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## Editorial Note

The Academic year 2022 brought about hope to humanity across the world over. It has indeed signalled the end of terror faced by humanity between the periods 2019-2021. The COVID-19 pandemic has indeed left scars in the hearts of many families who have lost their loved ones. For most of us who survived the pandemic, our believe is that indeed GOD spared us for a reason that our tasks were not yet completed. For the period in question, IPADA did not only suffer the COVID-19 pandemic, but also numerous man-made challenges which By His Grace the International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (IPADA) hope to continue achieve without fail to succeed to provide quality scholarship opportunity to both the emerging and established scholars wishing to learn and share knowledge with the rest of the scholarship community. From the Desk of the IPADA Board, we are and we will forever be indebted to African scholars and those from the other continents who have taken their time to be part of this African scholarship project. The IPADA Conference has a good historical record of consistently and successfully hosting the Conference from 2016 to date and will continue to achieve our vision without an option of giving up or fail. From inception we have successfully hosted this African Scholarship project respectively as follows: Limpopo province (2016), Botswana (2017), Saldanhabay (2018), Southern Sun, OR Tambo International Airport (2019), Virtual Conference (2020) and Virtual Conference (2021) and Premier Hotel, OR Tambo Airport (2022). Our scientific project objective as the IPADA conference continued to be rooted deeply in our desire to bring together academics from a multi-disciplinary context in the African region and beyond to engage on critical public administration and development issues in different context. We have since inception in 2016 crafted different Conference themes which are of interest to both African scholars and those outside our continent. In our 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, the Scientific Committee of the International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives deliberately crafted the theme "Relooking at Development, Value for Money and Public Service Delivery" to provoke debates that would ultimately bring about administrative, economic and political solutions to the African continent and beyond. With donations and borrowing from the international financial institutions our governments remain behind in terms of development and service delivery.

The majority of papers published in these Conference Proceedings addressed public administration from various countries across Africa and beyond. The opportunity to share knowledge and experience with scholars from America, Japan, Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique was prominent in the Conference interaction environment. Numerous case studies from Africa and beyond are therefore provided in this Conference Proceedings edition. Colleagues from all these countries presented all their work from their own countries in context of public administration and educational problems and development matters informed by the theme.

All papers that are published in this Conference Proceedings went through a quality scholarship verification of Triple Blind Peer Review process by specialists in the subject of Public Administration, Development and Public Governance. Papers which were accepted with suggested revisions were sent back to the authors for corrections before a final decision could be made by the Editorial Committee to publish them. The review process which determined the publishability of each paper contained herein was compiled in accordance with the editorial policy and guidelines approved by the Scientific Committee of the membership of the International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (IPADA).

The 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (IPADA) successfully managed to draw together experts from the subjects' fields of Public Administration, Development Management, Human Resources and Local Government, Public

Finances, Development and Economists and Military studies among others to engage scholarly in an attempt to find solutions that would improve African policy and administration systems.

This compilation provides only 58 papers out of 171 paper abstracts received and read at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (IPADA) held at Premier Hotel, OR Tambo Airport from September,14-16, 2022. Indeed, only 82 papers were reviewed in which 58 received favourable review reports and 24 were rejected for publication. This Conference proceeding is published online (ISBN: 978-0-9921971-9-3 (print) ISBN: 978-0-9921971-8-6 (e-book) in order to be accessible to as many academics, researchers and practitioners as possible.

This publication consists of 58 scientific papers contributed by authors from varying South African Universities, international universities and public institutions. The Volume consists of more than 60% of papers published from varying institutions as per the requirements of the South African Department of Higher Education and Training *Research Output Policy Guidelines* published in March 2015.

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# Commercialisation of Research in Institutions of Higher Education: A Transformation Process

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Walter Sisulu University, South Africa

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**Abstract:** Higher Education Institutions need to address transformation, particularly looking at reducing graduate unemployment and improving their third-stream income. One of the strategies to achieve these transformational goals is to commercialise research produced by these institutions. Hence, this paper aims to explore ways in which institutions can incorporate the commercialisation of research concepts to have an impact on their output. The exploration process employs a qualitative thematic literature review methodology. The paper focuses on how to dissect the commercialisation and entrepreneurship concept, harness intellectual property, form partnerships and collaborations, address transformational change and structural reform, benefits and challenges of commercialisation, among the ways to deal with the commercialisation of research. This study revealed that the commercialisation of research requires active participation from leadership, an understanding of the roles of all stakeholders involved, creating an enabling environment and having incentive programs for motivation. Challenges highlighted include financial constraints, particularly in developing countries, lack of awareness, unclear policies, and tradeoff between publishing research papers and protecting intellectual property. It has been found that commercializing research can have meaningful outcomes in institutions and an enormous effect on the economy and society.

**Keywords:** Commercialisation of research, Economy, Entrepreneurship, Intellectual Property transformation

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## 1. Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) need to address transformation, particularly looking at reducing graduate unemployment and improving their third-stream income. One of the strategies to achieve these transformational goals is to commercialise research produced by these institutions. Harman (2010) defined research commercialisation as the process of turning scientific discoveries and inventions into marketable products and services. The commercialisation process involves licensing patents to companies or by the creation of 'start-up' companies depending on the assignment to them of university intellectual property (IP) (Harman, 2010; Caulfield & Ogbogu, 2015). Added benefits of research commercialisation are to enable knowledge transfer between universities and research users, solve societal problems, strengthen university-industry-government partnerships, encourage ongoing public investment in university research and improve international economic competitiveness (Harman 2010; Arya, 2012; Caulfield & Ogbogu, 2015; Aubakirova, 2020). In essence, the commercialisation of research transforms HEI into entrepreneurial universities that are driving the knowledge economy phenomenon to diversify their sources of income and revenue.

The knowledge economy challenges the status quo of teaching and learning in traditional HEI as it requires fluid science and education engagements. The knowledge economy concept increases the requirements of education by incorporating essential skills such as entrepreneurship, understanding of patenting and licensing inventions, the value of customer services, and being innovative (Kichuk, Kunchenko-Kharchenko, Hrushchynska, Zhukova & Yarish, 2021; Farrell, Mapanga, Chitha, Ashton & Joffe, 2022). Consequently, HEI are actively establishing Technology Transfer Offices, science parks, entrepreneurship incubators, policies, and seed grants to create enabling environment for the commercialization of research (Kichuk *et al.*, 2021; Diop & Asongu, 2022; Farrell *et al.*, 2022). However, developing countries are still lagging in some of the above mentioned initiatives. For instance, African countries only allocate less than 1% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to research and innovation with South Africa and Kenya leading at 0.8% according to the World Bank Statistics 2017 report (World Bank, 2021). The limited public investment in research and innovation makes it more competitive to acquire grants that provide a platform for scientists and innovators to bring their ideas to life. As a result, the few discoveries made in developing countries may end up in

theses and journal articles due to a lack of start-up capital among many reasons.

