educational discourse. Rather than being viewed as attempts to delink from metropolitan control these should be viewed as a contribution of non-western systems of thought to theories and ideas. These discourses are informed by local historical experiences and cultural practices in the same way as Western discourses.

Ake (cited in Arowosegbe, 2008: 11) suggests that in the African context a commitment to endogeneity might be a starting point in the reversal or transcendence of academic dependence. Endogeneity in the sense that it is used in this context, refers to an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in African conditions; a centring of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one's intellectual work (Adésinà, 2008: 135). This commitment to endogeneity involves not only deriving distinct epistemological insights from the locale but also 'taking the locale and its ontological locations seriously as the bases of knowledge production' (Adésinà, 2005: 136).

While the term 'endogenous' has not been used much in the discourse on Africanisation, Crossman (2004) notes that it can assist one in avoiding some of the historical misinterpretations that have resulted with the use of the term 'indigenous' and its derivatives. The striking difference in the two terms can be seen in the field of botany where indigenous primarily refers to a species being native to a particular topography

while 'endogenous' refers to a plant's capacity to develop on the basis of its own resources, or growing or originating from within (Crossman, 2004). Explaining the difference between the two terms Crossman (2004: 324) notes that 'topographical definition tends to portray the subject as static, its only descriptor being a (quasi-permanent) link to a geographic locality or area', whereas the use of the term 'endogenous' allows for a more 'organic and dynamic understanding in that it invokes autonomously orientated growth'.

In advocating for the revival of the 'intellectual nerve' Adésinà (2006) reminds us that from Economics to Sociology, from Philosophy to History, it was the profundity of endogeneity that gave the canonical Western works their vivacity. As much as many may think of Economics as a science, for instance, one cannot understand the distinction between David Ricardo and Friedrich List, outside of the specificity of their locales; neither can we understand the perspicacity of the scholarship of Marx Weber or Emile Durkheim, in Sociology, outside of the depth of their endogeneity.

The call for endogeneity is often met with 'the charge of nativism' or 'cultural nationalism' and its advocates are invited instead to embrace Western ideals; to become cosmopolitan. However, Ake (1979) notes that the call for endogeneity is not a question of parochialism or nationalism because even though the principles of science are universal, its growth points, applications and the particular problems which it solves are contingent on the historical circumstances. Adésinà (2006: 243) argues that taking into context the contents of our education and public discourse is rather peculiar because endogeneity of an epistemic kind may help to address the growing crisis within the classroom, where educators continue to make aliens of their students - who sit through courses and with teachers 'whose epistemic gazes are firmly planted on the global North' (*ibid*).

For empirical substantiation of endogenous scholarship Adésinà (2006) gives as an example three schools of history, which offer important illustrations of the significance of endogeneity motivated by a commitment to locality: the Ibadan School, the Dakar School, and the Dar-es-Salaam School. The challenge of the Ibadan School of thought and its founder Onwuka Dike was about the content of scholarship and relevance to national objectives. The result of this was the Ibadan School of History, which gave second generation, post-colonial students a sense of connection. The 'stories' they encountered were their stories, told by their people for their people (Adésinà, 2006: 253).

The Dar-es-Salaam School of History, on the other hand, was not a pursuit for history as the stories of only great men and women but also that of ordinary people as well. The aim here was to write history in a counter-hegemonic manner; to do history with a class rooted in Africanity. The Dakar School of History was defined by the scholarship of Professor Cheikh Anta Diop (1923-1986) which was shaped by what he considered to be the falsification of Egyptian history. His concern was to utilise the tools of science to valorise African-centred historiography.

Adésinà (2006) points out that these three clusters, three methodological and epistemic foci; were all driven by a shared commitment to their locale; and for each, Africa is the locale, demonstrating that local relevance is never at odds with global and rigorous scholarship and being internationally reputable. The epistemological impact of doing African History, from the point of view of Africans - regardless of the location among these three schools of historiography produced not only a foundational impact but they changed the way in which historians approached their subject matter on a global scale.

While the term 'endogenous' undoubtedly cannot escape all the criticisms applied to the term 'indigenous' the use of the former term in the discourse on Africanisation is not only justified, it is more beneficial. Endogenisation is a process that is not related to geographical location, race or ethnicity. Applied to universities it refers to the development of African universities and their processes of production along lines consistent with the constantly changing cultural and material situation of the communities and learners they serve.



## CONCLUSION

Higher education courses in the global South are often taught without due recognition of the historical context and cultural practices of the students enrolling in university courses. The emphasis is usually on the context of the rise of the various disciplines in Europe, dealing with issues that bear little historical relevance or meaning to students. In South Africa the recognition of this practice has led to various calls for curricula that are rooted in the African milieu and are reflective of the constantly changing realities of the communities and students our universities serve. This in turn has led to a robust and dynamic debate on the Africanisation of higher education, with different authors offering differing viewpoints on what the process is and what it should entail.

Africanisation has been wrongfully pit against the process of internationalisation, with many arguing that Africanisation has negative consequences for internationalisation. This paper has attempted to show that this assertion is unfounded and that the two processes are instead compatible. Scholars have made a strong case for the integration of IKS into curricula as a means of transcending or reversing the current situation. While IKS has its merits, its application to higher education can be considerably polemical. The issues that proponents of IKS are attempting to address may be better solved by making a case for endogenous knowledge, which is knowledge produced within the continent.

Higher education must be made relevant to the material, historical and social realities of the communities in which universities operate. This can be done by drawing on the philosophical traditions and discourses in these communities for relevant concepts and theories. This forms part of creating a learning environment free of academic dependency and ethnocentrism. The call for Africanisation is neither an advocacy to be anti-West, nor is it discouragement to learn from the West. It is rather an encouragement to learn from the West, but in a selective and constructive manner.

As an alternative discourse Africanisation is conscious of the relevance of its surroundings. Its implementation will require adaptation and reorganisation that will be arduous as professional self-images, academic identities, affiliations and publication strategies are all at stake. This retooling will also affect teaching and learning as the dominant perspectives from the global North have become embedded in the graduate programmes that produce the next generation of academics and scholars.

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# Improving schools: The importance of culture<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*Though formal quality assurance procedures have their place, meaningful long-term school improvement is founded on a shift in the cultures that underlie the surface operations of a school. The article outlines four cultural arenas with which leaders and teachers must engage in order to accomplish real change; global cultural pressures brought about by international trends, the cultures of local families and communities external to the school, the internal organisational culture of the school and, finally, the subcultures of teachers and learners. Avoiding the allure of homogenised so-called world-class practice, aligning school and community cultures, and working long term to adjust teachers' socialised culture in order to change pedagogy are the keys to improving education for all children.*

## AN INTERNATIONAL VIEW ON IMPROVEMENT

The pressures of globalisation and ever-expanding communication media have allowed nations to share practice and outcomes in school education with each other much more extensively than previously. However, this has resulted in pressure not only to share but to compare and to compete, for example through international comparative tables such as PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) and TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). There is a danger that countries will be compelled to adopt similar strategies and measures in order to be comparable in their efforts to compete. Consequently, notions have taken root of a kind of world standard, with implications of homogeneity of practice and, more particularly, similarity in the values that underpin practice. This may not be in the best interests of children in schools, or the nations that nurture them. The perspective in this article is intended to challenge the trend towards surface quality assurance procedures and school improvement that have resulted in part from international competition. It is intended to enrich reflection, to make each reader more aware of the culture that informs individual practice, so that individuals are better able to evaluate decisions that have been made previously and be more informed in the future. Whatever way forward is devised to improve education, it must be appropriate for the local values and culture of a country and its people and not merely a reflection of so-called 'world-class' practice elsewhere. It takes as a starting point that long-term reform is always predicated on changes in culturally shaped practice.

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

How then might we look to improve the education experience and outcomes for children in schools? A recent international review may be a good starting point to review what we know about improving education and, more particularly, what we do not know. The report (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012: 6) uses 'The Learning Curve Data Bank (LCDB), ... (and) brings together an extensive set of internationally comparable data on education inputs and outputs covering over 50 countries'. This in turn has enabled a wide-ranging correlation analysis, conducted to test the strength of relationships between inputs, outputs and various socio-economic outcomes. The report distilled five key messages from analysis of the very large dataset:

1. There are no magic bullets
2. Respect teachers
3. Culture can be changed
4. Parents are neither impediments to, nor saviours of, education
5. Educate for the future, not just the present (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012: 11).

These lessons may not offer any surprises. However, the report noted that 'the most striking result of the search for correlations is the overall paucity of clear linkages. In this, our study is not alone' (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012: 11). There are no universal connections between a particular action and improvement. Further, the report suggests that any single element of the system, such as developing leadership, must be seen as part of a wider long-term strategy that involves not only matters internal to the school but the culture of the wider community, as part of a process which takes years to bring results. There are no magic bullets.

Another key finding may surprise some who appear to believe that investing considerable resource will bring results; that you can, in effect, buy good education for a nation's children. Numerous national policy makers and education experts interviewed for the report concluded that the culture of the school and the culture of the environment of the school may be more important than the level of resource. This accords with research from many countries that suggests that if leaders wish to improve schools, the most significant lever likely to bring about real change is culture. The message is that culture matters very much, and that it is unique to each country. Despite this, policy makers and school leaders often focus primarily on other things, particularly those that can be measured.

Parthasarathi, an Indian educationalist, suggested that successful outcomes arise from:

... the interplay of several factors, some tangible, others intangible. What I've seen in any number of surveys is you measure what is measurable. The softer inputs of education get left out. These inputs, however, can be crucial, such as the cultural context in which education occurs (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012: 14).

Compliance with standards and quality assurance procedures related to measurables may have a part to play, but they should never be mistaken as the foundation of improving education. That lies with the leadership of those in national and regional education roles, the principal, and other leaders in schools whose primary task is to influence culture to secure quality education for all children.

## DEFINING CULTURE

Part of the difficulty in shifting culture is that we cannot agree what we are talking about. Even the language shifts: culture, climate and ethos are argued to be different by some and used interchangeably

by others (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008; Van Houtte, 2005). Definition of culture is notoriously difficult. Some have adopted the strategy of listing elements:

... an organized set of thoughts, beliefs, and norms for interaction and communication; it is about how people treat each other, how they value one another, how school staff work together and get along together in a professional and personal sense, it is the consensus about what is important (Sailes, 2008: 74–75).

Others adopt an all-inclusive generality. Culture is a 'peculiar and distinctive way of life' (Sparkes, 1991: 5) or, most famously, 'the way we do things around here' (Bolman & Deal, 1991: 252).

Recently there was much excitement in the scientific world with the discovery of the Higgs boson. People who are not physical scientists struggle to understand the nature and implications of this discovery. In simple terms, the Higgs boson might be understood as the matter in between all particles that gives everything else its mass and influences its capacity to move. Culture is the Higgs boson of schools. It is the element that gives shape and impels or prevents the movement of everything else. Culture shapes what can be done. Whatever practice is suggested, whatever standards are applied, the level of enthusiasm, the willingness to implement and the way it is interpreted will depend upon the culture of the individual and the organisation. If change is needed in schools, then culture needs to change.

Some give the impression that there is a single dominant culture of a school, when in fact there may be many. For example, the UK National College for School Leadership (NCSL) offers a range of publications where a recommended process is the production of a clear vision which is suggested to underpin the establishment of a strong unified and unifying organisational culture. An integrationist perspective assumes that a single organisational culture is linked to effectiveness (Martin, 2004) and can benefit all learners. It is doubtful if this is a credible position in the light of much evidence that schools do not work equally well for all learners, and that there are likely to be multiple cultures in any school (Bates, 2006).

Becher's (1988) metaphor of a theatre stage may capture how multiple cultures function. There is the public performance of culture projected from the stage to the audience. Backstage, hidden from the audience view, is activity essential to support the on-stage performance. Finally, there is under-stage activity, hidden from the view of all. On the stage are the symbols and rituals of the school culture, how people dress, the forms of greeting, the physical appearance of the building, the way promotional publications use images. Backstage are other, less-acknowledged cultural strategies, for example manipulation of data, criteria for entry to the school (Van Houtte, 2005). Under-stage are counter-cultures, where students, staff and parents engage in group solidarity and actions to resist or to subvert what is intended by other groups, and particularly by those with more power than they (Prasad & Prasad, 2000).

#### FOUR CULTURAL ARENAS

In order to improve the process and outcomes of schools, leaders at regional and organisational level need awareness of the multiple cultures at play and the different directions in which cultures may be pushing, and also to work with cultures in a number of arenas. Lumby (2012) suggests four cultural arenas:

- The cultural context created by global phenomena external to the organisation, but which may nevertheless exert powerful internal pressures
- The cultures of local communities impacting on how learners and their families engage with the organisation and with learning
- The organisational culture, comprising the ways in which one school or college differs from another down the road



- The sub- and counter-cultures of staff and learner groups within the organisation that may be aligned to, or in opposition to, the organisational culture.

### *Cultural arena one: Global pressures*

Looking in more detail at each arena in turn, the first to consider is the culture created by global phenomena, which translates into pressure to act in alignment with international trends. The evidence suggests wide-scale and similar cultural change across schools, colleges and universities in many parts of the world. For example, internationally many nations aspire to being 'world class'. This has become something of a mantra, not always accompanied by deep thought as to what is implied by the term, or what cultural pressures such an aspiration creates for those who support leaders/teachers and/or for teachers and leaders themselves.

Often the term is taken to imply the implementation of standards which originated in the Anglophone world, and relate to values and beliefs of a Western culture. The difficulty is that there is mounting evidence that this approach to education, with its emphasis on changes in education structure, accountability, competition and competency-based approaches to leadership, does not necessarily improve education.

To take one example, we might compare Finland and the UK. Finland regularly tops international league tables of educational performance, yet it has no mandatory testing before the final school leaving examination. Schools and teachers have a great deal of freedom, for example, autonomy to plan their own curricula. This approach is very different from the UK's frequent testing, published competitive league tables, tight inspection controls and implementation of standards, but Finland not only performs better educationally but economically. It is not suggested that Finland's approach is appropriate in all locations; each needs to find its own way, based on its unique cultural identity. Adoption of those strategies used by the UK and that reflect worldwide trends in educational policy in many places does not bring the desired results. In fact, the UK has begun to learn that, rather than encouraging competition and stringent accountability, what may be required is a whole-system approach to improving schools, focused on classroom practice and underpinned by a coherent philosophy of education concerned with developing all children equally and preparing them for the entirety of their life: economic, certainly, but also spiritual and cultural (Innovation Unit, NCSL & Demos, 2007). This appears to be the approach in Finland. While such an approach may be universal in the rhetoric of education policy, it is contradicted in practice by the competitive, accountability-based approaches of the UK and elsewhere. The latter may not be effective, and should certainly be treated with great caution by education systems which need to consider their own characteristic philosophical, cultural and spiritual traditions. We can therefore identify the first foundational action of leaders at national, regional and organisational level to sustain a good educational system:

**To protect leaders from inappropriate cultural pressures of 'international' trends and to ensure indigenous values and practices are valued and sustained in local leadership.**

### *Cultural arena two: Local communities' cultures*

The second arena is the cultures of local communities. Very many schools now relate to diverse communities, their students reflecting different ethnic backgrounds, different tribes, different religions and different socio-economic status. Each of these characteristics may relate strongly to a home culture. There is overwhelming evidence of the fundamental impact of the culture of a child's family and wider social group on his or her attitude to schooling and educational success (Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Lumby & Foskett, 2011; Riley, 2012). There may be concern that cultural differentiation of school communities might lend itself to the kind of divisive and discriminatory practices evident historically, and some would argue still current, in

South Africa. Two points might be made in response to this anxiety. First, most communities are in fact very diverse rather than monocultural, and distinguishing the range of beliefs, practices and, above all, attitudes to education in the various cultures within local communities, is a primary step in a school valuing and communicating with all. Second, too often, only certain cultures are acknowledged by the school, foregrounding and advantaging community members and families with the most social and economic capital. Differentiation of the range of cultures within any school community offers the opportunity to at least acknowledge and engage with all who make up the community in a more inclusive sense.

Children may encounter their school's culture in one of three ways. First, those whose home culture is similar to that of the school are very much advantaged. There may be no cultural dislocation for children whose family background and culture embed the kind of values and behaviour expected within school. Second, other children may see both the culture of the home and the culture of the school as worthwhile but different and not connected, moving between two dissimilar experiences. Third, for some children the culture of school may be so alien that they see no connection between schooling and their wider life and future. In order for leaders to secure success for all children, they therefore need both to exert influence on community cultures and to shape the school's internal culture, to reduce friction between the two. Leaders and teachers need encouragement and support to establish trusting and respectful relationships between school staff and families and the wider community. A culture of looking outward to engage parents, carers and community leaders in the importance and process of education may be the primary foundation of successful education, particularly for those students who are disadvantaged. This might involve, for example, ensuring that every family has a positive relationship with at least one member of staff who is willing to understand the family's culture and to try genuinely to reach mutual accommodation of the goals of the family and school. If resources preclude such efforts in relation to all families, staff might agree criteria to prioritise those for whom such outreach work is most important (Carreón, Drake & Calabrese, 2005).

Whatever the official policy, most schools in most parts of the world engage only superficially with the external community, expecting parents to align with the school culture rather than making efforts to understand and accommodate the cultures of their communities. We can therefore distil a further area of activity for leaders to improve education:

**Valuing and communicating with the schools' external communities, understanding the cultures and encouraging all to negotiate ways forward that are mutually respectful of different cultures.**

*Cultural arena three: The school's organisational culture*

The third arena is the culture of the school itself, that is, the dominant culture, the ways of behaving and thinking that perhaps unconsciously shape the actions of leaders, teachers and pupils. The challenge is to make all schools consistently good and for leadership to sustain good schools for all, rather than just some learners. In the UK accountability regimes have not reduced inequality, with a 2010 UNICEF report indicating that the UK ranks only in the middle of comparisons of educational inequality across OECD countries (Adamson, 2010). The UK may be notable for the degree to which economic background appears to shape the educational outcomes of the child, but there is no room for complacency anywhere. Every rich nation has wide disparities in the attainment of learners. Some children exit school behind the majority by the equivalent of many school years. Even in a top-performing country such as Finland, low-achieving 8th grade pupils are approximately 3.5 years behind the average Finnish 8th grader in mathematics.

Growing emphasis on the importance of equality, that is reducing the degree to which a learner's background predicts their educational outcomes, has led a shift to system leadership approaches, to some extent. System leadership seems to offer an alternative and a way forward from the negative impact

of the competitive environment prevalent in much of the world. There are different understandings of what is implied by the term. One possible way of seeing the distinctiveness of system leadership is as a change in mindset leading to different goals. In system leadership the aim is not excellence of individual schools, assuming a bell curve differentiation in terms of quality and achievement, but rather consistency of leadership and teaching and outcomes across an area in which there are a number of schools:

System leadership is not leading just one or more schools, not even many schools, but leading the education system as a whole and doing so with an explicit moral purpose in mind, with the implications for action (Hargreaves, 2007).

The question posed is how practitioners can ensure that no individual school forges forward to excellence leaving other schools behind. System leadership implies giving priority to narrowing the gap more than just raising attainment. It does not mean that raising attainment and achievement is not important; rather, it recognises that for the well-being of all children and future society, education requires a cultural shift from a competitive to a collaborative culture. The culture change required implies moving from looking inwards taking responsibility only for one's own school, department or class, to looking outwards and taking mutual responsibility for the well-being of all within a larger unit. Consequently, all leaders are encouraged to work together, to support each other within each school and across schools. It is not a question of establishing a productive school culture looking inward, but a productive culture looking across the whole education system:

The hardest part of sustainable leadership is the part that provokes us to think beyond our own schools and ourselves. It is the part that calls us to serve the public good of all people's children within and beyond our community (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006: 158).

Consequently, token gestures of support from more privileged and better resourced schools to those cited in impoverished communities are no longer sufficient. System leaders:

- engage deeply with the organisation of teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment to ensure that learning is personalised for all students
- develop their schools as professional learning communities, with developmental relationships built across and beyond each school
- strive for equity and meeting the needs of all
- appreciate that classroom, school and system all influence each other (Adapted from Hopkins, 2009: 743).

Such ideas may be widely promoted, including in those nations which stress standards-based, competitive and accountability driven policies. To make a reality of such aspirations, at the macro level national structures and policies, which inhibit collaboration and promote competition, need to be dismantled. At the micro level, mutual support of teachers within schools and across schools to develop pedagogy would become the greatest priority. While such an endeavour involves practical actions, it is fundamentally driven by moral purpose. This is the primary task of leadership: to understand that education is a moral endeavour, with an obligation to assure the well-being and development of all children to the benefit of society and the economy, and that there is a duty for leaders to work with each other in a respectful way, helping leaders and staff in other schools in order to ensure that all children receive a good education. Therefore, the third message for leadership is:

**To look at how resources can be pooled across a system rather than within an individual school, to focus on the development, attainment and achievement of all children equally.**

While many might agree that this is indeed the mission of education in any nation, achieving it is anything but straightforward. This may be because in many organisations there are sub- and counter-cultures that may inhibit development. This is the fourth cultural arena in which leaders must work.

*Cultural arena four: the school's subcultures*

South Africa provides an interesting case of a nation attempting to develop its schools and school leaders in an environment which, due to historical factors, had little culture of learning in many schools. Professional behaviour taken for granted in some parts of the world such as staff attendance, adoption of appropriate pedagogy and even assuring the safety of pupils, is not always present. Changing the cultures within schools to focus on and support learning has proved an immensely difficult task. The national introduction of an outcomes-based curriculum was intended to impact on pedagogy but, arguably, its over-hasty, under-planned introduction and cultural misfit has rendered it largely ineffective (Jansen, 1998). The South African government has learned that changing schools to incorporate a culture of learning, and breaking down those cultures which are counter-productive amongst teachers and leaders such as acceptance of frequent absenteeism is a long-term project, dependent on working with staff rather than imposing new systems upon them, and particular systems with their provenance outside the country.

There is evidence from many parts of the world that teachers' cultures are not necessarily focused on supporting learning (Bjork, 2003; Pajak, 2012; Waller, 1932). Teachers may have a particular culture that values preserving and communicating their subject above learning, or which unconsciously holds assumptions about the ability of all children to learn, or which sees good teaching as adoption of a particular pedagogic pattern that resists changes, whatever the outcomes for learners. As long ago as, 1932, Waller argued that schools embed what he termed a grammar of schooling, where teachers are socialised into particular ways of behaving which relate primarily to their own identity needs and to surviving in a particular work environment, rather than meeting the needs of diverse learners. Research since then has repeatedly found the persistence of such structures (Pajak, 2012: 1187), and the tendency of schools to reflect and maintain what is rather than to challenge or to promote new and more equitable social relationships (Reay, 2001).

The issues are illuminated by the example of an Australian research project focused on teaching in four schools in high-poverty areas. Members of the research team and a respected leader in the school cooperated to produce a non-judgemental description in the form of a day diary of what a class of children experienced in one day. The teaching practices they observed were largely repetitive, focused on maintaining order, and did not support many children to learn:

Each lesson looked remarkably similar and... went something like this: enter classroom, sit down, pay attention to the teacher, answer questions, receive resource (usually a worksheet), listen to instructions, work individually (or occasionally in groups) on a set task, hand in work or make available for inspection, pack up, and exit room (Hayes, Johnston & King, 2009: 256).

Teachers recognised the descriptions of their lessons and it was clear they had built up habitual practice, not so much from their initial training or continuing professional development but from knowing what worked in the classroom, from their point of view, to maintain a quiet classroom where pupils appeared to be taking part in a ritual of learning. Actual learning was not happening in many cases. In other words, teachers had a deeply embedded culture of teaching that was not adequately productive for all learners. Changing such a deeply embedded culture is very challenging. In the case of the Australian schools and leaders, teachers and researchers worked together over time to find ways to transform pedagogy. This was a long-term and difficult process of innovation requiring persistence, determination and stamina.

Other more radical strategies are being trialled to break down the embedded grammar of pedagogy. In some parts of the world, for example Chile and the UK, learners themselves, even very young learners, are being enrolled as part of investigative teams within schools and across schools to understand better what is happening in classrooms and contribute to how it can be improved (Crane, 2001; Harding, 2001; Prieto, 2001).

Therefore, the fourth message for leadership is:

**To recognise the powerful influence of the culture of teachers and teaching both to impede and to propel change, and invest resources, including learners themselves, to achieve a more emancipatory and inclusive pedagogy.**

### LEADING IMPROVEMENT IN FOUR CULTURAL ARENAS

In summary, rather than aspiring to be 'world class' or importing performative practices based on competition and accountability, the way forward may be to work with leaders to transform the multiple levels of culture that shape schools and schooling. Four key areas of support have been distilled, which can be offered to leaders and through them, to teachers:

1. Protect leaders from inappropriate cultural pressures of 'international' trends and ensure indigenous values and practices are valued and sustained in local leadership.
2. Encourage communication with schools' external communities, engaging with the cultures and negotiating ways forward that are mutually respectful of different cultures.
3. Pool resources across a system rather than within an individual school, to focus on the development, attainment and achievement of all children equally.
4. Recognise the powerful influence of the culture of teachers and teaching both to impede and to propel change, and invest resources, including learners themselves, to achieve a more emancipatory and inclusive pedagogy.

Though there is no such thing as a magic bullet in education, there may be a first principle, which is to work more deeply with culture.

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# Mentorship challenges in the teaching practice of distance learning students<sup>1 2</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*Effective mentoring is pivotal to the development of student teachers. In this study, the researcher focused on the experiences of the University of South Africa (Unisa) distance education students who are enrolled for the Bachelor of Education qualification, who are in their fourth year of study, and who have already completed three cycles of teaching practice. This study evaluates mentoring practices using a five-factor mentoring model as a theoretical framework. Quantitative data were collected and supported by additional information provided by open-ended questions. The findings indicate inter alia that student teachers need to be placed at schools that will provide constructive learning environments and that more training should be provided to mentoring teachers. Mentors need to provide student teachers with emotional support and opportunities to develop their own identities as teachers, and to create challenging and complex environments in which to learn. Partnerships between schools and the university need to be improved. There should be greater clarity on the who, what and how of mentoring during teaching practice in order to increase the quality and quantity of mentoring for enhancing student teachers' practices. The findings of this study may have implications for other programmes that use work-integrated learning (WIL), beyond teacher education in a distance learning environment.*

## BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

Most teachers remember the first time they stood in front of a class – no longer a learner looking up to the teacher but now a student teacher trying to live up to a perfect ideal or passionately trying to 'perform' well. As such, a student teacher can be defined as 'a college student who is teaching under the supervision of a certified teacher in order to qualify for a degree in education' (Farlex, 2008). Thus teaching practice can be described as the time in student teachers' training when they are exposed to school life under the guidance of a supervisor/mentor.

Internationally, teaching practice is an issue that has been researched for some time (Robinson 2001). Recently, Landman (2008: 7), Naude (2007: 14), Rademeyer (2008a: 7) and Van Niekerk (2008: 12) observed that teaching practice in South Africa is in crisis. Although schools are willing to accommodate student teachers, poor management, non-existent timetables, lack of staff and non-mentoring all impact

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negatively on the practice, leaving some students demotivated and disillusioned (Cillië, 2008; Rademeyer, 2008b; Timm, 2008: 4). Thus, the restructuring of teaching practice at schools is essential.

Several studies on teacher training through Distance Education (DE) reveal that the organisation of practice teaching for student teachers presents both logistical and educational challenges (Du Plessis, 2011: 60-70; Aldridge, Fraser & Ntuli, 2009). Problems facing practical teaching via DE include: the placing of students at approved schools, mentoring and supervising them during school visits, building relationships with all stakeholders, assessment, and feedback. One of the biggest problems for DE, particularly in a developing country, is overcoming transactional (pedagogical) distance. In practical terms, such a pedagogical gap can exist between students and the institution, between students and lecturers/tutors, between students and courseware and between student and student.

Unisa, a DE institution, includes student teaching practice in the training of teachers. In support of this, Unisa staff design workbooks, visit schools during teaching practice and are available to students to discuss problems. Nevertheless, the lecturers at Unisa were urged in their audit by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) to improve students' experience of teaching practice (HEQC, 2008). This made it necessary to investigate students' views on the most vital concerns in teaching practice.

According to the HEQC requirements in their audit report, all of the following areas needed to be improved: selection of schools, placement of student teachers, training of mentors and mentoring during the teaching practice period, and assessment of student teachers' competence and feedback to the university. Referring to a recent study by Du Plessis, Marais, Van Schalkwyk & Weeks (2010) - the mentoring component of the Teaching Practice module was identified by these authors as an area for further research. Given the HEQC's criticisms referred to above, the main research question was: *What are the mentorship challenges in the teaching practice of distance learning students and how can Unisa improve this aspect of teaching practice?*

## THE CONCEPT 'TEACHING PRACTICE'

School-based teacher education or internships is a mode of delivering learning programmes in education in such a way that theoretical knowledge is combined with practical experience. Wilson & Demetriou (2007: 215) claim that it is essential to bring the academic programme into close alignment with its practical application in the actual classroom.

Various authors have also argued for a stronger relationship between schools and institutions with a view to improving the quality of mentoring. For example, in view of the lack of training provided to mentor teachers at schools, Quick & Sieborger (2005: 3) indicated a need for better communication between student teachers, supervisors, liaison people and university lecturers. Marais & Meier (2004: 230) and Maphosa, Shumba & Shumba (2007: 305) emphasised that lecturers and teachers (mentor teachers) have to work together in order to ensure their efforts are coordinated, thus improving the quality of mentorship in schools.

The implication of 'partnership' models for key stakeholders in initial teacher education is important. The key stakeholders are: prospective teachers (student teachers), higher education institutions (the providers), the schools themselves (and mentor teachers within them) and the organisation sponsoring the students, like the Department of Basic Education (Husbands, 1995: 19). Standards for mentoring need to be based on the literature and empirical evidence of effective mentoring practices. According to Sempowicz (2012: 52) theoretical mentoring models have been proposed but few studies conduct investigations of practice with these models. This study aims to identify mentoring challenges during teaching practice using Hudson's (2010: 30-39) mentoring model as a theoretical framework, as well as other supportive

literature. It further explores how the student teacher's feedback can act as a catalyst for improving the mentoring facet of teaching practice.

## PARAMETERS OF TEACHING PRACTICE

### *Student teachers*

Tomlinson (1995: 7) uses the concepts 'student-teacher', 'student interns' or 'mentees'. The concept 'student teacher' is the term most commonly used in the majority of academic institutions in South Africa.

Students' practical learning experience is supported in four ways:

- through their observation of, and work with, experienced teachers in the school
- through their observation of, and work with, their subject partner in the school
- through their analysis of, and reflection on, their own practice in support-teaching, small-group and whole-class work
- through a school-based research project, to be done after their first period of teaching practice.

Blake & Landsdell (2000: 64) argue that excellent performance by student teachers in the classroom depends on the conditions of learning established in specific teacher education programmes. These are likely to be influenced by a set of principles developed in collaboration by teams of teacher educators working with teachers.

Student teachers need to participate actively in the school contexts for their learning to take place. However, it is not always easy to operationalise 'participation' (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2003; 2008). These authors point out that 'practice' is merely an activity, whereas 'participation' is a meaningful activity. The importance of actively *doing* in the relevant context was pointed out by Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy (1999: 61). In this regard, a student teacher in a recent study (Du Plessis *et al*, 2010: 333) said: 'Practical experience by standing in front of a class gives you an understanding of the reality of teaching.' Thus, although some student teachers felt that they had been 'thrown in at the deep end', they recognised that this was a good and positive experience.

### *The education providers*

There is general agreement among educators, politicians, and others concerned with education that schools alone are unable to respond successfully to the changing family structures and values, global economic climate, social pressures, and the societal demand for educational accountability (Robinson & Mastny, 1989). It is increasingly important that schools form sustainable partnerships with stakeholders if schools are to be successful in fulfilling their mission (Railsback & Brewster, 2003). The value of educational partnership is particularly evident in teaching practice of student teachers.

The higher education providers provide the academic support. The Higher Education Institutions (HEI) partnership requires openness, which encourages cross-institutional resourcing and collaborative working. In the case of the HEI-school partnerships, this extends to urging the full sharing of resources and awareness across and within institutions (Tomlinson, 1995: 206).

A good teacher education programme is likely to include the following (Blake & Landsdell, 2000: 68):

- A model of the skilled reflective practitioner as an essential support construct.
- Partnership of HEIs and schools in course design, management, delivery, assessment, evaluation and student teacher selection.

- A skills and knowledge audit of student teachers at the beginning of the programme and regularly during the course of the programme.
- A sequence of extended and serial workplace experiences.
- Challenging modules in the HEI that develop student teacher's intellect, confidence and professionalism.
- High quality staff development for HEI and school-based trainers.
- Self-evaluation of academic and professional development as a key component in student teacher learning.
- Engagement of the HEI tutor, school mentor and student teacher in the assessment, evaluation and feedback of professional competence.

The educational provider in this instance is Unisa. After the 2008 HEQC audit report, changes were made to the teaching practice model. Distance learning student teachers now have to do their teaching practice at a school of their choice from a list of schools already selected by the university. International students have to come to South Africa to do their teaching practice at these selected schools. These student teachers are then visited during the duration of their practical work by either a Unisa lecturer or by a supervisor, trained and appointed by Unisa. These visits are class visits during which time the student teacher has to present a lesson.

Individual discussions are afterwards held with the student to point out the strengths and weaknesses of their specific lesson. A checklist is used to ascertain the competency of the student teacher. Lecturers visit student teachers to establish their classroom abilities and note their competence in their specific teaching subject. Interviews are held with the mentor teachers of these student teachers. Unisa also offers a formal mentor training programme that accounts for 120 SAQA (South African Qualification Authority) credits.

### *The schools*

Schools participating in initial teacher education should ensure that their learners, as well as the student teachers, will benefit from it. Cunningham (2007: 83-84) suggests that the learners themselves and their teachers believed that they benefited from this engagement. Howe (1972: 1) describes a student teacher as a 'good right arm'; a helper who is capable of assisting with the mountain of educational tasks facing the instructor in the classroom. Learners trained in this way will become useful members of staff from the start, because they have effectively undergone the initiation and orientation period during their training period (Learnership Business Plan, 2003: 9).

Working at more than one school may well benefit the student teacher. Teacher development will take place more effectively in schools with a culture of collaboration, because such schools encourage pedagogic partnerships that not only counter professional isolation, but also contribute to the enhancement of practice (Williams, Tanner & Jessop, 2007: 73). Referring to a study by Du Plessis *et al* (2010: 328) – student teachers were asked what worked well at the school where they did their teaching practice. One participant at a rural, well-resourced school said that she had felt totally involved in the school – 'just like part of the school'. Another participant at a well-resourced, high school said: 'Practical experience ... standing in front of a class ... gives you an understanding of the reality of teaching.'

Participation is a way of learning which allows the learning curriculum to unfold in opportunities for practical engagement, in accordance with situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The social context at the schools encouraged collaborative learning by means of groups which included both students

and staff members. Such social interaction addressed the students' differing needs by taking into account their social and cultural backgrounds (Woolfolk, 2007: 346). Due to the function of context, the positive aspects of the students' relationship with teachers during teaching practice were based on the teachers' professionalism and expertise in mentoring.

#### *Mentor teachers*

The very complex forms of skills possessed and practised by human beings (e.g. speaking, writing, social interaction, deployment of formal understanding) cannot be learned in isolation, but require input from others. Assistance is often informal, but is nonetheless active (Tomlinson, 1995: 20; Cunningham, 2007: 86). With a professional tutor on the school staff (to lead the school's professional teacher education work) and a mentor teacher in each subject where student teachers are being placed, one has the basis for 'school practice' to become an institution for 'school-based initial teacher education'. The great advantage of mentors as teacher educators is that they are full-time practising teachers who, in effect, are standing right next to the student teacher (McIntyre, 1997: 10). Ideally, every student requires at least one mentor. Some schools have found it useful to identify a main mentor and several subjects or phase specific mentors.

There are many ways of viewing this very distinctive relationship, and mentoring is not the kind of skill that can be broken down into clear components and steps (Windsor, 1995: 117-118). In fact, mentoring depends on craft knowledge that is accumulated through experience and practice. Its central distinctive quality is that, like teaching, mentoring is a very subtle and sophisticated kind of knowledge which is enacted and performed, but which cannot be 'transmitted' as a concrete and clear guide for action (Windsor, 1995: 117-118).