The transformation of HEI into entrepreneurial universities is at a transition stage whereby the concepts of invention licensing and entrepreneurship are neither well-known nor effectively implemented. There are offices and centers dedicated to such programs however, the reception is dependent on the research and innovation culture of the institution. For instance, an institution that purely focuses on teaching and learning is reluctant to learn as they do not understand the benefits of the new concepts (Harman, 2010; Farrell *et al.*, 2021). Other contributing factors are that some of the institutions do not have enabling business-friendly policies in place and there is no flexibility to share teaching workload in order to provide sufficient time for entrepreneurship (Harman, 2010; Audretsch & Link, 2019; Ghio, Guerini & Rossi-Lamastra, 2019; Diop & Asongu, 2022). Furthermore, there is a challenge of risking IP protection at the expense of publishing to meet academic targets for promotion (Salter, Salandra & Walker, 2017; Kichuk *et al.*, 2021). Academics are also required to commercial in a specific field to gain international recognition. The downfall of highly commercial research is that it limits the scope of academics and subsequently lacks the critical entrepreneurship skill necessary for commercialization.

The Universities South Africa established an Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) program in 2016 that teaches HEI about entrepreneurship (EDHE, 2022). The EDHE program is training university students, academics and leaders on entrepreneurship with the objective of cultivating an entrepreneurship culture that will yield entrepreneurial universities, reduced graduates and youth unemployment, and innovative academics (EDHE, 2022). The EDHE program is one of few initiatives that are teaching entrepreneurship. However, their focus is more on students and there is minimal awareness conducted to recruit academics. Once again, the low participation of academics becomes an issue of interest and finding time from the tight teaching workload.

The aim of this study is to dissect the state of the transformative process for entrepreneurial universities and unpack challenges that cause the lack of participation so that solutions tailored to the African region that address such can be devised. The overarching objective of the study is to bring

about awareness of entrepreneurship while creating a culture of commercializing research. In that way, academics and HEI will be able to form mutually beneficial partnerships with industries.

## 2. Theoretical Underpinnings

The commercialisation of research is key to the transformation of universities; hence, this study adopts the theory of change. The theory of change includes the process from inputs, activities, output and outcomes, and impacts. The theory of change can sharpen the planning and implementation of commercialisation since a person uses inputs to change and should be firm to choose roles one at a time (Coombs & Meijer, 2021). In commercialisation, the input phase involves the feasibility stage where the prototype or service is tested (Bhagavathy, Cardenes & McCulloch, 2021). It should be noted that this stage is necessary though its time consuming and expensive. However, there is seed funding provided by the universities and other private institutions that researchers can consider for a successful feasibility study.

After a successful feasibility study, the theory of change allows the commercialisation process to engage the researcher in several activities. These activities entail research and development of the prototype, transfer of knowledge, and collection of data for analysis (Bhagavathy *et al.*, 2021). The theory of change links to commercialization because the initiative can be evaluated in a systematic and cumulative way to put activities and outcomes together (Matschoss, Repo & Lukkarinen, 2020).

The theory of change entails that the researcher begins by stating the intended outcomes and putting them into context (Matschoss *et al.*, 2020; Coombs & Meijer, 2021). For instance, in this case, the intended outcome is for universities to produce impactful research that has economic value for communities through commercialization. An important economic factor may be the policy environment, where universities provide legislation on funding models of the research project at the stages of commercialisation. Moreover, another contextual fact may refer to social networks such as how communities can accept the project or how intergroup relations are addressed (Papadopoulou, Phillips, Salehi & Salder, 2021). The theory of change needs to be plausible in that implemented activities should lead to desired outcomes. There should be economic, institutional,

and human resources commitment for the change to be successful. The theory should have measurable records of accomplishment under conditions that enhance continuous improvement.

### 3. Methodology

The paper employed a qualitative thematic literature review methodology that builds from existing knowledge (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). This methodology synthesizes knowledge in a manner that dissects the themes into details that bring out new knowledge on the subject matter (Snyder, 2019; Osorio, Centeno & Cambra-Fierro, 2020). Consequently, this paper explored the following themes: how to dissect the commercialization and entrepreneurship concept, harness intellectual property, form partnerships and collaborations, address transformational change and structural reform, benefits and challenges of commercialisation, among the ways to deal with commercialisation of research.

### 4. Dissecting the Commercialisation Concept

The term commercialisation of research as defined above speaks about converting research and innovation discoveries into products and services that

solve societal problems while creating revenue. Research starts with identifying a problem or gap that could potentially be addressed through dedicated exploration of relevant interventions (Gross *et al.*, 2018; Kishuk *et al.*, 2021). Either the identified problem or gap is formulated into a testable hypothesis or question that will be answered based on the research finding. Similarly, entrepreneurship is identifying a problem or gap with the intention to provide a solution or service that creates revenue. Therefore, the commercialisation of research does require entrepreneurship skills. Table 1 shows the generic stages of commercialising research in HEI as basic research, commercialisation possibility including market research, technology feasibility and development, commercialisation, and business development (Hindle & Yencken, 2004; Bhagavathy *et al.*, 2021). Each of the stages has sub-steps that are time-consuming, resource-extensive, and sometimes expensive. Furthermore, each step required a different form of funding instruments from either the institution, government, or private investors and specialized human capital, facilities, and infrastructure.

The commercialisation of research in HEI begins with the disclosure of research findings to university stakeholders such as the Technology Transfer Office (TTO) after completing market research (Hindle & Yencken, 2004; Bhagavathy *et al.*, 2021;

**Table 1: Stages of Commercialisation of Research in Higher Education Institutions**

Stage	Activities	Funding Instrument	Housing/Responsible Stakeholder
Basic research	Test hypothesis Research market needs Commercialization possibility	Research grants	Laboratories
Disclosure of research and assessment	File for invention disclosure Evaluate whether it is a copyright, patent, know-how or trade secret	No cost	Technology Transfer Office
Prototype development and feasibility testing	Design, redesign and further testing Collect data for analysis	Seed grant	Research office or external funder
License assignment	File or sell the IP	Seed grant	Research office or external funder
Trials, market samples and demonstrations	Quality improvement User engagement	Investors, Government	Entrepreneurship Incubator Techno parks
Business development	New spin-off or existing business	Business angels	Inventor or the institution

Source: Author

Diop & Meijer, 2022). The market research stage is incorporated into the basic research step whereby the inventor discovers or improves a new product/service in the laboratory using a research funding grant and tests whether the product has a market and/or ability to generate revenue (Gross *et al.*, 2018; Farrell *et al.*, 2022). It is at this stage that the invention ought to solve local or international societal problems and must clearly state its contribution to the economy of the institution's community. The TTO decides if the disclosure is either published or protected as a copyright, patent, trade secret, or know-how given the outcome of its assessment (Hindle & Yencken, 2004; Ncube, 2013). This step is crucial for academics since publishing contributes to their productivity whereas filing for IP has financial gains. Only 15% out of 355 private funders showed interest in IP protection possibly due to the exorbitant fee required for this exercise (Chesbrough & Vanhaverbeke, 2018; Hart, An, Edwards, Mahadevan, Master & Edwards, 2021). This shows that most of the research funding does not cater for the IP protection cost.

The TTO further serves as an intermediary between the inventor and funders by assisting with seed grants for conducting technology feasibility studies in either a laboratory, technopark or science shop (Hindle & Yencken, 2004; Ncube, 2013; Kichuk *et al.*, 2021). The invention is prototyped in the form of trials, market samples and demonstrators that form part of the output stage in the theory of change. This stage allows direct feedback from users with the aim of improving quality. This stage assists in establishing real-world clientele that will be retained by the quality of the product and customer service. The challenges faced include finding time to balance teaching and learning workload, and implications of private work policy shall the invention require resources that are outside the HEI, unclear roles of the involved stakeholder and undefined inter-group relations/benefits which could be outlined in outcomes as guided by the theory of change (Coombs & Meijer, 2021; Farrell *et al.*, 2021). The invention is commercialised into a new spin-out start-up business mostly through the assistance of entrepreneurship incubators that are commonly found in HEI.