Mentoring also needs to help student teachers to analyse and reflect systematically, not just after the teaching session or series of sessions, but also during the teaching itself (in other words, while they are close to the action). Student teachers need help not just to monitor, but also to explore, interpret and explain the how and why of what went on. This then flows naturally into the next phase of the teaching cycle, namely, the (re)planning of the next piece of teaching (Tomlinson, 1995: 44; Husbands, 1995: 31).

Frick, Carl & Beets (2010: 434) concluded in their research on PGCE students that one can deduce that reflection is indeed a process where student teachers learn about the self in context, and that mentoring can act as a catalyst that enhances this learning process. According to these authors, a mentor system is valuable because it not only focuses on developing appropriate competencies, but also because it has a strong humanist element in that it concentrates on the person of the student teacher.

Mentoring is where teachers and prospective teachers meet within school settings. Indeed classroom teachers in their roles as mentors have a significant role to play in developing pre-service teachers (Hudson, 2010: 31).

The themes and issues raised in the research questionnaire were prompted by Hudson's theoretical framework, as well as the literature review.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Theoretical frameworks serve as epistemological guides that help to interpret the knowledge presented in a study. According to Agherdien (2009), studies that were theoretically developed yielded data that could be interpreted in more depth while, on the other hand, a substantial majority of authors who employed their theoretical frameworks in a very limited way ended up presenting findings that were simply descriptive in nature.

Literature has grown significantly in the area of mentoring with journals dedicated to such works (e.g., *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*; *International Journal of Mentoring & Coaching*), and empirical evidence has been gathered to present effective mentoring practices for guiding student teacher's development. The theory that guided this study is Hudson's five-factor model of mentoring for effective teaching (Hudson, 2010: 31-33). These factors are summarised as follows:

*Personal Attributes:* This includes being supportive of the mentee (student teacher), comfortable in talking about teaching practices and attentive listening to the mentee (student teacher). The mentor's personal attributes are used to encourage the mentee's (student teacher's) reflection on practices, and instil confidence and positive attitudes in the mentee.

*System Requirements:* In its simplest form, the mentor needs to articulate the aims, policies, and curricula required by an education system. However, the complexities for implementing system requirements may be noted in the pedagogical knowledge mentors need to articulate for effective teaching.

*Pedagogical Knowledge:* Effective mentors articulate how to plan for teaching; they timetable or schedule lessons for the mentee (student teacher). Preparation for teaching needs to be discussed, particularly with the location and use of resources. Mentors can assist with problem solving, teaching strategies, structure of lessons and pedagogic knowledge about curriculum and assessment.

*Modelling:* The mentor's enthusiasm as a teacher can present desirable teaching traits. Importantly, the teacher-student relationship is central to teaching and demonstrating a positive rapport with students can show the mentee (student teacher) how these behaviours can facilitate learning. The mentor also needs to model appropriate classroom language suitable for teaching, effective teaching, classroom management, hands-on lessons and well-designed lessons.

*Feedback:* Effective mentors articulate expectations and provide advice to the mentee (student teacher), they review lesson plans, observe how the mentee (student teacher) teaches, provide oral and written feedback. These factors are particularly useful in surveying practical experiences in and with teaching practice.

Against the background of the literature review and theoretical framework, the following methodology was deemed suitable for investigating the way in which a group of Unisa students experienced the mentoring aspect of teaching practice.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

A descriptive quantitative approach that applied logically structured questions (identified from the theory) as the data collection method seemed to be appropriate to gather information on student's experiences of mentoring during teaching practice. It was assumed that such information is crucial in determining strengths and weaknesses in the teaching practice of particularly distance learning students.

The initial draft questionnaire was improved by asking for input from three academics of the same department in Unisa. This added to both its content validity and face validity. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A focused on respondents' (student teachers) and mentors' demographical information, including gender, age, student teacher's position at a school and mentor's years of teaching experience. Section B covered student perspectives on the interaction between them and their mentors, including discussions, meetings, feedback from the mentor, evaluation or assessment and mentoring style. These issues are linked to *System Requirements* and *Feedback* from Hudson's mentoring model. Section C focused on the student teacher's experiences regarding attitude, relationships, understanding, and

learning experiences. These items are tied to *Personal Attributes, Pedagogical Knowledge* and *Modelling* in Hudson's (2010) mentoring model. In this section, student teachers had to respond on a four-point Likert scale to indicate if the item was relevant and, if so; to what extent they agreed or disagreed. In Section D four open-ended questions were asked as a way of obtaining in-depth understanding of an interactive and dynamic phenomenon. Respondents were asked what works well in the school's mentoring programme, what does not work well in the school's mentoring programme, to make recommendations to improve the school's mentoring programme, and to describes the *impact* of the mentoring on them personally.

All the respondents were enrolled for the same BEd (Early Childhood Development) programme. These respondents were doing their teaching practice in the primary school context representing all the provinces in South Africa. Fourth-year students were used as respondents because they had already successfully completed three periods of teaching practice. Therefore their perceptions contribute to greater validity and reliability of the data. Both genders and a wide range of student teacher ages (23 to 61 years of age) were involved. Moreover, these student teachers completed their practice in a wide variety of sites – from those that were rich in human and other resources to those that lacked even the most basic of resources. Different cultural groups were also involved. Posted questionnaires were used, because of the context of distance learning, to reach a sample of 250 respondents of which 140 questionnaires were received back constituting a response rate of 56%. This was regarded as satisfactory for the purposes of the research. Ethical measures were adhered to because participant anonymity, as well as confidentiality, was maintained at all times and participation was not compulsory. A covering letter was included to give an indication of how the respondents came to be involved in the investigation. Clear instructions were given to respondents on how to complete the questionnaires. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics version 21) was used to analyse data from the first three sections and provided descriptive statistics with frequencies and percentages for each item. The data in the final section were analysed by identifying themes and categories. The following findings are based on an analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Student teachers provided valuable insights into their experiences of mentorship during their teaching practice at primary schools. Their responses were registered in accordance with **items** associated with **factors for mentoring**, namely: Interaction between student teacher and mentor (*linked to System Requirements and Feedback*) and the relationship/partnership between the student teacher and mentor (tied to *Personal Attributes, Pedagogical Knowledge* and *Modelling*). Table 1 sets out the biographical data as gathered in Section A of the questionnaire. Table 1 shows that respondents consisted mainly of female student teachers (78.6%) and female mentors (72.9%). Most student teachers were under the age of 30 years (67%), while most mentors were between 40 and 49 years (40.7%). Student teachers' positions at the schools were almost equally distributed. Most mentors (79.3%) had more than 11 years of experience. This reflects the fact that student teachers were, on the whole, placed with experienced teachers at schools.

Table 1:  
Geographical data (section A of questionnaire)

Variable	*f	%
<b>Student teacher gender</b>		
Male	30	21.4
Female	110	78.6

Variable	*f	%
<b>Mentor gender</b>		
Male	35	25.0
Female	102	72.9
<b>Student teacher age (years)</b>		
30 and younger	95	67.9
31 - 39	34	24.3
40 - 49	9	6.4
50 and older	1	0.7
<b>Mentor age (years)</b>		
30 and younger	8	5.7
31 - 39	31	22.1
40 - 49	57	40.7
50 and older	38	27.1
<b>Student teachers' position at school</b>		
Learnership	31	22.0
Permanent	39	27.9
Part-time student	36	25.7
Other	34	24.3
<b>Mentor teaching experience (years)</b>		
1 - 5	5	3.6
6 - 10	24	27.1
11 - 20	61	43.6
more than 20	50	35.7

\*f is the official APA abbreviation for frequency.

The percentages associated with each demographic variable do not add up to 100% due to missing responses.

The next section of the questionnaire (section B) focused on the **interaction that existed between student teachers and mentors**. According to the data represented in Table 2, most of the respondents (80.0%) indicated that the focus of the mentoring they received was mainly on all aspects of teaching. Forty four per cent (44.3%) of the respondents specified that they had discussions or meetings with their mentors on a daily basis. According to 52.1% of the respondents, the feedback student teachers received from their mentor was mainly oral, while 42.9% indicated that the feedback they received from their mentor was an almost equal mixture of both written and oral feedback. Most of the respondents (73.6%) described their mentor's mentoring style as both task and people oriented. This shows that the interaction between mentors and mentees was important for keeping the relationship alive and that mentors were actively involved (in most cases). This is also highlighted by Blake & Landsdell (2000: 64) arguing that excellent performance by student teachers in the classroom depends on the conditions of learning. According to Hudson's (2010) mentoring model, feedback is essential for student teacher growth and it was good to see that regular feedback took place.

Table 2:  
Interaction between student teacher and mentor

Statement	*f	%
<b>The focus of the mentoring I receive is mainly on:</b>		
Completing my workbooks	5	3.6
Teaching my class	18	12.9
All aspects of teaching	112	80.0
Other	5	3.6
<b>My mentor and I have discussions/meetings:</b>		
Every day	62	44.3
Once a week	49	35.0
Once a fortnight	6	4.3
Other	23	16.4
<b>The feedback I receive from my mentor is:</b>		
Mainly in written format	3	2.1
Mainly orally	73	52.1
About equally in written and oral format	60	42.9
Other	4	2.8
<b>I would describe my mentor's mentoring style as mainly:</b>		
Task-oriented	19	13.6
People-oriented	13	9.3
Equally task- and people-oriented	103	73.0
Other	5	3.6

\*f is the official APA abbreviation for frequency.

Section C of the questionnaire deals with the student teachers' mentoring experiences during teaching practice with reference to the **relationship/partnership** between the student teacher and mentor. Table 3 indicates that the respondents rated their experiences generally as 'good'. Almost two thirds (64.3%) of the respondents indicated that their mentor had enough time available to be a dedicated mentor, while most of the respondents (99.3%) agreed that their mentor had a positive attitude towards being a mentor. This complements the factor of personal attributes (according to Hudson's mentoring model, 2010: 32) where mentors are supportive and contribute toward positive attitudes. What was also positive is the fact that 90.0% of the respondents indicated that their mentor motivated them as far as teaching itself is concerned, and 95.7% pointed out that their mentor had a professional attitude towards teaching. Only 50.7% of the respondents said that Unisa and their mentor worked as a team to develop their skills. This shows that there is a lack of communication between the educational provider (Unisa) and the schools. It is thus important to consider aspects of a good teacher education programme according to Blake & Landsell (2000: 68) where engagement of the HEI tutor, school mentor and student teacher in the assessment, evaluation and feedback of professional competence are pointed out.

Although most of the respondents (95.7%) agreed that their mentor was properly qualified, 40.0% indicated that a mentoring programme is needed. Most of the respondents (92.4%) pointed out that their mentor was a good role model who gave them valuable advice (93.6%), while 92.1% of the respondents specifically claimed that their mentor was willing to help them. This was influenced by how well the mentors and



student teachers were matched - 75% of respondents believed they were well matched. Hudson's (2010: 32) mentoring model also highlights the importance of mentors who perceive themselves as modelling practices. Only 13.6% of the respondents considered their relationship to have been influenced by cultural differences. The need to set clear goals for student mentoring was pointed out by 76.4% of respondents, and 77.1% made the point that it is important to stipulate clear time frames to reach goals. Seventy six per cent (76.4%) of respondents agreed that the school's infrastructure supported mentoring. Table 3 shows that more than 80% of the mentors made sure that students had positive learning experiences and helped student teachers to prepare for daily activities. More than 80% of mentors deliberately gave student teachers constructive criticism and encouragement and positive affirmation before recommending changes. These findings are in line with Hudson's (2010: 32) mentoring model, where most mentoring practices take place around the mentor's pedagogical knowledge. Mentors facilitate preparation, timetabling, classroom management, teaching strategies, and planning. According to Table 3, about two thirds of the mentors (63.6%) consciously addressed student teachers' negative emotions whenever these became apparent.

Indeed, Table 3 paints a positive picture of the mentors' influence on their student teachers. It also highlights a few aspects that need to be improved, like the partnership between the school/mentor and Unisa.

Table 3:

*Student teachers' mentoring experiences during teaching practice with reference to the relationship/partnership between the student teacher and mentor*

Statement	*f	Not applicable	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
My mentor has enough time available to be a dedicated mentor	139	0.7%	5.7%	28.6%	64.3%
My mentor has a positive attitude towards being a mentor	139	0%	2.1%	5.7%	99.3%
My mentor motivates for teaching	126	0.7%	2.1%	7.1%	90%
My mentor has a professional attitude towards teaching	134	0%	0.7%	3.6%	95.7%
My mentor and Unisa work as a team to develop my skills	137	7.9%	5.7%	33.6%	50.7%
My mentor is actively engaged in my mentoring	140	0.7%	2.1%	20.7%	76.4%
My mentor is well qualified	134	0.7%	0.7%	2.9%	95.7%
A training programme for mentors is desirable	140	10.7%	12.9%	36.4%	40%
My mentor is a good role model	140	0%	2.9%	5.7%	91.4%
My mentor gives me valuable advice	140	0%	0.7%	5.7%	93.6%

Statement	*f	Not applicable	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
My mentor is willing to help	140	0%	1.4%	6.4%	92.1%
My mentor and I are well matched	140	0%	1.4%	23.6%	75%
The relationship between me and my mentor is influenced by culture	136	22.1%	47.1%	14.3%	13.6%
Setting clear goals for the mentoring of student teachers is necessary	140	1.4%	2.1%	20.0%	76.4%
Stipulating clear time frames to reach goals is necessary	140	1.4%	3.6%	17.9%	77.1%
In general, the school's infrastructure supports mentoring	140	0.7%	3.6%	19.3%	76.4%
My mentor ensures that I have positive learning experiences	140	0%	2.1%	11.4%	86.4%
From my mentor I learn how to be well prepared for daily activities	140	0.7%	4.3%	12.1%	82.9%
My mentor gives positive affirmation before recommending changes	140	0%	1.4%	15.7%	82.9%
My mentor addresses my negative emotions (e.g. anxiety) when these arise	140	2.9%	6.4%	27.1%	63.6%

\*f is the official APA abbreviation for frequency.

*Responses to the open-ended questions of section D were as follows:*

Categories were identified, **highlighted** and used to support the quantitative findings. Respondents were asked what works well in the school's mentoring programme. According to a 31 year-old female respondent, her mentor supervision was very good. She believed that 'in service training takes place and it prepares me to be a good teacher'. These responses reflect on two aspects of Hudson's (2010) theory namely personal attributes (where mentors are supportive) and modelling (where mentors demonstrate effective teaching). Another respondent specified that 'to prepare classroom activities with my mentor works well in our school'. A 40 year-old female participant said her mentor gave her time to observe first and gave her pointers on how to improve her lesson plans. Another participant believed that 'motivation was positive from my mentor'.

Most of the respondents experienced the schools as being very supportive, felt part of the school and felt great about being involved in practical teaching. Students participate legitimately in teaching when they are treated as actual colleagues (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 53-54; 122). In other words learning is a social process where identity, membership (a need to belong in order to learn) and inter-personal relationships are significant. This happens when they are allowed to participate 'fully in a task, job or profession' (Brown & Duguid, in Handley, Sturdy, Fincham & Clark, 2006: 644). This sort of participation depends on

the mentor, who is the dominant partner in the teacher-student relationship. The social process at schools is significant in terms of identity, membership and interpersonal relations. These findings are in line with the quantitative data, indicating that the **interactions that existed between student teachers and mentors** were in most cases good and that the **relationship/partnership** between student teachers and mentors were positive.

Respondents were also asked what is not working well in the school's mentoring programme. Some respondents reported destructive or depressing experiences. A 25 year-old male reported that different mentor teachers gave different guidelines for the presentation of lessons - this caused confusion. If we compare this response with Hudson's (2010) theory, this is not a good example of **modelling** by a mentor. Another respondent pointed out that her mentor was also a class teacher and therefore did not have enough time to mentor her. One participant implied that student teachers are misused when teachers are absent. **Personal attributes** is also one of the factors mentioned by Hudson (2010: 32) where mentors are supposed to support student teachers and contribute towards a positive attitude.

Students are sometimes disappointed when they realise that teacher mentors are not always quite the experts the students expected them to be. It is also mentioned by Hudson (2010: 32) that mentors need to provide pedagogical knowledge and viewpoints about effective teaching practices. Respondents were asked to make recommendations to improve the school's mentoring programme. Many student teachers pleaded for a more structured and standardised system that made plain what was expected of both mentors and student teachers. It was suggested that the mentor be prepared for the arrival of a student. A formal mentor training programme was also recommended. Respondents asked for less repetition and observation – one lesson observation per learning area would be enough. A 23 year-old female participant asked Unisa to 'tell the school principals that all educators in the school are there for a student teacher and not only the mentor teacher'.

Respondents were asked what the *impact* of mentoring was on them personally. In general, mentoring experiences were positive. One participant made the following remark: 'Very positive, it prepares me to be a fully trained teacher.' A 25 year-old male participant believed: 'It helped me to prepare and organise myself more constructively. I know now how to use my time effectively and use the relevant resources.' Another participant revealed that 'it has shown me how enjoyable and rewarding teaching is'. From another participant, the following comment: 'It reassured me that if I did something which didn't work, the mentor would be there to guide me and advise me.' Another male participant said: 'Having a mentor is like having a role model; you can pick up qualities from that mentor.'

Finally, a student should develop an identity as a teacher during teaching practice. According to Hodges (1998: 273), practice and identity are continually informed and reconstructed. This occurs when mentors behave in an encouraging way towards their student teachers. It seems that teaching practice has a significant and wide impact on students' personal and professional development. In short, the findings emphasise the importance of collaboration between all the role players in teaching practice: Unisa, the school, the mentor and the individual student teacher.

## CONCLUSION

A challenge facing distance learning is that all role players in the school practice system should make a concerted effort to support the learning process of the student teacher during teaching practice. To overcome pedagogical distance, one of the principles in teacher training programmes, namely mentoring should contribute towards constructive teaching and learning during the teaching practice period at schools. In line with Hudson's five-factor model of mentoring for effective teaching, mentor teachers at schools play an important role in helping and assessing student teachers while they (i.e. student teachers)

do teaching practice. This research focused on the mentoring challenges as these can be deduced from experiences of student teachers while doing teaching practice at schools. The findings are also relevant for other modes of work-based learning of distance learning students. This quantitative study revealed data on mentoring practices to identify possible weak points in the current system. The study showed that, student teachers claimed that their mentorship experience was a positive experience in general, but it also highlighted the following mentoring challenges:

Lecturers and mentors have to work as a team and coordinate their efforts to enhance mentorship in schools. (The fact that only 50.7% of the respondents claimed that their mentor and Unisa worked as a team to develop their skills is something that requires further investigation. This implies that some of the factors of Hudson's theory for implementing system requirements were not consistent in this study).

Mentor teachers should concentrate on the significant impact that the personal attributes of mentors had on the mentoring relationship that impinged on the effectiveness of the mentor-student teacher interaction. (This refers to Hudson's theory where mentors have to encourage mentees and instil positive attitudes).

Results further show that mentor teachers should realise the importance of supportive and modelling aspects of mentoring. (This refers to Hudson's theory, focusing on the behaviour of mentors).

Lecturers should visit schools on a more regular basis to overcome the transactional distance. (This links with Hudson's theory, indicating that pedagogical knowledge, including lesson plans, teaching strategies, and so on, should be discussed).

From the quantitative and qualitative data it was clear that better mentor training should take place. This must include training on the influence of mentoring styles, how to negotiate rules and give feedback, how to deal with gender and cultural differences, and how to deal with student teachers' negative emotions.

It was also clear from the research that mentoring during teaching practice needs to be carefully thought through and discussed by the various role players so that there is greater clarity about what is expected of mentors and schools where student teachers are placed. A sound relationship and strong collaboration between the education institution and the work placement (in this case the university and the schools) and the need for training of the workplace mentors (in this case teachers) has bearing for all programmes which include WIL as part of the curriculum.

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# A managerial perspective of the role of secondary school learners in the development and implementation of a code of conduct<sup>1 2</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigated the rights of learners on the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) in secondary schools to develop and implement a code of conduct for learners through their participation on the school governing body (SGB). The study attempted to determine how active involvement of learners on the SGB is perceived by both the RCL and School Management Teams (SMTs). The problem was investigated by means of a literature review and qualitative inquiry. Individual interviews were held with RCL members and chairpersons, school principals and a chairperson of one SGB in three secondary schools in Tshwane, South Africa. Findings indicated barriers to the roles of learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct.*

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

The problem of discipline in secondary schools has kept writers such as Moles (1990), Furtwengler (1996), Palardy (1996), Pienaar (2003) and Le Mottee (2005) searching for remedies to curb poor discipline. A number of these remedies touch on the role that can be played by learners in making decisions concerning discipline.

The South African School Act (SASA), Act No 84 of 1996, is a step in this direction. The SASA (RSA, 1996: 23) mandates that secondary school learners must participate in the governance of their school. It stipulates that the representative council of learners (RCL) – an organ for learner representation in government schools – should be part of the school governing body (SGB) and be vested with the responsibility of drawing up a code of conduct for learners. A code of conduct for learners is the most important document in maintaining discipline and in managing the role of learners in developing and implementing that code of conduct. Against this background, there is a need to research what role is accorded secondary school learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct, as well as what roles they are actually playing in the development and implementation of such a code.

No doubt, this poses a huge challenge to the SGB and school management which has been assigned the responsibility of implementing a code of conduct for learners, and has prompted writers such as Mncube

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(2005: 56) and Heystek (in De Groof, Heystek, Malherbe & Squelch, 2000: 93-110) to question if the RCL is effective in school governance.

In his research, Heystek (2001: 211) reveals that learners do not make positive contributions at the SGB meetings, and when they do, such contributions are generally viewed with scepticism. Heystek also points out that learners are excluded from some SGB meetings, which could prevent them from participating in developing and implementing the school's code of conduct. This confirmed the findings of studies conducted by Sithole (1995), Van Wyk (1998), McPherson (2000), and Carrim & Tshoane (2000).

According to Woods (2005: 126) and Cockburn (2006) learners should play a role in more democratic forms of distributed leadership, decision-making and policy implementation, as they constitute a major stakeholder group. In emphasising the importance of learner participation, Heystek (2001: 210) states that learners are supposed to be the main focus in schools. In the same paper, he recommends research to determine whether the contributions that learners make (some of which are in the area of the code of conduct) are realised.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To address the research problem, an inquiry using a qualitative approach was undertaken in order to obtain divergent and diversified perceptions of current practice in terms of management of discipline and the role of secondary school learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct. A case study approach was employed to explore the extent to which the problem manifested in the secondary schools in Gauteng Province, in general, and the Tshwane South District, in particular. Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit (2004: 41) state that a case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. A variety of data-gathering methods was employed, including an overview of available literature in journals, books, official documents and educational legislation to explore the work of other writers on the role of learners in improving discipline and the function of management, particularly as it relates to South African schools. Considering the ban on corporal punishment and the search for alternatives, information-rich documents such as SASA (RSA, 1996) and publications of the Department of Education (1999a, 1999b, 2001) were important for this research.

## SAMPLE AND DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOLS

Of the 52 secondary schools in the Tshwane South District, three were identified by purposeful sampling. In order to obtain divergent and diversified perceptions of current practice in terms of the management of discipline and the role of secondary school learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct, schools in different locations were used: School 1 is a former Model C school (this is a school which has received a state subsidy in the form of teachers' salaries to a fixed learner: teacher ratio but would have to raise the balance of its budget through fees and donations) that draws its learners mainly from a privileged and affluent environment. School 2 is situated in a densely populated urban area of Tshwane South. It is a technical school and draws its learners from various regions in Tshwane. School 3 is located in a disadvantaged black township community of Tshwane South District. All three schools are registered with the Gauteng Department of Education and are expected to comply with certain government regulations.

## DATA GATHERING

Observations, interviews and document analysis were the principal methods of data gathering. To uncover the fundamental details of this study, informed participants were identified and involved through individual and focus interviews. A common interview schedule was used for all the participants, regardless of their constituency. The chairperson of the SGB and the principal of each school were interviewed because they direct the affairs of the school governing body/the school, which has been charged with the responsibility



of adopting a code of conduct for its learners. Individual interviews were conducted with learner representatives who were RCL members on the SGB in each school. These interviews revealed the extent of learners' involvement, if any, and their perspective of involvement. Individual interviews are important to ensure that the participants feel safe and confident enough to divulge any information. According to Fraenkel & Wallen (1993: 384), this 'is a way research verifies or refutes impressions'.

Focus group interviews with class representatives of Grades 8 to 12 in each school (three focus groups in total) were conducted. This created an atmosphere of relaxed peer association where learners felt free to express their feelings and opinions. As Vaughn, Shay Schunm & Sinagub (1996: 4) explain, 'the major assumption of a focus group interview is that with a permissive atmosphere fostering a range of opinions, a more complete and revealing understanding of issues will be obtained'. It was assumed that given these circumstances, learners would be free to express their feelings about the code of conduct, the extent of their representation in its development and their willingness to adhere to it.

A total of nine interviews were conducted, comprising an individual interview with the chairperson of the SGB from School 3 and individual interviews with the principals of Schools 1 and 2; three individual interviews with three learner representatives/chairpersons of the RCL of each school; and three focus group interviews with nine members of the RCL from Schools 1 and 2 and six members of the RCL from School 3. A total of thirty participants were interviewed. All interviews were recorded on audio tape and transcribed immediately thereafter. Gestures were noted. In the case of focus group interviews, flip charts were used to link responses with broader topics.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analysed using the procedures typical of qualitative research. Interviews were transcribed and coded, and responses grouped according to the questions asked. The participants' responses to each question were studied, thus gauging the views held by the majority of respondents. A manual analysis of data was possible owing to the reasonable size of the sample.

In addition, documentary sources were examined. The documents were used only to complement observations and interviews and enhance accountability; as such, these were not necessarily analysed in detail as substantive evidence. The main documents used were meeting agendas and minutes of the school governing bodies, letters and annual reports to parents, and discipline records. For ethical reasons, access to documents and records was negotiated in advance.

## ETHICAL ISSUES

Approval for the research to be conducted in the relevant schools was first obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education. The informed consent of the participants was sought and they were given the normal guarantees regarding privacy and the right to withdraw from the study if a need arises. The following ethical issues were honoured:

**Informed Consent:** The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their participation. The participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw their participation at any time.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:** In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the identity of the schools and participants were kept anonymous. To this effect schools were given fictitious names.

**Permission:** was sought from the school principals to allow the use of documentary materials related to school governance matters.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned by constitutional policies, theories and legislative provisions for managing discipline in educational management in developed and developing countries. Learners are entitled to a secure and orderly environment that is conducive to learning and proper teaching. The research seeks to discover and interpret the situation of discipline in secondary schools from the point of view of learner participation in developing a code of conduct through the mechanism of the Representative Council of Learners, with a view to offering a solution to the problem of discipline that will help learners to develop self-control and self-discipline. It offers an educational law perspective on the problem, with the aim of presenting a model for dealing with indiscipline in schools so that a secure environment may be restored. The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996: 8) is the legal document that stipulates the limits of learner involvement in schools. A literature study was done in order to determine the situation of discipline and the theory and management of discipline prevalent in South Africa, in particular.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section combines significant data from the literature review with significant themes that emerged from interviews, observations and analysis of documents during the empirical inquiry. These emerging themes and sub-themes are as follows: perceived problems of indiscipline in secondary school learners, which include lack of discipline in the secondary schools, causes of indiscipline and effects of indiscipline; barriers to the role of learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct; lack of collaboration by the principal/management/SGB/educators, thus creating frustration in the Representative Council of Learners; conflict and communication barriers; and a code of conduct as a barrier. The findings are presented in the following categories:

- Lack of discipline in the participating schools.
- Barriers to the role of learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct.
- Lack of collaboration by the principal/management/SGB/educators, thus creating frustration in the Representative Council of Learners.
- Conflict and communication barriers.
- Code of conduct/policy as a barrier.
- School programme-related barriers (rigid timetable, timing of school governing body's meetings, lack of extracurricular activities and planning).

The researcher used the participants' responses verbatim. Quotations are either enclosed in quotation marks or the text is indented.

### *Lack of discipline in the participating schools*

The data collected show that there is a lack of discipline among the learners of the participating schools. Examples include being disrespectful to those in authority, smoking, bunking, late coming, drug abuse, disruption of classes, making a noise, theft, jumping the fence, vandalism, wearing the wrong uniform, fighting, bullying and coming to classes with the wrong materials. All the participants agreed that discipline is a big problem in teaching and learning.

The participants of School 2 discussed the influence of alcohol, drug abuse and class disruption, among other problems, in their school. One of the focus-group participants lamented:

There is a serious lack of discipline at our school. I think we as a school struggling with discipline. Educators, prefects and the RCL are finding it difficult to maintain the high standard of discipline that the school used to have.

All the participants agreed that the issue of discipline is crucial to teaching and learning in schools. This research has shown that several factors are responsible for indiscipline in schools. These are: the home environment, the school environment, and the society. The first, the **home environment** relates to the learners' socio-economic background and parental involvement in schools. The participating learners, and principals identify home as the main cause of indiscipline in the school. Most of the participants who spoke on this issue felt that the solution should also come from home. The data indicate that among the causes of indiscipline, home ranks highest by appearing seven times out of the twenty-one responses shared by the four (home, school, society and learner) factors. The participants believe that if there is no discipline at home it would affect the discipline at school in the area of developing and implementing a code of conduct, which is basically about managing discipline. Secondly, the **school environment** relates to lapses in the school management, absence of a code of conduct and educator neglect of duty/absenteeism. The participants complained that the school is a factor of indiscipline among learners in the areas of management, control of educators' neglect of duty/absenteeism and developing and implementing a code of conduct. Six responses out of the twenty-one responses for causes of indiscipline in the participating schools are devoted to school environment factors. Thirdly, the **society** relates to the environment, the democratisation process and the admission policy of the technical schools. Modern society, democratic changes and environmental influences are some of the factors that affect discipline in the school according to the data collected in this study. This factor has four responses out of the twenty-one responses on the factors that contribute to indiscipline in the participating schools; and the learner, which pertains to the underachievement of the learner. The data reveal that the learners themselves contribute, to a certain percentage, to the problem of indiscipline in the way of underachievement and unruly behaviour. Three responses out of the twenty-one responses for causes of indiscipline in the participating schools are devoted to learner-related factors.

All these factors have led to conflict between the educators and the learners, as well as disrupted teaching and learning, a low standard of education and low self-esteem among learners.

#### *Recommendations for improvement, based on the results of the research*

It was evident from the findings that disciplinary measures were top down in nature and learners were rarely involved in the formulation of school rules and in deciding the kind of punishment an offender should receive. The study recommends the use of learner-centred disciplinary measures. In drawing classroom and school rules, learners should be involved. This will assist in making them feel a sense of ownership of the rules and the need to uphold them. Enforcement of such rules is guaranteed as the learners are bound to be supportive as opposed to rules imposed on them. As Furtwengler (1996: 36) rightly points out, people can be motivated if they feel they have control over their own lives and would assume more responsibility if they have power and influence in the decisions that concern them. The study also recommends compulsory short courses on classroom management for educators as these would assist educators to understand, appreciate and use alternative and supportive disciplinary measures.

#### *Barriers to the role of learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct*

The results of this research show that there are many barriers to the role of learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct. They also identified variations in the application of the role of learners in the management of discipline in schools. These barriers are:

#### *Lack of collaboration by the principal/management/educators/school governing body*

Results show that the principals/management/educators/SGB are apathetic about collaborating with the RCL and they tend to exclude the latter – either totally or partially – from the SGB meetings. This creates a barrier that prevents learners from being able to participate in developing and implementing a code of conduct.

In School 1, the principal claims that he has excluded learners from participating in certain issues, such as discipline and school accounts, at the SGB meetings because he feels that those issues are 'beyond them'.

The RCL members from School 2 complained that the school management team turns down all their ideas, without even considering them. These members felt very frustrated and they claim that the learners who gave them their mandate have lost confidence in them and blame them for not being effective. A participant expresses this frustration as follows:

They [learners] say 'you are not doing anything, you are not doing anything' because they gave us things (proposal). They [learners] usually come to us with papers and we discuss for several hours and come up with good proposals but they [learners] don't see results. Each time we come back to them [learners] with such lame excuses given to us by the management, they think that they gave us their vote and we can't do anything. They [learners] say we let them down. So our voices are not being heard. The learners are fed up.

*Recommendations for improvement, based on the results of the research*

As recommended in the Guide for Representative Councils of Learners (Department of Education, 1999b), bureaucratic roadblocks between the principal and learners; between learners and educators; between the chairperson of the SGB and the principal; and between the chairperson of the SGB and the learners; need to be removed. The management of the affected schools needs to convene a meeting at which the learners and educators will be able to table their problems and find a way to resolve them.

A proper structure is required for RCL participation in the affected schools, for example the school governing bodies of black schools in the previously disadvantaged areas need to devise a structure to include their learners in their meetings. If learners are not permitted to participate in certain issues discussed by the school governing body, then the policy should dictate which these are and arrange an alternative time/forum for discussing these issues.

There is a need for the learners to be trained in communication skills. According to Furtwengler (1996: 37-45), training in communication skills and breaking the communication barrier between educators and learners are some of the techniques that may be used to improve discipline in the school through the learners' involvement in the programme: 'Reaching success through involvement'.

*Conflict/communication barriers*

Conflicts and communication barriers in the form of bureaucratic roadblocks in accessing the principal and conflict within the various groups of learners emerged as barriers to the role of learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct.

Participants at all three schools complained about the conflict that exists between the RCL members and the other learners they represent. According to the participants, this conflict is a result of jealousy on the part of the other learners. A participant from School 1 explained it this way:

There will always be guys who are jealous. There will always be guys who gang up against you. They give you trouble if you are disciplining them. But then if you are disciplining them you just keep your head and maintain your cool. Even with your own peers, there are guys who feel that they should be the one to be where you are right now. They will go out of their way to make sure you have hassles.

*Recommendations for improvement, based on the results of the research*

Extra-curricular activities such as sports will build the learners' team spirit and teach them to exercise self-control. The disadvantaged areas need special support in this regard. There is also a need for further

training of the RCL members, especially in the area of communication. It is essential for all the learners playing a role in the implementation of a code of conduct to be trained in team building and promoting unity. Networking between the RCL of various schools is recommended, but this should be scheduled and monitored by the school management teams. There is a need for clearly defined duties and rights of the principal with respect to those of the chairperson of the school governing body, and these two persons need to work together in the interest of the learners.

#### *Code of conduct/policy as a barrier*

A code of conduct/policy was identified as a barrier, which is contradictory because schools need a code of conduct to enforce discipline. Nevertheless, where this code of conduct/policy is inadequate it constitutes a barrier to the role of learners in managing discipline. Some schools have written policies and constitutions about the role of learners, while others do not.

None of the learners in the three schools said that they had been involved in developing their code of conduct. The principal of School 1 said that the code of conduct at his school had been in existence for decades, and they merely revise it every year in consultation with the Representative Council of Learners. The participants at Schools 2 and 3 complained about the lack of visibility of their code of conduct and also said that the merit system was not being implemented to enable the affected learners to be rewarded. They also complained that certain practices were not included in the code of conduct. Some of them complained that discipline was not taken seriously, especially regarding disruptive behaviour in class. A participant from School 2 had the following to say:

All we like to see is things taken seriously like lack of discipline because things that are put in the code of conduct. They are taking things like weapon. Ok he/she can be expelled ok then how about the student who always disturb in classes, they are thinking that this person be suspended like two three days, then afterwards he comes back and then the same thing happens. [He complains of the management's opinion over what constitutes serious misbehaviour and deserves more attention which differs from the learners'.] So I don't see anything happening. I feel that it's useless to take a kid to a disciplinary hearing and then after he does the same thing again. A number of learners have been taken to the disciplinary hearing without any effect. So I feel that discipline will have to be taken to another level.

#### *Recommendations for improvement, based on the results of the research*

A well-developed code of conduct that elicits learner participation and which is visible and reinforced at the beginning of every term will go a long way in helping learners to develop self-control. The schools that lack a policy regarding the participation of learners need to put one in place urgently. It is also important to implement the merit system in the code of conduct at the right time, before it becomes a disciplinary problem. The Representative Council of Learners, disciplinary committee and management of the affected schools need to sit together and agree on what constitutes serious misbehaviour.