## 5. Harnessing IP

Harnessing the IP in universities involves a process where research output is recognized and rewarded

by remunerating researchers during the commercialization process. This implies that harnessing the intellectual process includes some stages in the commercialization process ranging from IP audit, incubation of new ideas, reduction of ideas to the practical form, protection of the idea and exploiting the idea which are categorized as input and activities in the theory of change (Downie, 2005; Ncube, 2013; Kichuk *et al.*, 2021; Kant & Shahid, 2022). The harnessing of IP activities is a disclosure of inventions, ownership of patents, licensing and registering companies (Delgado, Silva & de Rodriguez, 2019; Aziz & Nasir, 2021). There should be a pending patent application ready to be presented to investors and potential buyers or licensees for the commercialisation process to be smooth. Ensuring that there is a patent application keeps information confidential before it can be public.

The IP audit stage allows the researcher to keep records. These records will state the patent, trademark, copyright, trade secrets and confidential information (Ncube, 2013; Aziz & Nasir, 2021). Patent holders experience barriers when it comes to equity, commercialisation knowledge, and protecting their ideas from others who can steal the idea and run with it as their own. Universities need to up the game on implementing policies and overcoming strict regulatory processes of commercialisation. The commercialisation process needs awareness campaigns in universities to concertise researchers with privacy issues, ownership divisions and disclosure policies for researchers to engage in the process with confidence (Aziz & Nasir, 2021; Ravi & Janodia, 2022).

According to Aylen (2001), the harnessing of IP can generate third-stream income for universities. For instance, New Zealand reaped huge amounts of income from the seed fund, of which the seed fund involves the stage where the feasibility study is done for the prototype development (Aylen, 2001). Lack of knowledge about the commercialisation and IP process and information gaps leave research outputs in the cupboards being trophies. Others are exemplars for future researchers or kept in publication houses as other researchers are more comfortable with the publication process than the commercialisation process. Awareness and clarity on the process is a win-win strategy for both the researchers and the university as this process can generate social impactful research that is economical (Ncube, 2013; Delgado *et al.*, 2019).

## 6. Partnerships and Collaborations

The process of commercialisation needs researchers to collaborate with other parties to strengthen the process. For instance, commercialisation can have a significant impact on translating research and development (Downie, 2005; Hart *et al.*, 2021). The partnerships integrate activities among businesses, universities, government and publicly funded research organizations. There can be a research consortium and research platforms that focus on the commercialisation of research. For example, in South Africa, the EDHE project hosted by Universities in South Africa (EDHE, 2022) to change the research landscape. In EDHE, among the platforms created to support entrepreneurship activities in universities, there is a community of practice that focuses on research. The project contributes to building strong collaborations among academics and linking universities to the private sector and potential investors. In 2022, there was a workshop that empowered academics on skills of commercialization (EDHE, 2022).

Partnerships and collaborations in the commercialisation process can have a sustainability impact on both the university and the communities that are served by them. For instance, companies attached to universities can invest huge amounts of money if the research output produced has a direct impact on industry production. Furthermore, the industry partners bring expertise on scale-up for mass production, technical barriers, and logistics for effective distribution of the new inventions to the market (Centobelli, Cerchione & Esposito, 2019; Ghio *et al.*, 2019; Hart *et al.*, 2021). This also creates new opportunities for graduates produced by universities and therefore can result in skilled graduate employment and job creation (Downie, 2005; Papadopoulou *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, researchers remain relevant to address societal needs and make an impact with the investment they receive. Universities use innovation to sustain their research and continue to grow.

Several examples of activities on partnerships and collaborations range from including industry peers in review processes of universities and researchers being involved in industry space in activities such as board members, consultants, and speakers (Umoren, James & Litzelman, 2012; Centobelli *et al.*, 2019). The partnerships can result in new degrees and short courses being born such as postgraduate diplomas, degrees in innovation

and entrepreneurship, and IP protection or Finance Management course. Some companies or partnerships need to engage in formal agreements like the signing of memorandums of understanding or agreements to facilitate bilateral benefits (Skelcher, 2010; Ghio *et al.*, 2019).

Cohen, Nelson and Walsh (2002) in their study in the United States of America found that partnerships and collaborations contributed to the efficient production of the manufacturing sector. Public research had a significant impact on both large firms and start-ups. It was suggested in their paper that partnerships were established through research publications, published reports, meetings, consultations, and the exchange of informal information (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). In addition, Hsu (2006) found that partnerships and collaborations can enhance growth and sustainability in start-ups.

## 7. Transformational Changes and Structure Reform

Transformational change should be based on the growth of the competitiveness of the economy and the accelerated development of the entrepreneurship ecosystem (Arya, 2012; Aubakirova, 2020). Universities should provide skills that can be used for building economies and should be able to instil an entrepreneurial mindset in the transformation process. It has been suggested by Simsek (2013) that leadership is key to the transformational process and should open doors for organizations.

Transformation in higher education in the commercialisation of the research process proposes that leadership bring a new strategic vision. For instance, chapter 9 of the National Development Plans (NDP) vision 2030 in South Africa quotes as:

*"Universities educate and train people with high-level skills for employment... South Africa needs knowledge that equips people for society in constant social change... In today's knowledge society, higher education underpinned by strong science and technology innovation system is increasingly important in opening up people's opportunities..."*

This implies leaders in management should have the technical expertise to lead the process and be flexible to adjust where necessary. In the implementation phase, leaders need to recognize that there will be a cultural change in the university (Gamze,

2014; Aubakirova, 2020). This affects structures and leadership needs to find ways to report changes to university formal reporting structures and concertise the entire university community that there will be changes in processes, systems, roles, and relationships. Transformational changes should improve the quality of offerings in the university (Arya, 2012; Simsek, 2013; Caulfield & Ogbogu, 2015).

There should be new structures formed for the commercialisation process to succeed (Downie, 2005; Gamze, 2014). Commercialisation needs structures such as centers of entrepreneurship and innovation, TTO, institutes of entrepreneurship, and incubators among others. These structures should promote the participation of entrepreneurship activities and have platforms to link universities with the private sector to increase partnership agreements (Audretsch & Link, 2019; Centobelli *et al.*, 2019). In addition to TTO, there should be commercialization managers or officers and lawyers specializing in contracts. In top management, there should be a Deputy Vice-chancellor or Senior director responsible for innovation and entrepreneurship (Simsek, 2013; Ghio *et al.*, 2019). There could be new companies within the universities that are entities assigned to generate revenues for universities. For instance, Auckland University's Uniservice Ltd in New Zealand deals with commercialisation aspects and generates huge revenues for the university (Downie, 2005). Also, other universities in South Africa own hospitals used to train students, conduct research, and generate revenues for the university. Universities can also offer new degrees and diplomas in programmes such as entrepreneurship, innovation management and others as they see fit in their surrounding environments. The programs in commercialization need to be provided in proper infrastructure and be offered by qualified human resources (Aubakirova, 2020).