#### *School programme-related barriers (rigid timetable, timing of school governing body's meetings, lack of extracurricular activities and planning)*

The study identified the following aspects pertaining to the school programme as barriers to the role of learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct: a rigid timetable, timing of the SGB meetings, lack of extracurricular activities and lack of planning. Some participants complained that they were unable to fulfil their role in the RCL because of the school programme.

With regard to how the learners can contribute to discipline in their school through developing and implementing a code of conduct for learners, the RCL members of School 3 commented on the efforts they have made in this regard, as well as the barriers they have experienced that relate to school programmes:

We are trying to make school more fun, practical. It's, kind of, boring coming to school doing the same things every year. You, like, want to make new things, make change, do some things different. [She complains about lack of extra-curricular activities in the school] RCL will create understanding and change the school.

*Recommendations for improvement, based on the results of the research*

It is important to have a flexible school programme and timetable that make provision for the learners' role in developing self-discipline through participating in concerts and other extracurricular activities. Learners should receive the timetable/school programme at the beginning of the term. SGB meetings should include the RCL and should be scheduled to take place during the day; alternatively, if these meetings are held in the evening, the safety of the learners should be considered.

## CONCLUSION

The problems of discipline are considerable and very formidable for educators and it is quite obvious that educators alone cannot solve them. The learner who is at the centre of it all should be encouraged to participate. The literature review and the result of the investigation show that it is compulsory for learners to participate in the development and implementation of a code of conduct through the RCL and through their representation in the school governing body. Learners should be consulted in their own affairs. Research conducted by Cockburn (2006) and Mncube (2008) shows that they are willing to play that part.

The investigation reveals that this process is saddled with a lot of barriers with the result that the learners in some black schools are not being represented in the SGB and in the schools where they are represented; they are not allowed to participate in the hearing and decisions of certain nature. The results showed that the majority of participants were negative about the role of secondary school learners in developing and implementing a code of conduct. This investigation also shows that the learners are not involved in the development of their code of conduct. The emphasis on the implementation of a code of conduct is on self-discipline and self-control, which is shown in the literature.

The literature reveals that a participatory self-discipline approach will help learners learn democratic principles that will enable them to make positive decisions as democratic citizens. The South African Schools Act stipulates that the process of drawing the code of conduct for learners involves learners exploring their own ideas, deciding on the consequences of the behaviour, revisiting, evaluating and changing things if necessary. But this process is not done in black schools. In this case, the support of the principals, the educator and the chairpersons of school governing bodies in giving the learners the opportunity, creating extra-curricular activities and the right environment will go a long way to remedy the situation. This study reveals that learners desire to leave their footprints on the sand of time in their schools. They should be motivated to do so.

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# Adolescents' Gender Stereotypes, Differences and Other Aspects of Behaviour in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*While in metropolitan countries gender stereotypes has been a topic of extensive research, this has not been the case in African countries including South Africa. Such a deficit served as a motivation for investigating the extent to which gender stereotypes among adolescents prevail in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The sample was based on 599 Junior Secondary School students in grades 7-9 in Mthatha Eastern Province, South Africa. A questionnaire on gender stereotypes consisting of ten statements was administered to 239 girls and 360 boys drawn from five Junior Secondary Schools participating in the study. A chi square was used for statistical analysis. Based on the entire sample, the responses for each one of the ten statements in the questionnaire, early adolescents scored statistically significant on gender stereotypes. Further analysis based on gender showed statistically significant differences in gender stereotypes. The findings confirmed the findings of researchers in gender stereotypes in metropolitan countries. As reported in the literature, South African early adolescents experience gender stereotypes as observed in other cultures. Such results have implications for children, parents, teachers, educational institutions and society at large.*

## INTRODUCTION

This investigation explored the extent to which gender stereotypes of adolescents prevail in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The investigation aimed at relating such stereotyping to how it impacts on learners in their school work, decision making in terms of subject choice and career to be pursued. It is vital that such knowledge be available for guidance not only in terms of school performance and career choices, but also in terms of child-rearing practices.

By gender stereotyping is meant the traditional perception of boys and girls as well as men and women regarding themselves and each other in the context of what they can or cannot do or whether they are capable of doing well or not so well; how they ought to think or behave purely on the ground of their gender (Delamere & Shaw, 2010; Holdsworth, 2007; Lee-Thomas, Sumsion & Robert, 2005; Martin, 1995). Gender stereotypes may further be defined as 'social differences between women and men that have been learned over time and may differ within and between cultures, rather than the biological characteristics which differentiate people as males or females' (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008: 2).

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In a study of black South African school-going adolescents aged 15 and 17 years, Gaganakis (2003) argues that sex role stereotyping occurs early in life as one's gender is subjected to a socialisation process leading to internalisation and integration in one's personality. Consequently, girls are associated with being passive, nurturing, needing approval, emotional, intuitive, in contrast to boys who are perceived to be rational, assertive, competitive, ambitious, curious and independent. In another South African study of adolescents, Phetla (2007) points out that gender roles are defined on the basis of one's culture marked by differentiation of both girls and boys as well as men and women, as they go through socialisation. Part of this socialisation entails the coinage and usage of nicknames among South Africans (De Klerk & Bosch, 1996). In nicknaming there is reflected the nurturing and nurtured role of women in society, as well as the difference in social power between men and women. Such nicknaming is partly instrumental in promoting stereotypes more than may be in the fixed language used. Coinage and usage of nicknames among predominantly South African adolescent bearers and users is dominated by males more than females, and the latter being associated with affect more than being humorous and critical effect (*ibid*).

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The literature review reported in South Africa, other African countries and western countries, in particular the US, constituted the conceptual framework. Special reference is made to the US because more research has been carried out on gender stereotypes than has been the case in any other country worldwide. Knowledge obtained from such a conceptual framework will be extended to examining how such knowledge can be transferred in combating the prevalence of gender stereotyping in the South African context.

According to Mwamwenda (2004), child rearing practices in South African ethnic populations, as well as how men and women relate to each other, gender stereotypes in numerous ways are clearly stipulated and defined in their socialisation, interactions and functions in various societal dimensions. Moreover, in South Africa, gender stereotypes are not only the domain in basic education covering Grades R to 12, as they are also reflected at public institutions of higher education, in terms of student enrolments, there are more men pursuing studies in the field of science, engineering and technology than there are women (Council on Higher Education, 2012: 26). There are almost three times as many women studying education than men (*ibid*).

Apart from South Africa, gender stereotypes have been observed in other African countries such as Nigeria and Sudan (Ifegbesan, 2010; Mwamwenda, 2011, 2004; Greany, 2008). In Nigerian gender stereotypes (Ifegbesan, 2010) men are associated with being strong, brave, and intellectual and identifies other stereotypes as self, school, family, cultural and gender stereotypes. Women are associated with being homely, warm, passive, lacking in competence, expressiveness. Further there are reports on teachers being accused of fostering gender stereotypes in school subjects and academic achievement. While Mwamwenda (2011) would not make similar charges against South African teachers, it is important to note that South African Junior Secondary School teachers in the Eastern Cape gender stereotype in subjects such as Mathematics, Sciences in favour of boys were very high. This being so, one wonders what kind of impact this must have had on their teaching such subjects. In Kenya, Bosire, Mondoh & Barmao (2008) present the argument that gender stereotypes have been part of education in Africa long before the encounter with Western civilisation. Traditional education was gender stereotyped, in so far as it was based on the sex and gender of the learner, and such learners were taught separately from each other. The knowledge, skills and cultural values transmitted were different and stereotyped, and in some cases calling for teachers of the same sex to provide such education. Moreover, even following the arrival of westernisation and the introduction of formal schooling, as we know it today, they started running both co-education and single sex schools, reflecting their own home background.

While the preceding section primarily addresses gender stereotypes as reported in several African countries, which is the focus of the present study, it is important to note that more studies on gender stereotypes have been carried out in metropolitan countries for a number of decades than has been the case in African countries (Mwamwenda, 2011; Ifegbesan, 2010). Such studies have been conducted on two dimensions, namely gender stereotypes in their own right, as well as gender stereotypes as they relate to school performance in the various subjects offered in their curricula. In fact, the very motive for undertaking this study is based on the researcher's exposure to gender stereotypes, as observed in Canada and the US, where he has studied and worked for a number of years. A brief review of literature for this component will be presented here.

Stereotypes are evident early in life as children interact with their environment in various ways (Gender Bias in the Classroom, 2009; Kane, 2009; Greary, 1998). While there may be some modification and adjustment of stereotypes as children grow, fundamentally the impact of stereotypes remains permanent in the lives of people, as they interact with others and make various decisions in life (The Development of Gender, 2001). As children grow and develop socially, physically, emotionally and cognitively, they are inevitably subjected to the process of socialisation whereby they learn from parents, siblings, older children, peers, adults in the community and teachers at school, the numerous types of behaviour that govern their behaviours in a gendered fashion, e.g. in a family setting, and in a communal context (Gender Norms, 2012; Gender Stereotypes, 2004; Gaganakis, 2003).

Most societies draw a distinction between the behaviour on the basis of gender stereotypes, meaning there are different ways girls and boys as well as men and women are culturally expected to conduct themselves in various settings (Kinoti, 2012; Lee & Mushner, 2008; Mwamwenda, 2004). Failure to do so is followed by censure, as correct adherence is followed by reinforcement of one kind or other. On the basis of stereotypes, it must be conceded, some people's behaviour is stigmatised, valued, despised, devalued, respected, advantaged or disadvantaged (Wilde, 2009; Mwamwenda, 2004; Spencer, Steele & Quinn, 1999).

From an education perspective, it is interesting to note that when children join school, what is already known about children stereotypes is reinforced by teachers in their interaction both in the classroom in particular, as well as outside the classroom in general (Mwamwenda, 2011; How Teachers Influence Gender Roles, 2007). In a study of 48 teachers' perceptions of 300 grades 3 & 4 students' competence and effort in Mathematics, their responses were in agreement with gender stereotypes in which it is argued that boys are better than girls in their performance of Mathematics (Wilhelm, 2009; Tiedemann, 2006). Ifegbesan (2010) and Kane (2009) further point out that in the context of school and learning, both the attitudes and actions of teachers have a bearing on children stereotypes.

Leedy, Lalonde & Runk (2003) investigated attitudes held towards Mathematics by boys and girls in which it was observed that both boys and girls held the stereotypical view that Mathematics belongs to the domain of men. This led the researchers to conclude that teachers and parents play a significant role in enabling students' performance in Mathematics. Brandell and Staberg (2008) carried out a study consisting of 1300 secondary school students aged 15 and 17 years of age in Sweden, with the objective of finding out whether participants would classify the study of mathematics as a male, female or neutral domain. The results showed that mathematics was identified as a male domain. The older participants who were 17 years associated mathematics with males more than was the case with the young participants who were 15 years of age. Moreover, the latter who were registered in a science programme held stronger gender stereotypical beliefs that without doubt, mathematics was a male domain subject.

In a study of gender differences in lunar-related scientific and mathematical understandings, Wilhelm (2009) concluded that boys' performance in both astronomy and mathematics was better than that of girls.

In Kenya, Bosire *et al* (2008) examined students' performance in Mathematics in national examinations at the end of primary education. The results showed that boys' performance was superior to their female counterpart.

Moreover, in a study of 52 first and 65 second grade boys and girls taught by 17 teachers, it was shown that women teachers who had anxiety about their competence in Mathematics ended up with students (girls) who showed a similar characteristic (Schmid, 2010). This led to the conclusion that female elementary school teachers who are concerned about their own Mathematics skills may be transferring that to the young girls they teach.

The gender stereotypes observed among boys and girls in their performance in Mathematics also have been observed in Science where boys perform better than girls (Nosek, Smyth, Sriram *et al*, 2009; Woods, Kurtz-Costes, Stephanie, 2008; Schmader, Johns & Barquissau, 2004).

While in the lower grades, there is not much difference in girls' and boys' performance in Mathematics and Science, this is not the case at high school and university where boys take the lead in both Mathematics and Science (Woods *et al*, 2008). It is argued therefore that messages - that may be either explicit or subtle emanating from parents, teachers and adults - regarding gender stereotypes in Mathematics and Science may have a negative effect on the students' attitude and performance in such subjects (*ibid*) 'Gender stereotypes might lead to gender differences in Mathematics and Science ability either by enhancing the self-competence of boys or by inhibiting Mathematics interest, self-competence perceptions and identification in girls' (*ibid*: 2).

It is further pointed out that 'It is clear that many parents and teachers believe that boys are more capable in Mathematics and Science than girls' (*ibid*: 3). This is in agreement with Jovanovic (2006) who presents the argument that during middle school years, there is a noticeable drop in girls' confidence to make a success of studying Mathematics and Science.

It is nevertheless, significant to note that, there are other studies which have not confirmed gender stereotypes that boys are better than girls in Mathematics and Science (Lee & Mushner, 2008). For example, in a study of middle school and elementary school girls and middle school boys, it was concluded that in both Mathematics and Science girls were better than boys (Rowley, Kurtz-Costes, Mistry & Feagan, 2007). Steele (2003) reports that gender differences in Mathematics and Science performance remain undetected till high school and university years. Similarly, Spencer, Steele & Quinn (1999) argue that differences in mathematics and science become more pronounced at senior level of high school and college/university level. In fact, before this period, it has been demonstrated that in some cases, girls outperform boys in their performance in Mathematics and Science (Thomson, 2001; Early, Eccles & Lord, 1993).

According to research findings, there exists a relationship between gender differences and preferential treatment, classroom dynamics and students' performance or preference for school subjects (How Teachers Influence Gender Roles, 2007; Leedy, Lalonde & Runk, 2003). Teachers treat boys differently from girls. Boys are identified more readily and more attention is paid to them and asked questions more frequently.

Kane (2009) proposes a number of factors that may be accountable for gender stereotypes in society, some of which are due to physical differences between men and women which predispose them to behave differently. According to Vedantam (2006) one of the reasons girls do not perform so well in Mathematics and Sciences is that they have been told directly or indirectly that only boys are good and capable of dealing with such subjects. Hall, Davis & Bolen (1999) and McElroy (2005) stress that the reason for girls being less confident to handle Mathematics is based on their having been told thus by parents and their teachers and other means, such as the media and books. And therefore children fall in line as some

sort of self-fulfilling prophecy (WikEd, 2010; Frawley, 2005; Jost & Kay, 2003). Moreover, stereotypical behaviour is a function of males' and females' differential upbringing and life experience starting with their birth, and as they grow into childhood, adolescence and adulthood (Kane, 2009). According to Smith, Sansome & White (2007) women continue being less successful in mathematics and science and related subjects due to biological and socialisation factors. Better performance on mathematics maybe attributed to earlier maturation of boys in their spatial ability as well as visualisation (Wilhelm 2009; Giedd, Blumenthal, Jeffries *et al*, 1999). According to Bosire *et al* (2008) the differences in mathematics performance between girls and boys is based on brain lateralisation involving the use of right and left hemispheres of the brain. Boys are more inclined to use the right hemisphere while girls use the left hemisphere. The left hemisphere focuses on processing languages and other related subjects, whereas the right hemisphere focuses on visualisation and spatial information, which is mathematics related.

### IMPACT OF STEREOTYPES

Undertaking the study of gender stereotyping is not an end in itself. The interest beyond is the social implication on the lives and decision making of those affected by gender stereotypes. In this context, it can be proposed and argued that stereotyping has a great impact in the shaping and questioning, as well as promoting reinforcement when it comes to the development in the lives of both boys and girls, as they pursue their educational careers and their day-to-day behaviour as they interact with their physical and psychological environments (Mwamwenda, 2011; Ifegbesan, 2010; Bosire, *et al*, 2008; Smith, Sansome & White, 2007). As a result of gender stereotyping, the outcomes are restriction in educational achievement, as well as job prospects. More than this, the very norms used for the promotion of gender inequality are further strengthened (Musanic, 2009; How Teachers Influence Gender Roles, 2007; Frawley, 2005). Surprisingly, teachers in schools engage in reinforcing gender stereotypes without their conscious knowledge (Kane, 2009). Stereotypes set the standard by which children are judged in terms of their behaviour. Children will behave in the manner they are stereotyped, thus confirming adults' expectations (Martin, 1995). Unknowingly, teachers perpetuate the male stereotype by paying more attention to male students, while paying very little attention to female students (Gender Bias in the Classroom, 2009).

Research shows that in the classroom environment, boys are preferentially treated compared to girls (How Teachers Influence Gender Roles, 2007; Gender Bias in the Classroom, 2009). Boys are praised more than girls for their correct answers; boys have more contact times with their teachers than is the case with girls; boys are given more time to answer questions than girls are given. Moreover, boys are asked more cognitively challenging questions than is the case with girls.

Along the same vein of thought, it has been shown that teachers treat boys differently from girls (How Teachers Influence Gender Roles, 2007). Boys are identified more readily and more attention is paid and questions are asked more frequently. Consequently, they are of the view that they are valued and led to take risks more than girls. On the other hand, the girls are not valued to the same extent and are not that likely to participate in some of the class activity (How Teachers Influence Gender Roles, 2007).

Martin (1995) postulates that adults' stereotypes of children are likely to have an impact on gender roles in a variety of ways. For example, children may be either rewarded or punished on the basis of gender stereotypes. This may also apply to the manner and severity of the way they are punished. Frawley (2005) stresses that teachers' biases whether intentional or accidental have an impact on students as they form their own perceptions, beliefs and develop their social, intellectual, emotional and physical abilities. He further identifies some of the aspects that impact on children's gender stereotypes as: being told that they cannot engage in certain activities on the grounds of their gender, the hidden curriculum, and in instructional materials such as textbooks.

Girls have been reported to do better in other areas of study than is the case with boys (Delamere & Shaw, 2010; Woods *et al*, 2008; Lee & Mushner, 2008; Tucker, 2007; Driessen, 2007). This is particularly so in languages, where girls have been reported to perform better than boys and that for this reason, girls value the study of English more than is the case with boys (Early, Eccles & Lord, 1993). The more the girls valued English, the more they endorsed the gender stereotypes that girls are better than boys at English. This partly lends support to the perception that both girls and boys have a natural talent in specific subjects as shown in boys' performance in mathematics and girls' in languages such as English or whatever other language there be for comparison purposes (Lee & Mushner, 2008; Driessen, 2007; Bornholt, Goodnow, & Cooney, 1994).

Tucker (2007) and WikEd (2010) report that according to research findings, girls have advantages over boys in verbal abilities consisting of grammar, spelling and writing. Woods *et al* (2008) point out that while girls show self-competence in verbal domains, boys show self-competence in Mathematics and Science. Similarly, in a study carried out by Schmid (2010) it was concluded that comparatively, boys are better at Mathematics, whereas girls were better at Reading than boys.

In the study carried out by Delamere & Shaw (2010) on children's perception of leisure stereotypes, it was observed that gender stereotype of leisure choices was more pronounced among boys than girls. The boys' emphasis was on: sports, such as hockey, soccer, baseball and basketball. Correspondingly, the girls' leisure choices were on music lessons, choir, arts and crafts. Furthermore, children were aware that parents had differentiated gender leisure choices. Sisters were interested in feminine activity such as playing with dolls, playing house, doing crafts compared to brothers whose focus was sports and video games (Delamere & Shaw, 2010; Vedantam, 2006). Fathers showed leisure choice for sports, golf, hockey, soccer, and football. This is how boys more than the girls perceived their fathers, whereas the girls more than the boys perceived their mothers to show greater involvement in social activities such as visiting, chatting, talking on the phone with friends and reading (Delamere & Shaw, 2010).

## THE PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In view of the review of literature on gender stereotypes as reported here, there is a paucity of research undertaken on gender stereotypes in South Africa in particular and Africa in general. This did not only serve as a motivation for this investigation, but further constituted the statement of the problem, to examine the extent to which gender stereotypes prevail among South African adolescents in Junior Secondary Schools in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. The investigation further sought to examine whether there would be a difference in gender stereotypes between boys and girls during adolescence.

### *Research hypotheses*

The research hypotheses that guided this investigation were as follows:

- 1 There would be significant difference in gender stereotypes based on the participants' responses to the ten questionnaire items in terms of those who were stereotyped and as opposed to those who were not stereotyped.
- 2 Male adolescent participants' responses would be significantly different from those of female adolescents' responses to gender stereotypes responses to the ten questionnaire statements.

### *Method*

The objective of this study was to explore the extent of gender stereotypes prevalence among adolescents in the Eastern Cape. The nature of responses expected to the ten questionnaire statements was in the

form of binomial distribution responses which called for the use of a quantitative rather than a qualitative approach. Using a quantitative approach entailed the use of descriptive statistics in the form of chi-square table contingency. This determined whether the mean difference was significant between those with stereotyped behaviour and those not. Those who had more stereotypes in their scores would fall under the category of being stereotyped, whereas those whose scores were low would fall under the category of those who were not stereotyped. This in brief accounts for the approach used in determining the nature of the statement of the problem, as reflected in the literature review and the preceding hypotheses.

### *Sample*

Participants in this study were drawn from five Junior Secondary Schools located in the vicinity of the Municipality of Mthatha in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. In total there were 599 adolescents in Grades 7-9. The gender distribution was 360 boys and 239 girls whose age ranged from 14 to 24 years with a mean of 18.5 years.

For the purpose of confidentiality, participants were asked not to write their names or schools with which they were affiliated. All that was required of them was to indicate their age, as they proceeded with responding to the questionnaire.

It is relevant to point out the rationale why the present sample was selected to participate in the present study. First, it was a convenience sample given that both the researcher and the research assistant were familiar with both the schools and some of the teachers who taught in these schools, thus enhancing accessibility to such schools. Second, the participants were considered appropriate given their chronological age as adolescents and their level of education. Third, cognitively they were at the formal operational level, which facilitated their adequate grasp of the abstract gender stereotypes concept. Moreover, the nature of questionnaire to which they were expected to respond dealt with familiar experience in terms of the socialisation process to which they had been subjected, as well as the fact they had been exposed to the study of a number of subjects such as mathematics, science, sports and technology to which they were to relate their responses. Finally, their participation made it easier for the study to examine the educational implication of stereotypes.

### *Questionnaire*

The questionnaire administered consisted of ten statements used in reference to gender stereotypes. The ten statements dealt with areas such as Reading, Sports, Dancing, Mathematics, Talking, Science, Getting Along with Peers, Fixing Things, Cooking and Getting Along with Adults. For each statement, there were three possible answers comparing boys and girls. The participants were to mark with a tick the most appropriate answer showing whether boys or girls were better at a certain activity. In case they did not think so, they had a third option on questionnaire which was to be marked with a tick. The third answer read as follows: 'There is no difference.'

The validity and reliability of the ten-statement gender stereotypes questionnaire has been confirmed (Beerz, 1990). Moreover, many research studies carried out in more than two decades have used the same questionnaire in the investigation of gender stereotypes (Mwamwenda, 2011; Ifegbesan, 2010; Gender Stereotypes, 2004)

### *Procedure*

Prior to the administering the questionnaire, permission was sought from each one the five principals of the schools, as well as the class teachers in charge of such classes. Participants' consent was obtained in a rather indirect manner, in so far as they were given the option of not responding to the questionnaire, if they so desired. Ideally, permission could have been sought from the Department of Education and

parents could have been notified and perhaps expressed their consent. On account of past experience and practice, this was not thought necessary. Had it not been so, the school principals would have said so. Following such permission, arrangement was made with the teachers involved in teaching the various grades so that students would be administered the questionnaire during the respective periods. The monitoring of the writing of answers to the questionnaire was done by the research assistant with the assistance of the respective teachers.

Immediately after the briefing, participants were asked whether they had any questions to raise regarding the exercise. A couple of clarifying questions were raised for which answers were provided. Thereafter, the participants proceeded to respond to the questionnaire for which they were given twenty minutes to complete. Those who completed the questionnaire earlier than the allocated twenty minutes were to remain seated until the allocated time was over. At the end of the allocated time limit, all participants were asked to stop writing and submit the questionnaire to the research assistant and the teachers who assisted in invigilation.

#### *Analysis of data*

Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) contingency tables were used to confirm or not confirm the alternate research hypotheses on gender stereotypes in the responses for the entire set of participants, as well as in the responses for male and female participants separately. This held true for each one of the ten statements in the questionnaire to which the participants were expected to respond.

For each of the ten statements, there were three possible responses. Participants were expected to choose one that was most appropriate in their views as individuals. For each one of the ten statements the respondent was to indicate whether girls or boys are better than the other, or whether there was no difference.

The responses for all the participants for all the statements are displayed in Table 1. In response to Reading, there was a statistically significant difference proportionally  $\chi^2$  (2 df, N597) =208.8  $p < .001$ . In view of this, the alternate hypothesis that there was a statistically significant difference was accepted, as more responses indicated that girls were better at Reading than was the case with boys.

*Table 1:*  
*Participants' Responses to Stereotypes Statements\**  
N= 599

<b>Statements*</b>	<b>Girls Better</b>	<b>Boys Better</b>	<b>No Difference</b>	<b>Chi Square</b>	<b>P</b>
Reading	204	102	292	208.8	.001
Sports	38	358	205	137.7	.005
Dancing	247	63	278	152.9	.001
Mathematics	30	332	236	146.6	.001
Talking	303	116	179	199	.001
Science	32	304	249	124	.001



Statements*	Girls Better	Boys Better	No Difference	Chi Square	P
Getting Along with Peers	171	144	240	127	.001
Fixing Things	85	389	111	214	.001
Cooking	474	21	89	169	.005
Getting Along with Adults	184	85	312	208	.001

\*Key words in Questionnaire used for Statements

Responses regarding whether girls or boys were better were statistically significant  $\chi^2$  (2 df, N597)= 137.7,  $p < .005$ . The alternate hypothesis was accepted, as boys were considered better at sports than girls. In Dancing, the proportion of participants agreeing that girls are better than boys was statistically significant  $\chi^2$  (2 df, N597)=152.9  $p < .001$ . For this reason, the experimental hypothesis that girls are better at dancing than boys was accepted.

The responses to whether girls or boys were better at Mathematics were statistically significant  $\chi^2$  (2 df, N597)= 146.6,  $p < .001$ . Boys were thought to be better than girls in Mathematics, which led to the alternate hypothesis being confirmed. Moreover, participants were of the view that girls do better at Talking than is the case with boys  $\chi^2$  (2 df, N 597)=199,  $p < .001$ . The alternate hypothesis, supporting the position that girls are better at Talking than boys was confirmed

Table 1 shows that participants' responses were in the direction of boys being better in Science than was the case with girls  $\chi^2$  (2df, N597)=124,  $p < .001$ . Therefore, the experimental hypothesis was retained, as more boys were considered better than girls in their Science performance. The seventh statement dealt with either boys or girls being better at Getting Along with Peers, in which case girls were deemed better than boys  $\chi^2$  (2 df, N597)=127,  $p < .001$ . The alternative hypothesis that girls are better than boys in Getting Along with Peers was confirmed.

In statement eight, participants were asked to show whether boys or girls were better at Fixing things or there was no difference. There was a significant difference statistically  $\chi^2$  (2 df, N597)=214,  $p < .001$  in support of boys being better at Fixing Things. The alternate hypothesis was retained. In response to whether girls or boys were better or the same when it came to cooking, the overwhelming response was in favour of girls being far better than boys  $\chi^2$  (2 df, N597)=169,  $p < .005$ . The experimental hypothesis was confirmed.

Participants were finally asked whether girls or boys were better at Getting Along with Adults. There was a statistically significant difference  $\chi^2$  (2 df, N597)=208,  $p < .001$ . The alternate hypothesis that girls are better than boys at Getting Along with Adults was confirmed.

In summary, the hypotheses that adolescents' responses to gender stereotypes would differ significantly were confirmed for every one of the ten statements of the questionnaire. This demonstrates that the gender stereotypes observed in Western countries also prevail among the South African adolescents who participated in this investigation.

#### *Sex differences in gender stereotypes*

The second aspect of the data analysis consisted of examining sex differences in gender stereotypes for which alternate hypotheses were tested by Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) contingency tables as displayed in Table 2.

Table 2:  
Boys' and girls' responses to stereotypes statements  
Boys=360 Girls=239

Participants	Girls Better	Boys Better	No Difference	Chi Square	P
Reading					
Boys	86	85	188	42.3	.001
Girls	118	17	104		
Sports					
Boys	8	242	110	263.3	.001
Girls	25	116	93		
Dancing					
Boys	135	49	174	135	.001
Girls	112	14	104		
Mathematics					
Boys	12	232	115	237	.001
Girls	18	100	121		
Talking					
Boys	152	78	130	96.2	.001
Girls	151	38	49		
Science					
Boys	7	218	129	160.2	.001
Girls	25	86	120		
Getting Along with Peers					
Boys	71	101	182	44.4	.001
Girls	100	43	88		
Fixing Things					
Boys	46	241	66	284	.001
Girls	39	148	45		
Cooking					
Boys	272	17	64	251	.001
Girls	202	4	25		
Getting Along with Adults					
Boys	95	64	195	130	.001
Girls	89	21	117		

\*Middle Column shows key words standing for the Questionnaire Statements

For the alternate hypothesis, it was expected boys and girls participants' responses would be significantly different. The chi square analysis showed that the difference between the two sets of participants was significantly different  $\chi^2(2df, 392)= 42.3, p<.001$ . Such a difference led to the acceptance of the alternate hypothesis in which girls were in greater proportion than boys. On the statement of Sports, there was a statistically significant difference between male and female participants  $\chi^2(2 df, N241)= 263.3 p<.001$ . Therefore the alternate hypothesis was confirmed with a greater proportion of boys in support of boys being better than girls in Sports.

On the question of girls and boys in relationship to Dancing, the difference was statistically significant  $\chi^2(2 df, N260)= 135, p<.001$ . The experimental hypothesis was retained. More girls' responses than those of boys were of the view that girls are better at Dancing than is the case with boys. As far as performance in Mathematics was concerned, statistically significant difference was observed  $\chi^2(2 df, N335)= 237, p<.001$ . The alternate hypothesis was accepted. More boys were in agreement with alternate hypothesis than was the case with girls.

In response to whether girls are better at Talking than boys or vice versa, the difference was statistically significant  $\chi^2(2 df, N206)= 96.2, p<.001$ . Girls were said to be better at Talking than boys, supported by a greater proportion of female participants than male participants. The alternate hypothesis was confirmed. In relation to Science and the way girls and boys perform, there was a statistically significant difference with boys being said to be better than girls  $\chi^2(2 df, N390)= 160.2, p<.001$ . Hence, the support for the alternate hypothesis. There were more boys than girls in support of the alternate hypothesis.

Participants were asked to compare girls and boys in the manner they Get Along with Peers, for which significant difference was observed with girls being classified as getting along with peers better than boys  $\chi^2(2 df, N153)= 44.4, p<.001$ . A greater proportion of girls were in support of this prediction than was the case with boys. The alternate hypothesis was supported.

Fixing Things responses from both boys and girls were significantly different  $\chi^2(2 df, N391)=284, p<.001$ . In view of this, the experimental hypothesis was confirmed. Boys were said to be better than girls at Fixing Things, and this was supported by girls more than by the boys.

Responses to whether girls or boys are better at Cooking from male and female participants were significantly different, with a greater number of responses from girls than boys asserting that girls are better  $\chi^2(2 df, N553)= 251, p<.001$ . Such difference led to accepting the experimental hypothesis. On Getting Along with Adults, more girls than boys thought girls were better than boys,  $\chi^2(2 df, N241)= 130, p<.001$ . The alternate hypothesis was confirmed.

## DISCUSSION

The principal purpose of this investigation was first to examine the prevalence and existence of gender stereotypes among adolescents in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Subsidiary and as an extension of the title of the investigation, further analysis was sought to identify gender differences in gender stereotypes among the participants consisting of 360 boys and 239 girls. The second component of the study aimed at determining the extent to which there were statistically significant different responses to the ten statements of the questionnaire based on the participating girls and boys.

The analyses of data led to the confirmation of all the research hypotheses which predicted statistically significant differences in the responses of participants in support of gender stereotypes. This held true for all the ten statements in the questionnaire covering the following aspects of behaviour for boys and girls: Reading, Sports, Dancing, Mathematics, Talking, Science, Getting Along with Peers, Fixing Things, Cooking, and Getting Along with Adults.

A significant number of boys and girls were of the view that comparatively girls are better than boys in Reading. In terms of Sports, a statistically significant number of participants thought that boys were better than girls. The same held true in response to whether boys are better than girls in Mathematics.

A comparison between boys and girls on Talking showed a significant difference in favour of girls being better than boys. However, when it came to Science, the response was that boys were better than girls. Getting Along with Peers was viewed as the domain of girls who are stereotyped to do better than boys. In contrast, boys were said to do better than girls when it comes to Fixing Things. Cooking was considered the domain of girls, as the majority of respondents agreed that girls are better than boys. Similarly, the majority of participants said that girls are better than boys in Getting Along with Adults.

These findings are in alignment with other research findings reported in the literature review (Delamere & Shaw, 2010; Wilde, 2009; Wilhelm, 2009; Gaganakis, 2003). In these studies it was shown that women are associated with cooking and domestic chores more than is the case with men. It was also pointed out that comparatively, boys are keener in participating in sports such as hockey, baseball, golf and soccer than girls who engage in feminine activity such as music lessons, dance, handcrafts and choir.

Furthermore, the findings of this investigation are in agreement with extensive research that has been carried out on gender stereotypes based on girls' and boys' performance in school subjects such as Mathematics, Science, English (Wilhelm, 2009; Bosire *et al*, 2008; Woods *et al*, 2008; Lee & Mushner, 2008; Driessen, 2007; Smith *et al*, 2007). In these studies, it has been shown that boys outperform girls in both Mathematics and Science, whereas in English and verbal ability, girls outperform boys. Such difference in performance becomes more distinct after completing the lower classes of high school and at university level.

The current findings are a replica of what has been observed in Western countries, where research on gender stereotypes has been widely carried out for many years. This has not been the case in South Africa or other African countries. Given what has been reported in the literature review, the findings of the present investigation lend support to such findings. What is even more interesting are the implications of such findings in the relationship between teachers and adolescent students and other factors which have a bearing on the lives of adolescent students in the present as well as the future.

It can be argued that when children join school, what is already known about the children's stereotypes is reinforced by teachers in their interaction both in the classroom in particular, as well as outside the classroom in general (Mwamwenda, 2011; Ifegbesan, 2010; Kane, 2009; Tiedemann, 2006). Holdsworth (2007) cautions that the very teachers involved in the education of the young ones are not immune to the gender stereotypes.

Unknowingly, teachers perpetuate male stereotypes by paying more attention to male students, while paying very little attention to female students (Mwamwenda, 2011; Ifegbesan, 2010; Gender Bias in the Classroom, 2009). The education children receive at school reinforces what has been acquired at home regarding stereotypes, as reflected and displayed in the reading material and textbooks used at school (Ifegbesan, 2010; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008).

The implication of stereotypes is the impact it has in the shaping, questioning, and promoting reinforcement in the development of identity, education, career, and decision making in various aspects of life in the lives of girls and boys while still young, and as they grow into adulthood (Brandell and Staberg, 2008; Phetla, 2007; Frawley, 2005; Gaganakis, 2003). In this context, Musanovic (2009) argues that it is not a wrong assumption to say teachers' stereotyping has an impact on school children, as they are academically and socially moulded.

As a result of gender stereotyping, the resultant outcomes are restriction in educational achievement and job prospects. Moreover, the very norms used for the promotion of gender inequality are further strengthened (Holdsworth, 2007). Frawley (2005) advances the argument that it is vital for teachers to recognise that teachers' biases whether intentional or accidental have an impact on students, as they form their own perceptions, beliefs and develop their social, intellectual, emotional and physical abilities.

According to the Commonwealth Secretariat (2008), stereotypes reinforced by teachers in many commonwealth countries are responsible for hindering boys and girls expected achievement at school. It is further argued that children are expected to be provided with an appropriate environment that is conducive to their growth and development of natural powers at their own pace to their fullest potential (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008).

In the South African setting, the educational implication of the present investigation is a serious one. At all levels of the education system students have problems in academic achievement in all subjects, but more so in mathematics-science-related areas of studies. Various factors have been identified as associated with such a state of affairs. There is hardly a study bringing the attention of those concerned that some of the problems experienced may be attributed to gender stereotypes as experienced in society in general, and school in particular. Society, parents, teachers and students have gender stereotypes which may be contributing to such poor performance.

It is important therefore that due emphasis should be placed on an awareness of gender stereotyping not only at home and school, but also in society at large, as children, adolescents and adults interact among themselves as well as community members, teachers, parents and the significant others in society such as journalists, politicians, business persons, peasants and farmers. This should be reflected in professional development, school curriculum, textbooks, media inclusive of radio, television, textbooks and other reading material, school practice, teacher-student interaction in class and school as a whole. This is 'a tall order', and yet this is the challenge with which South Africa must grapple to bring about transformation in the education system.