## 8. Benefits of Commercialisation

Commercialisation of research in HEI command changes in the organogram, curriculum programs and policies. The transformation itself to the knowledge economy creates more job opportunities within the HEI that will require a variety of skills and competencies (Kichuk *et al.*, 2021; Farrell *et al.*, 2022). Interested university staff will have to embark on lifelong learning to acquire new skills necessary to successfully breed the research commercialisation culture. For instance, academics will be trained on entrepreneurship and IP protection so that they can

better understand the process of research commercialisation and expectations based on their roles. The proposed new programs will have a clientele of the HEI community including top management, the partners from the government and the industries as the collaboration engagements will also be a great platform to market the new programs (Centobelli *et al.*, 2019; Ghio *et al.*, 2019; Hart *et al.*, 2021). Community members can be trained on the new concepts as part of the HEI community engagement so that they become employable should an opportunity arise or be equipped with skills to run sustainable businesses. Consequently, the third-stream income of the HEI from the short courses and economic development in communities will be boosted. The revenue generated by the start-ups from the commercialized research or sales of IP contributes to the third-stream income (Aylen, 2001; Delgado *et al.*, 2019).

Additionally, the acquired skills affirm that the commercialisation of research is a multidisciplinary exercise. Therefore, it will ignite collaboration across disciplines within the HEI and yield multi-skilled staff and students. This will further improve knowledge transfer as people from different backgrounds will be working together by sharing their expertise which then creates learning opportunities for the partners and collaborators (Downie, 2005; Kichuk *et al.*, 2021; Papadopoulou *et al.*, 2021). The quality of produced graduates will improve and subsequently increase the chances of employability or starting sustainable businesses. The entrepreneurship training will instill traits such as creativity, innovative, strategic thinker and problem-solving while enhancing self-esteem as alluded to by Ncanywa (2019) and Farrell *et al.* (2021) in their definition of an entrepreneur. The commercialisation of research will contribute to curbing the high unemployment rate due to reliance on formal employment, particularly from the government.

The entrepreneurial academics partaking in the commercialisation of research will have the ability to devise customised solutions for immediate societal problems. For instance, HEI in rural Eastern Cape and Limpopo serve low-skilled unemployed community members who have access to agricultural land whereas Western Cape and Gauteng are dealing with increased demand for basic services like water, electricity, and reticulation system caused by urbanisation (Rogan, 2018; Bischoff-Mattson, Maree, Vogel, Lynch, Olivier & Terblanche, 2020). The inventions from the research will allow community access to improved services. In so doing, the



communities will be part of the solution making process. The partnerships will also increase economic activities between local government, institutions, local businesses and community members with the ultimate goal of creating circular economy culture.

## 9. Challenges of Commercialisation

The commercialisation of research concept is not necessarily new, however, its implementation varies due to ineffective articulation, unclear roles of stakeholders, lack of commitment and economic inequality. The commercialisation of research concept is understood at face value as converting research findings or inventions into services and products (Harman, 2010; Caulfield & Ogbogu, 2015). However, the translation of the conversion process with the necessary steps can lose its meaning based on the knowledge of the translator. For example, the concern about suppressing academic exchanges and research publications due to the non-disclosure requirement when filing for IP protection discourages participation (Aylen, 2001; Ncube, 2013). Research publications are one of the performance indicators for scholars that qualify them for promotion. Opting for commercialisation may delay one's promotion and participation in the commercialisation of research becomes a tradeoff between the two (Salter *et al.*, 2017; Chesbrough & Vanhaverbeke, 2018). Hence, this paper seeks to highlight the need for clear policies that are accommodative of this concept. The policy must create room for consideration of the commercialisation of research as a component of scholars' performance indicators.

HEI policymakers have a key role in the rollout of the concept. The process of revising policies for inclusion of the commercialisation of research concept must involve all stakeholders such as students, staff and community members (Gamze, 2014; Farrell *et al.*, 2021). This will allow all stakeholders to better understand their roles and benefits. It is upon knowing what is expected of you that you will commit, especially when the benefits are clearly spelled out. The policies must state principles of including community members as stakeholders of the institution, establish efficient funding models that benefit the investor, government and the inventor, and how the teaching workload will be allocated without threatening the scholars' income (Harman, 2010; Farrell *et al.*, 2021; Diop & Asongu, 2022). The policy must have frameworks that explain terms of

the interrelations. The funding frameworks must be formulated with the aim of creating enabling ecosystem for resource-poor HEI to minimize the economic inequality (Farrell *et al.*, 2021).

## 10. Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this study was to explore the commercialisation of research in HEI by focusing on articulating the concept, its benefits and challenges faced. The commercialisation of research is dissected into stages with steps, funding instruments available and offices/structures that can be consulted for each stage. For example, the disclosure of the invention is done at the TTO at no cost while scaling-up and prototype development can be done at techno parks with financial assistance from investors or the government. Benefits of research commercialisation include income generation, job creation, skills transfer and customised solutions to societal problems. This conceptual study revealed that there is a differing understanding of the concept, hence, the unclear roles of stakeholders, who are the stakeholder and consequently the low commitment. It was further discovered that most of the challenges stem from unclear policies and frameworks to guide the process. Therefore, this study recommends that HEI must undergo structural reform and formulate/revise policies to explain the interrelations from partnerships, funding models accommodative of poor-resourced HEI and stakeholders' roles.

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# State of Online Teaching in Grade 10 English Second Language Essays with Special References to Orthographic Errors and WhatsApp During COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** This study looked into the state of online teaching in Grade 10 English Second Language essays in three high schools, with a focus on orthographic errors and WhatsApp during COVID-19 pandemic. A mixed research method was adopted in the study. Mixed method was adopted. Social Constructivism and Gratification theory were adopted. The research was conducted using a descriptive research design. The participants in the study were 180 Grade 10 learners who were purposefully chosen from three high schools that provide English as a Second Language (EL2) and use it as a language of learning and instruction. After a pilot study, data was gathered utilizing narrative essays produced by Grade 10 learners. Written EL2 essays were scrutinized for WhatsApp orthographic errors, and a few photographs of the essays were used to demonstrate the illustrated orthographic errors. During COVID-19 pandemic, learners in Grade 10 English Second Language essays saw online teaching as a critical component of teaching and learning. The information was carefully analysed and presented in frequency tables and graphs. Themes were created from the comments of the learners. Learners on WhatsApp employed word cuts (WN), grammar mistakes (GR), word omission (WO), shorter words, and digits in place of words, according to the findings. The findings led to recommendations that WhatsApp be formally taught, as well as a LEE SINCUBA model. A WhatsApp model was proposed to aid in the sharing of the future of EL2 essays with less orthographic errors.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, English second language, Orthographic errors, Pandemic WhatsApp