## LIMITATIONS

The sample consisted of participants who lived in a rural area and attended school in the same rural area not far from Mthatha in the Eastern Cape. This was a limitation in so far as it excluded participants from urban areas of the Eastern Cape. What we know about the rural students cannot provide us with similar knowledge about urban dwellers. Another limitation was its confinement to the Eastern Cape, to the exclusion of other provinces in South Africa. Given the nature of the educational implications of gender stereotypes, the study could have included a correlation study in which the participants' stereotypes would have been compared with their academic achievement in their school subjects. Alternatively, the study could have examined a correlation between student gender stereotypes and those of their teachers based on the same questionnaire. Such limitations are important to be considered for future research on gender stereotypes in South Africa.

## CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the literature review clearly shows that child rearing practice, parents, teachers and other members of society have a bearing on the development of gender stereotypes as observed in school children. Teachers influence students in the manner they perform in school subjects such as Mathematics, Sciences, Languages and Sport, on the basis of their gender stereotypes. Equally true are the students whose gender stereotypes influence their commitment in certain subjects. Moreover, their decision making is constrained on the basis of their gender stereotypes. Gender stereotyping starts with child-rearing

and socialisation processes. By the time children commence school, they have already formed their own perceptions of the already established stereotypes. Teachers have their own gender stereotypes related to themselves, career and cultural background. In the African context, hardly any attempts are made to discard such stereotypes. It is almost a way of life. Instead they are passed on to school children as if it were a legacy. As was seen in the literature review, boys are considered better at Mathematics and Sciences than is the case with girls. This affects teachers in their teaching students in their classrooms. This has a corresponding effect on how students perform in such subjects, particularly among girls. This includes the preparation of instructional material, and the way teachers interact with learners in class, in particular and school in general. According to the literature review, parents and teachers, as well as other members and institutions in society play a role in children's development of gender stereotypes.

Though the present investigation did not address all these issues in the broadest sense, as carried out in the literature review, it addressed the core aspect. It focused on the extent to which gender stereotypes prevail among school adolescents in the Eastern Cape Province. In the questionnaire administered participants commented on social interactions, school subjects, sports, music, reading and other aspects of life. The results were a replica of what has been observed in Western countries regarding gender stereotyping. Indicating as it did, that there is no difference in the domination of gender stereotypes in an African rural environment, though not devoid of Western influence. If this is the case, then it would not be stretching the point, to make the assumption, that the implications of such gender stereotypes also may apply to African children in the Eastern Cape, subject to empirical research for confirmation purposes. In fact, the level of gender stereotyping among some teachers in the Eastern Cape is not different from what has been observed among their students ((Mwamwenda, 2011).

As a researcher, I am of the view that the findings of the present investigation are a contribution to a body of knowledge within its own right. Given the paucity of research on gender stereotypes in South Africa, the study provides knowledge that will be useful to teachers, policy makers and those involved in the preparation of students for a teaching career, without leaving out the political component of society. Every society worldwide believes in the crucial role education plays in the development of people, as well as in national and economic development. As such, the nature of curriculum pursued at all levels of education is of paramount importance. A knowledge of gender stereotypes among school children at all levels would be something in which men and women irrespective of creed would want to invest in, by ensuring that gender stereotyping is not part of the education landscape in the education system and society at large.

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# Good policy, bad results: An investigation into the implementation of a plagiarism policy in a faculty at a South African university<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper reports on an investigation into the implementation of a plagiarism policy and the perceptions of plagiarism among lecturers in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at a university in South Africa. A questionnaire was administered to explore these perceptions and a total of 52 completed questionnaires were collected. Unstructured interviews were also conducted in a faculty board meeting and a total of 16 written responses were collected, bringing the total number of responses to 68. The findings indicate that despite the existence of a plagiarism policy there is no comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing plagiarism. Although many lecturers admitted to being familiar with the policy, most did not implement the actions and processes suggested in the policy. To be more effective in addressing plagiarism, the author makes a number of recommendations.*

## INTRODUCTION

Discussion about plagiarism has gained a great deal of momentum across many higher education institutions in the world. Plagiarism has been acknowledged as a considerable challenge for universities in South Africa too (Elander, Pittam, Lusher, Fox & Payne, 2009). Perhaps, in South Africa, the problem is increased by the call to widen access to higher education across the country, which began after the demise of apartheid. This has resulted in a bigger student body in institutions, which ironically is still being catered for by the same number of academics and resources as in previous years at many universities. This at least is the case in point at the university under study. The increased heterogeneity of the student population with regards to educational backgrounds and learning abilities combined with a reduced unit of resources is at the expense of student success in higher education (Brew, 1995). All of the changes in student population contribute to academic, administrative and technical staff having to face unfamiliar situations and new demands (Candy cited in Brew, 1995). This study is particularly interested in the challenges faced by academics in the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities in trying to assist students to produce academic writing in which there is no plagiarism.

To address plagiarism the institution formulated a 'Plagiarism Policy' approved by the University Senate in May 2009. The policy defines plagiarism as 'taking and using the ideas, writings, works or inventions of another, from any textual or Internet-based source, as if they were one's own' (University of Fort Hare [UFH], 2009: 1).

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Many students come to university without a clear understanding of plagiarism and will need to be educated explicitly about how knowledge and intellectual property are viewed in higher education (Beute, Van Aswegen & Winberg, 2008). According to Howard (cited in Beute *et al*, 2008), the term 'plagiarism' is often used as a scare word but this is far from being sufficient to deter students from doing it or making them understand why it is wrong. Students often find academic life in general and its literacy demands in particular, alienating. As a result they need to be taught the values, beliefs and literacy practices in higher education, because these affect the way they view and undertake academic writing assignments (Ivanic, 1998). Therefore, lecturers need to explain both verbally and in writing why and how sources may be cited in their disciplines. Specifically, learning guides need to have a section about the nature of plagiarism, how not acknowledging authors is a transgression and its consequences. In addition, specialised sessions dedicated to training students in the requisite procedures to be followed in the acknowledgement and citation of sources need to be scheduled (UFH, 2009). These are but some of the requirements outlined in the Plagiarism Policy.

The argument in this paper is that in order for lecturers to be more effective in addressing the problem of plagiarism, proper implementation of the policy, collaboration with other academic staff and an alternative approach to dealing with plagiarism need to be considered. To present this argument, a brief background to the problem of plagiarism in the faculty is presented. This is followed by a theoretical framework which ties together notions of writing as identity and literacy as social practice. Thereafter, follows the method used in the study, the discussion of findings and recommendations to the faculty, before the conclusion to the study is given.

## BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Many lecturers with large classes in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities have adopted a strategy of reducing the amount of written assignments they give to students. Lecturers report they simply cannot handle the load of marking. Consequently, this has resulted in students not having enough opportunities to improve their writing, hence, the outbreak of plagiarism and students who cannot write. Plagiarism is exacerbated both by ease of access to information from the Internet and by a lack of understanding about how to use the works of others in an academic context. A disadvantage with accessing information from the Internet is that it is often not academic in nature, thus students cannot discern academic sources from non-academic sources (Pittam, Elander, Lusher, Fox & Payne, 2009). Many teaching and learning committee meetings held in the faculty document lecturers saying that their students have weak or poor assignment writing skills. Consequently, this has become a mantra amongst many lecturers and they are perplexed as to how these students were allowed into the institution if they struggle with basic articulation and expression in English.

The discussion of students who cannot write and indulge in a great deal of plagiarism continues to gain momentum. Similar to the observations made by Chandrasoma, Thompson & Pennycook (2004), some lecturers in the faculty recommend the solution to the problem as accessing free plagiarism detection technologies which are available on-line. As noble as this endeavour might be, scholars argue that 'educational understanding of writing development and diversity should not be left in the hands of new forms of software detectors' alone (Thompson & Pennycook, 2008: 20). Writing is both a developmental and emotional process that should not be relegated to the detached plagiarism software detectors that cannot appreciate this process. If lecturers tell students to put everything through plagiarism detection software they encourage themselves to think that students need to arrive at university with a particular writing competency and that developing that through their lecturing or assessment is not in their job description. This therefore, removes the responsibility from the lecturers for the development of student writing. Beasley (cited in Beute *et al*, 2008) also argues that prevention of plagiarism is better than the cure. The reason being, the software detects the offence after it has already been committed.

In order to get to grips with the task of addressing plagiarism in the faculty, the researcher decided to establish the enormity of the issue of plagiarism firstly amongst the students, and then empirically amongst the lecturers. In an endeavour of trying to address the plagiarism issue the researcher collaborated with lecturers to engage with their students in the classrooms to find out their understanding of plagiarism and confirm that plagiarism is really a problem and to ascertain the extent of the problem.

Generally, the students themselves confessed to knowing they are not supposed to plagiarise, confirming Howard's claim (cited in Chandrasoma, Thompson & Pennycook) about plagiarism being used as a scare word. Students are vaguely aware of the consequences, and most of them neither know how to avoid it nor do they quite understand what exactly plagiarism entails. These informal inquiries corroborate studies on students and plagiarism that have been carried by other scholars. For example, research conducted by Elander *et al* (2009) and Pittam *et al* (2009), revealed that many interventions regarding the problem of plagiarism involve lecturers telling students about what plagiarism is and then ordering them not to do it. This message is largely negative and borders around banning acts of plagiarism with hardly a positive message about what to do in an active way to avoid being accused or suspected of plagiarism.

Other studies also suggest that high order skills and conventions of avoiding plagiarism need to be developed for students not to become vulnerable to committing plagiarism (Ellery, 2008). Informal discussions with students in the faculty revealed that there was a great deal of telling about plagiarism but not enough showing. Therefore, an investigation into how lecturers in the faculty were engaging with students about plagiarism was necessary to ascertain whether plagiarism itself is the problem or is the symptom of the problem; and if the latter, what then, is the real problem? Through this study, the researcher sought to find out how academics approached the implementation of the Plagiarism Policy.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Lea & Street (1998) propound that literacy is a social practice; this can be interpreted to mean that issues such as language, reading and writing exist alongside other forms of social action, making them relevant aspects of the social construction of identity. Scholars who view identity in a social constructionist perspective

... reject the idea that any type of identity – political, sexual, emotional – is solely the product of individuals' minds and intentions and believe that it is the result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities which are available to them in their social context (Burkitt, Gergen, Gergen & Davis, Turner cited in Ivanic, 1998: 12).

Thus, if students entering higher education experience an identity crisis, it is not because of any inadequacy in themselves, but because of a mismatch between the social contexts which have constructed their identities in the past and the new social context which they are entering. This suggests that for one to participate in the activities of a community one would need to take on its values and practices, and become like one of those like-minded peers (Ivanic, 1998).

According to Rose & Hart (2008), the cultural isolation mentioned above might actually be caused by lecturers - who are the discipline experts - not being involved in the process of inducting students into the ways of being. These two scholars argue that reading, and even writing, interventions need to be integrated across the curriculum and beyond first year support programmes. They go further to introduce a methodology known as scaffolding academic literacy, which offers a theoretically sound and workable means of integrating academic literacy development with academic learning across degree programmes by focusing on the development of students' academic reading (*ibid*).

Scholars, such as Boughey & Van Rensburg (1994), Lea & Street (1998), and McKellar (nd), agree that the person who teaches the students is best positioned to promote valuable writing in the discipline. Effective writing in the discipline allows for students to learn, develop academic and disciplinary identities and become empowered and confident writers (Elander *et al*, 2009). The benefits of writing for learning are for both the student and the teacher. Writing to learn is a process of discovering / creating meaning and it improves learning through engagement with curriculum content because problems with students' writing lie at the level of meaning and not at the level of form (Boughey & Van Rensburg, 1994). People become literate gradually, through immersion in the community of knowledge they are acquiring. Scholars such as Boughey & Van Rensburg (1994), Elander *et al* (2009), Ivancic (1998), Lea & Street (1998), McKellar (nd), and Pittam *et al* (2009), work upon the assumption that academic literacy should be regarded as an end-product of degree studies rather than a pre-requisite.

## METHOD

The study was carried out among lecturers in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at a university in South Africa, and the method of acquiring information is similar to that of Beute *et al* (2008). The researcher sent a request to the Faculty Manager to assist in meeting lecturers to discuss issues around plagiarism. Following the request, a 45 minute slot during a faculty board meeting was allocated for the discussion. At the start of the meeting a questionnaire was administered. The intention of the questionnaire was to explore the perceptions of lecturers around students' plagiarism. The questionnaire consisted of ten statements and questions, and was divided into two sections. The first section had eight statements with three ranked responses. For instance participants were asked: *Plagiarism is a problem in the faculty*. In their responses they had to select one of yes, no, or unsure (see Appendix A).

A total of 52 completed questionnaires came back from lecturers. During the meeting, an unstructured interview was conducted with a specific focus on attaining further information about the challenges that lecturers face with regards to developing their students' academic writing in the classrooms. A total of 16 responses were collected from the meeting with lecturers. The second section of the questionnaire had two questions. Lecturers were requested to rank the most common practice of plagiarism they encountered in the students' writing. In the last question they were invited to make qualitative comments as to why they think students plagiarise.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Despite all lecturers (100%) identifying plagiarism as a problem in the faculty, some of them still model bad practices in the implementation of the policy amongst their students in classrooms. The image of a chasm is probably a good metaphor for the context in which plagiarism occurs in the faculty. Not only are there some gaps between policy and implementation but there are often big differences between what lecturers perceive as their responsibility of addressing plagiarism and what they do not view as their responsibility. The discussion below will focus on three common themes found during the survey, namely: the implementation of the plagiarism policy by lecturers; their view of the most common type of plagiarism; and lastly their perceptions towards the causes of plagiarism.

### *Common trends in the implementation of the Plagiarism Policy in the faculty*

Figure 1 shows that out of all the lecturers who completed the questionnaire and indicated that plagiarism is a problem in the faculty, 70% claim that they read the plagiarism policy, 2% indicated that they were not sure, a quarter (25%), admitted that they had not read the policy, unfortunately 3% did not respond to this statement.

Figure 1:  
A representation of lecturers who read, were not sure and did not read the  
Plagiarism Policy passed by Senate in May 2009

#### Lecturers who read plagiarism policy

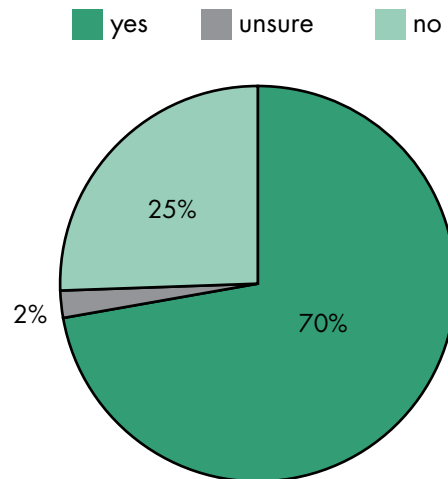
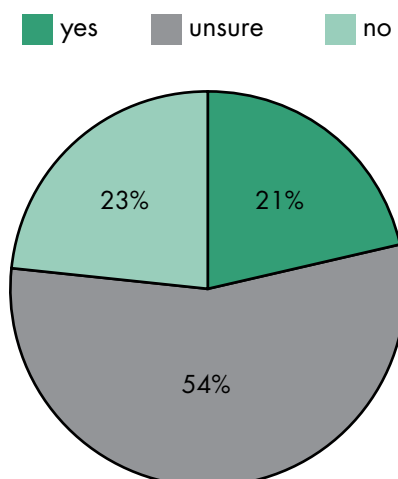


Figure 2 meanwhile reveals that a majority (54%), disclosed that they do not know if their students are aware of the policy, 2% decided not to respond, while 23% said their students are not aware of the policy. Surprisingly, only 21% of the lecturers indicated that the students whom they teach are familiar with the policy.

Figure 2:  
A representation of students who are aware of the Plagiarism Policy passed by Senate in May 2009

#### Students who are aware of plagiarism policy



A reading of the Plagiarism Policy states that lecturers are supposed to dedicate lectures or have tutorials or specialised sessions on training students in the formal procedures to be followed in the acknowledgement and citation of sources (UFH, 2009). It seems that most lecturers (77%) do not take ownership of making their students aware of the plagiarism policy. This implies that lecturers expect either someone else (most probably academics in the student support unit) to introduce the plagiarism policy to their students or for their students to come to class already knowing the policy and how to avoid plagiarism.

Another surprising finding is that a significant number of lecturers (62%) do not insist that students should submit a signed declaration together with each assignment submission; only 34% do. The other 4% are perhaps ignorant of there being a plagiarism declaration to be submitted with written assignments (see Figure 3).

It is worth noting that more than two thirds (70%) claim to have read the policy but only a third (34%) request plagiarism declarations to be submitted with each assignment submission. These figures seem to show that some lecturers are clearly choosing not to take ownership of implementing the policy in the classroom. The policy requires that lecturers should insist on the inclusion of an appropriate plagiarism declaration whenever written work is submitted by students. This declaration is meant to sensitise students to the seriousness of the offence of plagiarism and make them accountable for their work. One could suggest that lecturers expect students to be aware of this but it is highly unlikely considering that only 21% of the lecturers inform students about the policy. Evidence gathered from the questionnaire shows that a majority of lecturers expect someone else to request their students to attach a declaration to assignments. There are two possibilities to support this evidence. First, it is possible that the lecturers who actually read the policy are far less than the 70% who indicated this (see Figure 1). Second, this is further evidence that lecturers do not perceive insisting on declarations as their responsibility. These findings are however odd because the Plagiarism Policy includes a generic template that lecturers are expected to adapt to suit their specific needs. This suggests that this is a policy brief most are failing to implement.