## 1. Introduction

The need to increase English proficiency among high school learners in South Africa has grown importantly. Written English essays of learners in grade 10 show significant communication skills inadequacies. English is the language of academic expression; it is frequently stated that a portion of the general public's poor academic achievement in high schools may be traced to lack of fluency in writing (EL2). Department of Basic Education (2018) report state that, the use of English as a language of instruction is considered an important aspect in learning. One of the aims of the English Language (EL2) syllabus, as explained by the Minister of Education in South Africa, is to enable pupils to speak, write and make presentations in internationally acceptable English that is grammatical, fluent and appropriate for purpose, audience, context and culture. This does not only apply to English as a language, but to all subjects offered in English. Teachers' knowledge of English and how it functions is acknowledged to contribute to effective language use. Learners are

taught the kind of English that is used for social purposes (Department of Basic Education, 2018).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online teaching became popular since it was deemed the safest method of teaching and learning in the world (Cleophas, 2020). Teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) had to employ online instruction to teach essay writing skills quickly. Learners' English language competency suffers as a result of the pressures imposed by technological advancement (Franklin, 2014). Learners appear to be influencing academic English Second Language essay writing by employing 'WhatsApp language,' which has become prominent (Muhammad, Ashraf & Muhammad, 2016). Words with superfluous abbreviations and words chopped unnecessarily, such as b4, u, n, t (before, you, know, that) are slowly coming into English Second Language essays. Furthermore, it has been noted that learners dedicate more attention and time to WhatsApp social media than to their studies, and as a result, they may struggle to pass their exams (Osharive, 2015). Samuddin (2018)

state that, literacy is not only important for language learning, but it is also important for learners' overall academic achievement.

The researchers are particularly interested in orthographic errors in English Second Language essay writing skills in Grade 10. Orthography, according to Franklin (2014), is the proper technique of writing a language. Orthography originates from Greek language which means 'correct technique of writing'. Orthography, according to Nordquist (2018), is the practice or study of correct spelling according to recognized use. It is a writing system's defined technique that encompasses spelling, pronunciation, word break and emphasis (Franklin, 2014).

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Orthography is a language's traditional spelling system, yet spelling is difficult for all learners, and this is orthography's fundamental challenge. Spelling is crucial in the writing process in English. It is difficult for a non-native English speaker (second language learner) to write without making any spelling mistakes since a second language learner must employ the English alphabet's 26 letters to write down 36 sounds (Franklin, 2014). In their attempts to reconcile letters of the alphabet and phonemes of English when writing, second language learners face interference from their mother tongue. Native speakers of isiXhosa write essays in English as a Second Language. While most learners have no trouble with grammar, work breaks, or emphasis, the researchers discovered that some learners are authoring English Second Language essays, with certain errors displaying elements of 'WhatsApp language,' such as excessive informal abbreviations or word cuts. The usage of colloquial language in today's dynamic technology environment, particularly online teaching and learning during COVID-19 pandemic, reveals signs of 'WhatsApp language'. The 'WhatsApp language' is gaining a lot of traction. It may encourage the use of short words, illustrations, and a lot of informal abbreviations that aren't appropriate for official English Second Language essay writing in schools. 'WhatsApp jargon' is infiltrating formal written essays in English Second Language, and this might be contorted written essays presented. The researchers believes that by concentrating on learners' orthographic errors in essay writing, as well as WhatsApp's involvement in orthographic errors in EL2 essay writing, one will obtain a greater knowledge and respect of

the difficulties faced by English Second Language learners.

## 3. Orthographic Errors in English Second Language

Nordquist (2018) defines orthography as a practice or study of correct spelling according to established usage. Orthography refers to the study of letters and how they are used to express sounds and form words. Dhanya (2016) states that English is the official language of the world. It is an international language, spoken in many countries both as a native and as a second or foreign language. In addition to the foregoing, it should be mentioned that English is taught as a second language in most African schools. English is designated as a second language in most nations, and it currently dominates as a medium of education and communication (Nyamayedenga, 2017). It is of paramount importance that this language be taught in such a way that it helps us not just to speak, write and listen but to communicate (Shinga, 2019). Also, Jabeen (2015) contends that English is the predominant foreign language taught in schools in Europe, South America, Asia and Africa. English is more widely spoken and written than any other language, even more than Latin has ever been. It may also be suggested that English might now be the first truly global language, being the dominant or official language in over 60 countries.

In South Africa, English is used in education, administration and mass media (Songxaba & Sincuba, 2017). It should be noted that orthographic systems vary across the world in languages. Orthographic systems like English are deep, also known as opaque (Tiffany, 2017). Learners approach spelling in systematic ways.

Language teachers have found it difficult to teach English since syntactic, morphological, and phonological principles differ from tribe to tribe. Because there is a scarcity of printed literature on native grammar and linguistics, learners are sometimes uninformed of the principles that govern their own language in comparison to English (Songxaba & Sincuba, 2017). However, while there are a growing number of English-language dictionaries and grammar books on the market, there is no program in place to ensure that they are implemented in the feeder levels (Dhanya, 2016). Writing skills, particularly essay writing, must be harnessed and cultivated among learners in order for them to

further strengthen their English language skills. Writing skills are mostly used for communication, or the transmission of thoughts and feelings from one mind to another. Composition writing helps to strengthen writing skills (Swain, 2015).

Letts (2017) examined the spelling mistakes made by a group of First Grade learners in a charter school in Philadelphia. Letts (2017) reported that "vowel team errors were also common, with 16 errors or 12%. Final consonant errors were the only other error type with over 10% of the sample, with 14 errors, or 10.5%. There were only five instances of initial-consonant misspellings, including two misspellings by the same student of 'phone' <fone>, and three instances of confusion over whether <k> or <c> should represent /k/. Categories (4-5 combined) and (11) each had 11 errors. Interestingly, of the unstressed syllable errors, only 2 involved syllables other than -ing. Data on vowel spellings was inconclusive overall. Short vowels were especially confusing for learners (30 errors)". Sukasame, Kantho & Narrot (2014) conducted research on grammatical errors in learning English structures on Tenses of the MatthayomSuksa four learners. It was found that Thai learners have problems of tense selection. The errors were past perfect tense (87.1%), past simple tense (74.2%), present perfect tense (67.4%), past continuous tense (54.8%), present simple (48.4%), future simple tense (41.7%) and present continuous tense (32.3%).

Tiffany (2017) collected data on Spanish learners; there were a total of 193-word tokens collected. The learners in this study committed 259 errors. Learner four made 123 spelling errors. Learner two made 46 errors. Learner five had 39 misspelled words. Student three came in with 26 misspellings and found that for the total errors collected per learner, grade level errors collected did not trend upwards or downwards in correspondence to grade level. A point was given for correct onset, nucleus or coda. The nucleus was the location of most errors committed. The coda was ranked second with the errors it collected.

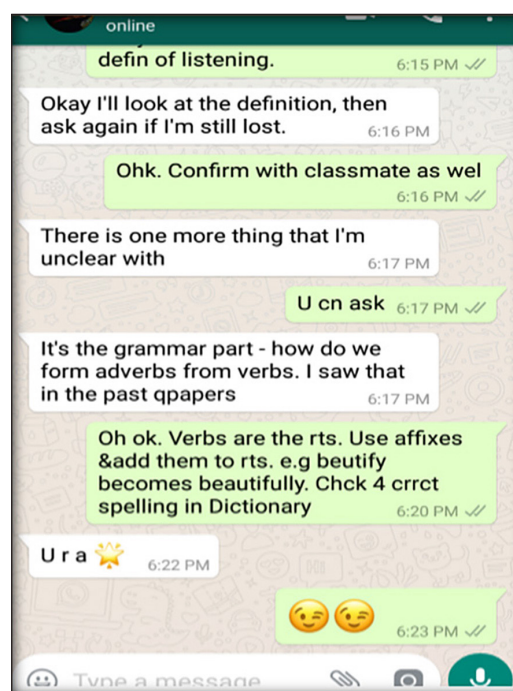
Kumar (2013), in India, reported that based on analysis of 177 written samples collected, were a result of learners' inability to discriminate sounds. Some of the errors were reported as a result of pronunciation, grapheme mismatch, flawed description and some were as a result of false word boundary. He reported that English spelling is known to be difficult

to learn for second language learners as they struggle with English spelling rules which are too many.