Figure 3:  
A representation of the number of lecturers who request students to submit a plagiarism declaration with submitted written work

**Lecturers who request declaration**

■ yes    ■ unsure    ■ no

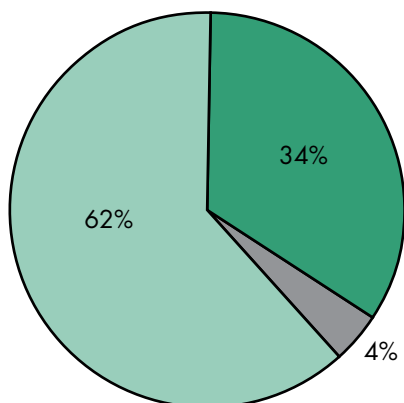


Figure 4 shows that less than half of the lecturers (46%) offer training to their students on how to avoid plagiarism. A significant number, (37%), seem neither sure if their students are trained nor whose responsibility it is to offer training students, and 17% disclosed that they do not offer their students training. Some of the lecturers who participated believe that some sort of training is necessary and thus one lecturer recommended:

The problem could be tackled through properly arranged information literacy instruction course to enable students to acquire information evaluation skills (Lecturer 2).

Another lecturer, supporting Lecturer 2, commented:

Faculties should develop their own academic literacies course and all students regardless of department should undergo that common communication skills course to address academic literacies acquisition throughout their first year ... (Lecturer 68).

However, a majority of the lecturers' responses in the survey seem to imply that the responsibility of training students on plagiarism and academic writing lies somewhere else. For example, one of the lecturers, during the meeting said:

Arguably, our learners suffer from cultural isolation. They have limited or no contact with other learners who seem to be knowledgeable about their respective courses. This may be due to choice, the culture or the environment (Lecturer 57).

This seems to imply that enabling participation in academic discourse is supposed to happen somewhere else. However, the writing as identity approach encourages that the subject experts support students in gaining access to the academic discourses with which students seek to become conversant. The support needed by the students to develop their writing needs to happen in what McKellar (nd: 4) refers to as the 'authentic context', where the learning is taking place. According to Northedge (2003) the lecturer, as the subject expert, is supposed to play three key roles to enable learning, namely: to lend capacity to frame meaning, to lead excursions into specialist discourse, and to coach students in speaking the discourse competently.

Figure 4:  
A representation of the number of lecturers who offer training  
on how to cite / acknowledge sources to students

#### Training offered to students

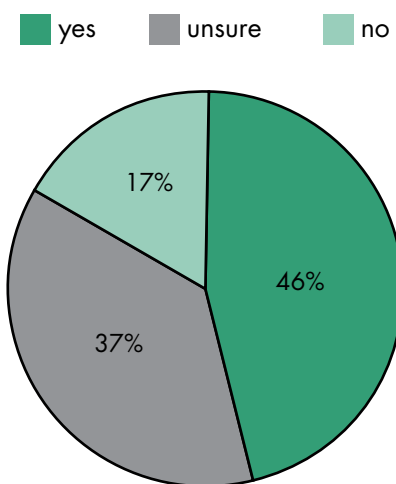
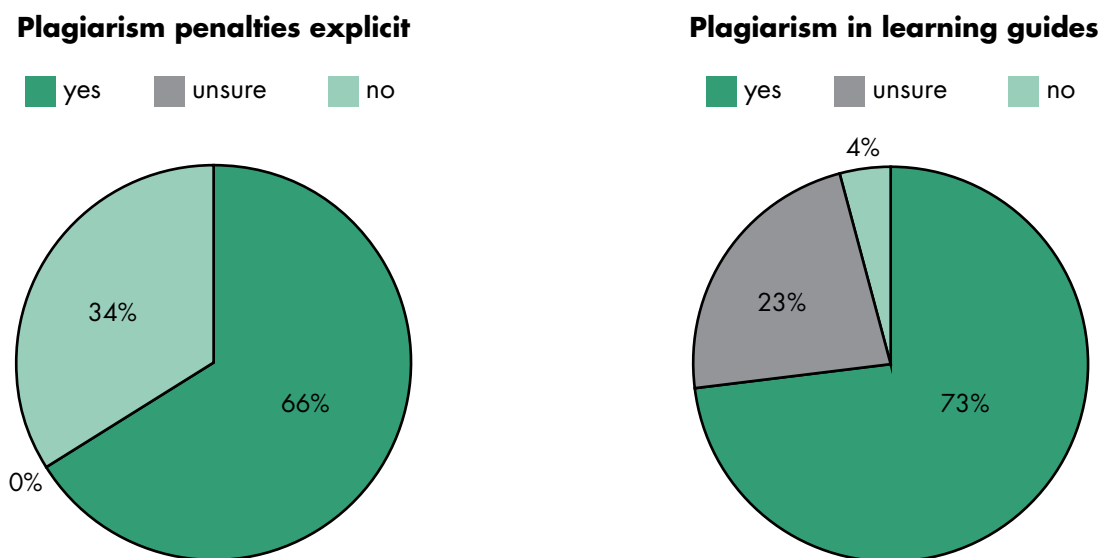


Figure 5 shows that a majority of the lecturers strongly believe that their responsibility of implementing the plagiarism policy revolves around two activities, namely: outlining penalties for plagiarised work (66%) and putting information about plagiarism in the learning guides (73%). Disappointingly, there are still a significant number of lecturers (23%) who are unsure of whose responsibility it is to put notes on plagiarism in the learning guides. Not trivialising the efforts of other lecturers who are doing notable work in addressing plagiarism, in the faculty, there is still more that needs to be done. If the problem of



plagiarism is going to be addressed successfully, lecturers need to start taking more ownership of their responsibility towards making their students better writers.

*Figure 5:  
A representation of the number of lecturers who give out clearly written penalties for plagiarised work and also representation of number of lecturers who include information on plagiarism in the learning guides*



*Common types of plagiarism committed by students in the faculty*

Lecturers' responses to ranking the most common occurrences of plagiarism witnessed in students' writing revealed cutting and pasting information from internet sources as the most common. Many of the lecturers believe this is because of '... the ease of downloading information from the Internet' (Lecturer 32). Williams' (2007: 350) study also concurs with this observation and he explains that students are 'confused about how to use and credit other sources of information'.

The second most common practice of plagiarism identified by the lecturers is using sources without acknowledging. One of the lecturers explained:

I believe they are not familiar with the concept of essay writing using secondary sources. They need to be enlightened on how to synthesize information that has been gathered from sources (Lecturer 16).

Copying written work from another student was the least common practice of plagiarism. From their qualitative responses on the questionnaires issues such as poor time management, laziness and ease of downloading, featured prominently as the reasons students plagiarise. Borrowing the words of one of the lecturers, students plagiarise 'because they get away with it! ... and are not aware of the seriousness of plagiarism' (Lecturer 37).

*Common causes of plagiarism among students in the faculty*

Figure 6 reveals that four themes emerged from the survey, which were identified by the lecturers as being the main causes of plagiarism: namely, poor time management; laziness; language barriers; and lack of academic literacy acquisition. With regards to poor time management one lecturer explained:

Mostly because they do not plan to do assignments in good time. They then think they can get away with copying other students or from internet sources (Lecturer 29).

Laziness was also a key factor and lecturers said things such as ‘Students are lazy to think ...’ (Lecturer 1). ‘They are too lazy to read ...’ (Lecturer 6). ‘Students are lazy and want to be spoon-fed’ (Lecturer 61). The third cause of plagiarism that lecturers identified was that of language barriers. One lecturer commented:

They are not confident in expressing themselves in English and lack the vocabulary and expression to convey their thoughts and ideas (which they know). They feel that they can’t say things better than a textbook or another source does, so they copy from the internet (Lecturer 23).

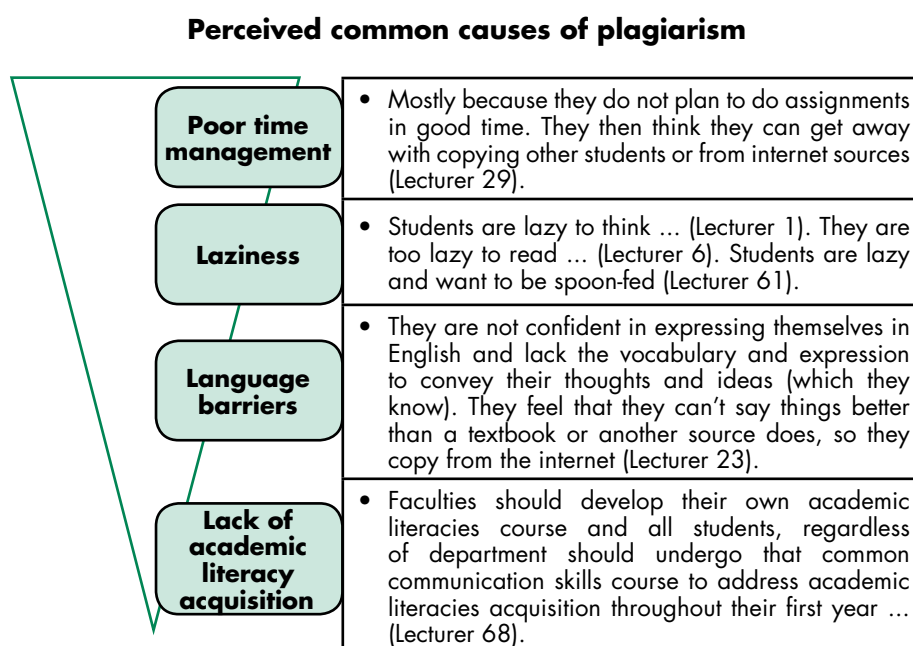
Lastly, lecturers identified lack of academic literacy acquisition as contributing to students plagiarising.

Faculties should develop their own academic literacies course and all students, regardless of department should undergo that common communication skills course to address academic literacies acquisition throughout their first year ... (Lecturer 68).

Lecturers were able to pinpoint issues that cause plagiarism amongst students, even though they mentioned the critical problem last. Scholars such as Williams (2007) and Beute *et al* (2008), who conducted similar investigations, also came to the same conclusions. These authors reported that lecturers locate acquiring of academic literacies at the bottom of the hierarchy of causes of plagiarism. This only emphasises the importance of why students need to be inculcated into the culture of reading and writing at universities: the ways of being as they are referred to by Rose & Hart (2008).

Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the fact that rarely did the lecturers comment on their own actions which impede addressing of the problem of plagiarism, but rather emphasised heavily upon those actions which relate to students. Although they did mention students’ lack of academic literacies, one can note that there is a general impression from the lecturers that to a large extent they feel none of their actions contributes to the problem of plagiarism.

Figure 6:  
A hierarchical representation of the perceived common causes  
of plagiarism committed by students in the faculty



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Lecturers need to start taking ownership of students whom they say cannot write because they are best positioned to address the needs of students. The researcher recommends the faculty to use the Teaching and Learning Centre services to implement the policy. The mandate of the policy, with regards the Teaching and Learning Centre, is to drive the implementation of the policy by

... provid[ing] presentations on academic writing and plagiarism to incoming students. ... provide assistance to departments with regards to understanding plagiarism in a modern academic context, and ... assist in preparing the presentations and material to be used by individual departments (UFH, 2009: 3).

The support offered by the Teaching and Learning Centre is in line with the developmental approach to an educational understanding of writing. This is what the Plagiarism Policy advocates. The focus on responding to the problem of plagiarism is not on criminalising the students. Rather, it is to assist the academic community in creating a supportive environment where students have repeated and continuous opportunities to use the language and thoughts of a discipline in order to find their own voices and express their thoughts proficiently (Angelil-Carter, 1995).

The success of the plagiarism issue being addressed will require lecturers not only to start with reading the plagiarism policy or just telling their students not to plagiarise, but will involve the full implementation of the policy. The policy requires lecturers to do the following:

- Set creative, innovative, original assignment tasks that are not repeated from year to year.
- Verbally, and in writing, explain why and how sources may be cited.
- Include nature of plagiarism, how it transgresses and its consequences in all learning guides.
- Dedicate some classroom time to specialized sessions on training in the formal procedures to be followed in the acknowledgement and citation of sources.
- Dedicated training to be reinforced at 2nd, 3rd, 4th and post graduate level.
- Insist that students include an appropriate declaration with submitted written work that it is their own.
- Contact the Teaching and Learning Centre to offer presentations / workshops on student authorship / academic writing and integrity to incoming students.
- Be prepared to be one of the two staff members in a pool that is rotated to constitute the Departmental Plagiarism Committee.
- Respond responsibly by being fair and consistent (UFH, 2009).

The researcher also recommends that the faculty re-examine their commitment to the way teaching and learning is conducted. In order to be more effective in the promotion of critical engagement of students with academic texts the faculty could look to the Post Graduate Diploma in Higher Education and Training (PGDHET). The PGDHET is a learning programme that was specifically designed to address the needs of academic teaching staff at the university. According to the learning guide, one of the main purposes of the PGDHET is to assist lecturers to enhance their ability to facilitate, manage and assess learners' learning (PGDHET Learning Guide, 2011).

The PGDHET has a number of unit standards which cover aspects relevant to the lecturer's needs such as developing curricula, managing higher education LPs, assessing, using technology in learning and most importantly, understanding the nature of learning in higher education. The Nature of Learning module is

about developing lecturers to mediate and facilitate the initiation of learners into higher education. This is done by engaging lecturers into the epistemologies of academic literacies acquisition, learning theories and diversity in learning. Each lecturer is required to assemble a portfolio of evidence which will enable them to engage critically with their teaching practice, to evaluate their teaching practice, and develop it with the aim of improving student learning.

It is in the Nature of Learning module that lecturers are introduced to the concept of academic literacies acquisition. This concept is very broad ranging from English language proficiency, general study skills, faculty specific writing skills and most significantly the induction of learners into their discipline specific knowledge, discourse and epistemology. Again in this module, lecturers are introduced to the concept of integrating reading and writing into their teaching. Some of the methods discussed in this session include, but are not limited to, Bean's (2001) coaching students as learners and thinkers; and reading commenting on and grading student writing in the margins of student work. Boughey & Van Rensburg's (1994) low stakes versus high stakes approaches to writing are also discussed, not forgetting Elander *et al* (2009) developing authorial identity of students in the classroom.

The promotions of these recommendations are very important. The main issue here is that the students will never understand nor take plagiarism seriously if their lecturers do not monitor this. For students to be labelled lazy, to have poor time management skills, and so on, is not an excuse.

## CONCLUSION

While many lecturers are aware that their students plagiarise quite a significant number feel it is because students are lazy, have poor time management skills and want to pass with the least possible effort. Seemingly, even though lecturers know that their students are struggling to engage critically with academic texts and produce original written responses, some of them assume the responsibility of addressing the problem of plagiarism lies out of their hands. Lecturers either, did not give a true picture in the survey with regards to reading the policy or they simply chose to ignore the developmental approach towards addressing plagiarism offered by the university policy, which they are mandated to implement. From the observations in the survey, there is evidently a chasm between the approval of the policy and its implementation by lecturers.

Considering that all the lecturers indicated that they read the policy, some of them still model very bad practices in the actual implementation of the policy amongst their students in classrooms. Granted, there will always be trends in higher education that impact negatively on academic writing development such as the pressures of large classes and students with language barriers, just to name a few. Nevertheless, proper implementation of the Plagiarism Policy, collaboration between the Teaching and Learning Centre and lecturers, and seeking new interventions to support the development of writing identities will go a long way in addressing the problem of plagiarism in the faculty and in turn help the students to become better writers. In conclusion, more research about the plagiarism problem needs to be carried out, so that lecturers can position themselves strategically in this process of implementing the Plagiarism Policy and in helping to create a supportive environment for students to avoid plagiarism.

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## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire

The intention of this survey is to explore the perceptions of lecturers around student plagiarism in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. According to the definition provided in the Plagiarism Policy, plagiarism can be defined as the 'taking and using of ideas, writings, works or inventions of another, from any textual or internet-based source, and presenting them as if they were one's own' (UFH, 2009, p.1).

This questionnaire is completely anonymous and the information provided will be dealt with confidentially.

### Instructions

This questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A is comprised of eight statements, you are required to circle one of the three options provided to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. Section B consists of two open-ended questions which require you to contribute your opinion and experience. Please complete both sections.

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### Section A

1. Plagiarism is a problem in the faculty.  

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
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2. I have read the Plagiarism Policy passed by Senate in May 2009.  

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
------------	-----------	---------------
  
3. The students whom I teach are familiar with the Plagiarism Policy passed by Senate in May 2009.  

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
------------	-----------	---------------
  
4. The lecturers, with whom I work, are familiar with the procedures that need to be followed when plagiarism is suspected.  

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
------------	-----------	---------------
  
5. Information is provided to students (at undergraduate and postgraduate level) in their learning and study guides to ensure that plagiarism is avoided.  

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
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6. Training is offered to students (at undergraduate and postgraduate level) in the form of workshops (in collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Centre) to ensure that plagiarism is avoided.  

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
------------	-----------	---------------
  
7. All the written assignments which I set for my students include clear assessment criteria with explicitly stated penalties for written work which is plagiarized.  

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
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8. I insist that all students submit a signed declaration (indicating that the writing is their own work) together with each written assignment.  

<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>
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**Section B**

9. Read the four types of plagiarism listed below. Indicate by means of the number one (1) in the space provided, which one you believe to be the **most common type of plagiarism** because you encounter it most often in your students' written assignments. Indicate by means of the number two (2), which one you believe to be the **second most common type of plagiarism** you encounter in your students' written assignments. Indicate by means of the number three (3) which you believe to be the **least common type of plagiarism** found in student writing.

- a) 'Cut and paste' information from internet sources
- b) Copying written work from another student
- c) Copying from sources without acknowledgement (no quotation marks, in-text citations, footnotes or reference list)

Please specify if you are aware of another type of plagiarism not listed above:

.....  
.....

10. In your opinion, why do students plagiarize?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you for your contribution!

**ANNEXURE B: A GENERIC DECLARATION FORM**

The template provided below may be used and adapted by individual departments to suit their academic needs.

**PLAGIARISM DECLARATION**

1. I know that plagiarism means taking and using the ideas, writings, works or inventions of another as if they were one's own. I know that plagiarism not only includes verbatim copying, but also the extensive use of another person's ideas without proper acknowledgement (which includes the proper use of quotation marks). I know that plagiarism covers this sort of use of material found in textual sources and from the Internet.
2. I acknowledge and understand that plagiarism is wrong.
3. I understand that my research must be accurately referenced. I have followed the rules and conventions concerning referencing, citation and the use of quotations as set out in the Departmental Guide.
4. This assignment is my own work, or my group's own unique group assignment. I acknowledge that copying someone else's assignment, or part of it, is wrong, and that submitting identical work to others constitutes a form of plagiarism.
5. I have not allowed, nor will I in the future allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as their own work.

Signed .....

Date .....



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