Rwodzi (2018) performed a study into teacher initiatives in teaching English digital literacy. On WhatsApp, the participants were discussing academic matters. The findings were intriguing, as most people used digital phones; nonetheless, the language employed in conversing with learners piqued my curiosity. If Figure 1 below is any indication, the teacher did not spell define correctly, and as a result, habitual poor spelling may be the ultimate outcome. Rwodzi's (2018) revealed a preference for reduced terms, U cn ask, qpaper, r t s, chck 4 crct, and u r a. On social media, short forms of words such as lol (laugh out loud), gr8 (excellent), gud nyt (good night), kul (cool), and msg (message) are often used. The following image was used in one of Rwodzi's (2018) reports as evidence of what participants were saying.

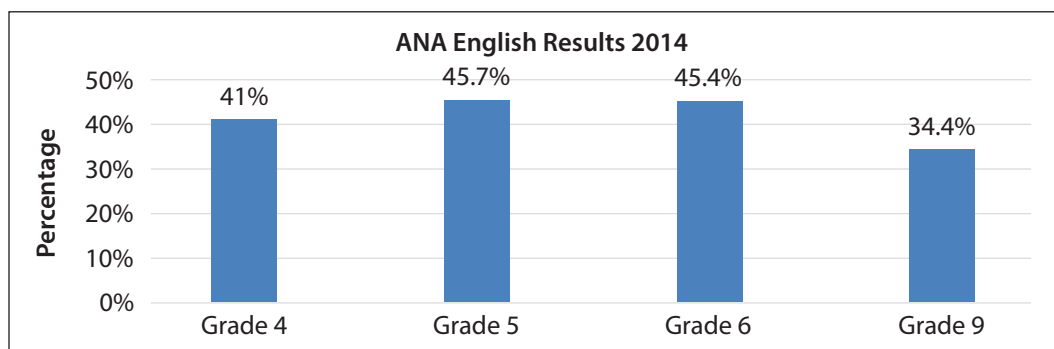
Figure 1 shows communication of participants with WhatsApp words cuts and use of digits rather than words, communication of participants in school C of his research. Mamba (2012) explicates that errors in learning are inevitable and are seen as an integral part of learning.

**Figure 1: Communication of Participants in School C**



Source: Rwodzi (2018)

**Figure 2: The Annual National Assessment (ANA) from Grade 4 to 9 in South Africa on Research Carried out by Leah (2018)**



Source: Leah (2018)

Leah (2018) orates that if one looks at the patterns emerging from the diagnostic information of past cycles of ANA above, in Figure 2, it would seem that learners in Grade 9 find it difficult to answer questions correctly. This includes answering questions that need sequencing and writing essays that need argumentation, logical order and evaluation (ANA Diagnostic Report, 2014). Leah concluded that learners fail English assessments such as the ANA because they are unable to answer in-depth questions or write essays that require sequencing, argumentation, coherence and cohesion of text in English. Furthermore, research revealed under-achievement of South African primary school learners compared to literacy levels of children worldwide. Leah laments that the problem of language as a barrier to learning in South Africa has not been dealt with, even though attempts have been made (Leah, 2018). The above results in Figure 2 show 34.4% of Grade 9 passed, and they will be doing Grade 10. If such low English scores are attained at Grade 9 level, then it may be concluded that lower levels of achievement may continue in Grade 10. One may come to an understanding that the history of lower achievement in English may be perpetuated.

#### 4. Research Question

What is the state of online teaching in Grade 10 English Second Language essays with special references to orthographic errors during COVID-19 pandemic?

#### 5. Research Objective

To determine the state of online teaching in Grade 10 English Second Language essays with special

references to orthographic errors during COVID-19 pandemic.

### 6. Methodology

According to Creswell and Poth (2018) methodology refers to considering on how the researcher goes about finding what s/he believes can be known. Creswell and Poth (2018:326) define qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological approach to inquiry that explores a social or human problem. To gain an understanding on the causes of orthographic errors in EL2 essay writing among the Grade 10 learners in the selected research sites in the OR Tambo Inland Education District, the researcher adopted the mixed research approach. Qualitative and quantitative research methods are essential in most studies and are not necessarily opposed to each other. They can be complementary as the former can be verified by the latter (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). To study these problems, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to people and places under study and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establish patterns or themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### 7. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is informed by the Social constructivism, mainly Social Interaction Theory (Vygotsky, 1986; Piaget, 1968). Since mobile technologies and WhatsApp broaden possibilities for interaction with other learners, it is of prime importance in language learning, as they are ideally suited to support a Social Constructivist approach to task

design. Vygotsky's (1978) theory plays a pivotal role in providing insight into causes of orthographic errors in English Second Language Grade 10 Essay writing around WhatsApp in this study. Also, the Gratification theory was used. Motivation to use technology, ranging from radio and television (TV) to digital TV and now the internet and mobile phones, can be explained by the Uses and Gratification theory (UGT) posits (Johnston & Ophoff, 2014). The UGT focuses on why consumers turn to technology to satisfy their social and psychological needs (Balakrishnan & Raj, 2012). The UGT implies that consumers are actively involved in their decision to use, and how to use technology in order to fulfil certain needs (North, Johnston & Ophoff, 2014). A large number of gratifications for mobile phone use which include: information exchange, conversation and socializing, information viewing, entertainment, education, escape and diversion, reassurance, fashion and status (North, Johnston & Ophoff, 2014). Figure 3 below explores the use of mobile phones by university students.

For many people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are commonly used social media, while mobile phones have become web enabled devices that may be constantly connected to the internet, providing more communication than just phone calls and Short-Messaging-Services (SMS) such as WhatsApp social media and Instant Messaging (IM) (North, Johnston & Ophoff, 2014).

## 8. Population and Sampling

The participants in this study were all Grade 10 learners enrolled in EL2 at three convenient South African schools. The process of extracting a sample from

a population is referred to as sampling, according to Alvi (2016). Two different sample methods were used in this investigation. To begin, the research sites were chosen using practical sampling. Because the researchers are full-time educator in the same district, three schools were chosen as research locations. According to Maree (2017), convenient sampling refers to instances in which population constituents are chosen based on their accessibility. It's usually simple and inexpensive to do. Second, each research site's participants were chosen using purposive sampling.

## 9. Delimitations of the Field of Study

The delimitations in this study included the geographical, sample population and conceptual delimitations.

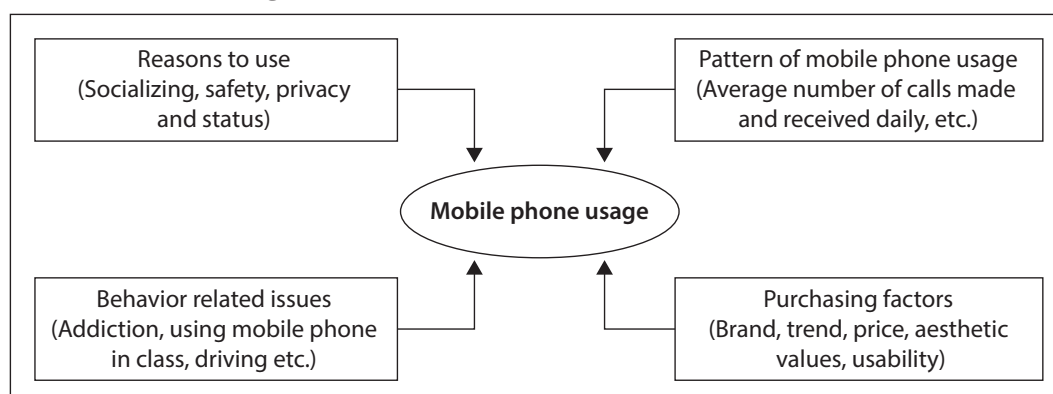
### 9.1 Geographical Delimitation

This study only focused on Grade 10 English Second Language learners at selected High Schools in South Africa.

### 9.2 Population-Sample Delimitation

The population for this paper was the entire Grade 10's doing EL2. Grade 10 (EL2) write essays until Grade 12 in paper 3 in South Africa. Paper 3 (EL2) carries 100 marks which is the highest than paper 1 which has 70 marks while paper 2 has 80 marks. For this article, the participants included selected learners doing English Second Language in Grade 10 as stipulated per selected research site: Research Site X-70, Research Site Y- 60 and Research Site Z-50,

**Figure 3: Uses and Gratification Framework**



Source: Balakrishnan and Raj (2012) and North, Johnston and Ophoff (2014)



leading to a total of 180 participants from three selected High Schools.

### 9.3 Conceptual Delimitation

This research looked at the use of the WhatsApp application platform on social media in the teaching and learning of essay writing. As a result, the study's use of cell phones was limited to orthographic errors in essay writing using WhatsApp platform model.

## 10. Ethical Considerations

The principles or norms that discriminate between right and incorrect behaviour are referred to as ethics (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leah, 2018). To ensure the study's ethical integrity, the researchers sought ethical clearance from the Basic Education Ethics Research Committee. Principals were emailed letters, which were followed by online appointments to undertake research. The educators and learners had online group meetings to outline the proposed research study and the methodology.

All participants were assured of their privacy. To obscure their identities and maintain confidentiality, schools and participants were given pseudonyms. The informed consent form was filled out and signed by the participants' parents or guardians because they were under the age of 18. In order to maintain confidentiality, the research sites were coded as X, Y and Z. Participants' essays did not have their real names but named, for example, X1 to X50.

## 11. Limitations

Theofanidis & Fountouki (2019) state that limitations of any study concern potential weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher's control, and are closely associated with the chosen research design, statistical model constraints, funding constraints, or other factors. Still, it may affect the study design, results and ultimately, conclusions. Emails were not replied to on time so that phone calls ended up being done to overcome the limitations. Resistance by participants to change from traditional teaching and learning methods to a more innovative method was another limitation. The researchers had to hold informative or motivational meetings with participants, administrators and the School Management Team (SMT) regarding the need for more relevant teaching and learning methods during COVID-19 pandemic.

## 12. Data Collection

Data was collected using an electronic email questionnaire and written essays from Grade 10 English Second Language learners.

### 12.1 Influence of WhatsApp on Learners' Spelling Errors

Learners were invited to express their personal perspectives on the impact of WhatsApp on their essay writing spellings. The information acquired for this question was crucial in determining how learners' widespread use of the WhatsApp social platform model was related to their opinions of the platform model's influence on their spellings. As a result, the query was designed to find out how WhatsApp influenced spelling problems. From research sites X, Y, and Z, participants' perspectives on WhatsApp's impact on spelling errors.

## 13. Results

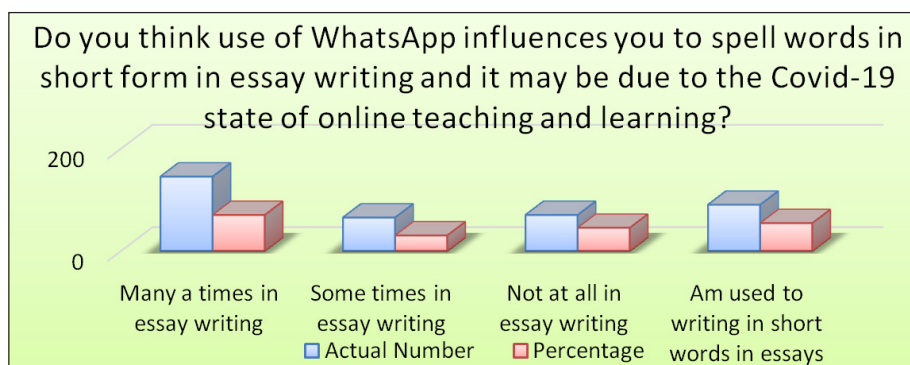
The results for aggregate data from study sites X, Y, and Z are shown in Figure 4. More than 39% of participants said that their spelling was influenced by using WhatsApp as a social media platform during essay writing. Some participants believed that WhatsApp did not always have a complete impact on their essay writing errors. As a result, around 18 percent said WhatsApp influenced their spelling errors on sometimes, while 19 percent said it had no effect on their spelling errors at all.

Figure 4 also shows that several individuals believed that WhatsApp influenced their essay writing faults on occasion. As a result, over 28% of respondents said they couldn't entirely blame their essay spelling issues on WhatsApp. An unusual group of learners (approximately 24 percent) said that WhatsApp had no effect on their essay writing. Finally, more than 48% of individuals who said they utilized WhatsApp to write brief message words in essays.

In a 136-word piece of writing, Figure 5 reveals that there were 49 errors out of the 26 words (see Table 1), some of which were repeated at least twice. In written essay, around 36% of the words were misspelled. It suggests that one out of every three words had or had been erroneous.

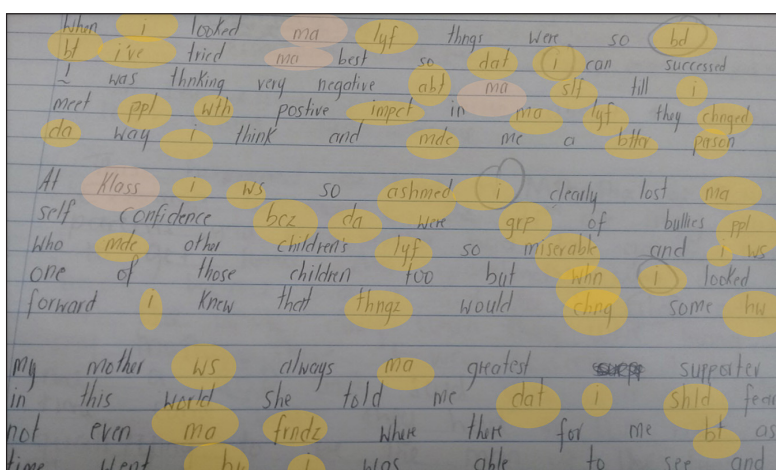
Table 1 shows WhatsApp Language Error (WE), Word Omission (WO), and Direct Translation of

**Figure 4: Participants' Views of WhatsApp Influence on Spelling Errors From Research Sites X, Y and Z**



Source: Authors

**Figure 5: Orthographic Errors From Research Site X1**



Source: Authors

**Table 1: Types and Frequency of Orthographic Errors (N=49)**

Number	Orthographic Error	Type	Correct Word	Frequency	Repetitive %
1	Ma	DHE	my	7	14
2	Lyf	WE	life	3	6
3	Bd	WO	bad	1	2
4	Thnking	WO	thinking	1	2
5	Abt	WE	about	1	2
6	Slf	WO	self	1	2
7	Ppl	WE	people	2	4
8	Impct	WO	impact	1	2
9	Changed	WO	changed	2	4
10	Frndz	WE	friends	1	2
11	Bt	WO	but	1	2
12	i've	WE	I have	1	2
13	Dat	WE	that	2	4
14	I	WE	I	9	18

Source: Authors

Home Language Error were the three most common faults (DHE). There were 12 WEs, 12 WOs, and 2 DHEs among the group. In general, Table 2 shows that the word with the highest modal error of nine repetitions was 'l' instead of 'I,' accounting for 18 percent of the total, followed by 'ma' instead of 'my,' accounting for 14 percent. For both the terms 'lyf' and 'ws,' the participant made the same mistake three times (repetition of 6%).

The following section details the orthographic problems found at Research Site Y2. Table 2 shows that the participant made nine orthographic errors, consisting of eight WhatsApp language errors (WEs) and one spelling (SP) error, out of seven types of

orthographic errors. The (WE) type's orthographic error 'ma' had the greatest percentage of 33 percent.

Figure 6 shows the commonly used orthographic errors from Z2.

In Figure 6, the learner made five orthographic errors but without repeating any of these. As such, each error was equally weighed at 20 percent as represented in Figure 7.

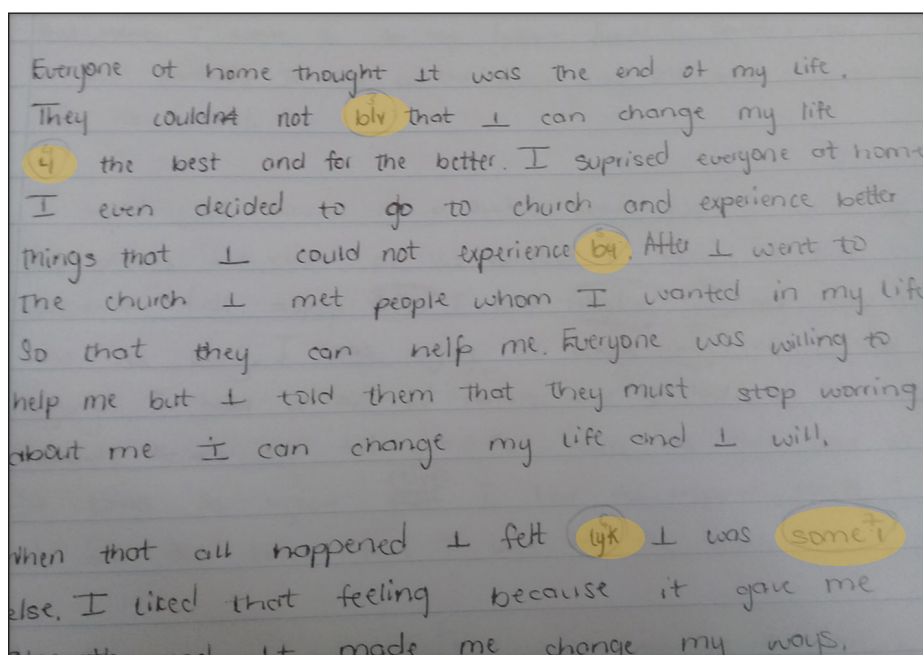
Figure 7 shows that the participant committed five orthographic errors but without repeating any. Four were WhatsApp Language Errors (WEs) and one was

**Table 2: Frequency of Orthographic Errors (N=9)**

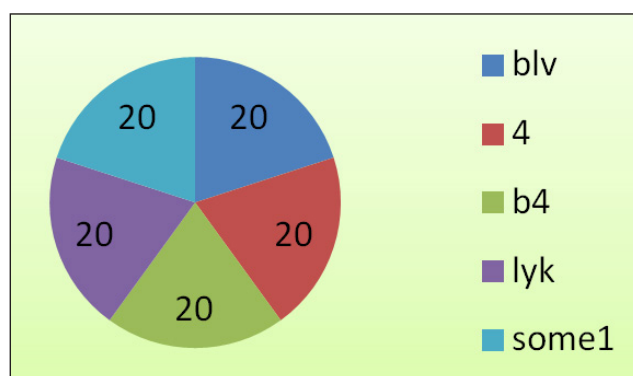
Number	Orthographic Error	Type	Correct Word	Frequency	%
1	Ma	WE	My	3	33
2	Aln	WE	Alone	1	11
3	Living	SP	Leaving	1	11
4	Lol	WE	laugh out loud	1	11
5	Alryt	WE	Alright	1	11
6	BF	WE	boy friend	1	11
7	Wud	WE	Would	1	11

Source: Authors

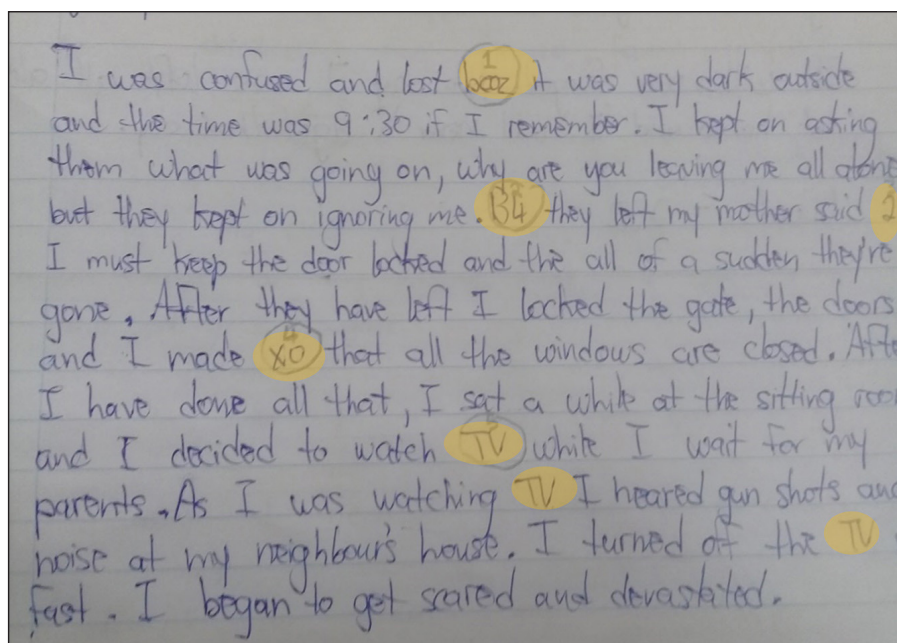
**Figure 6: Orthographic Errors From Z2**



Source: Authors

**Figure 7: Distribution of Orthographic Errors**

Source: Authors

**Figure 8: The Commonly Used Orthographic Errors From X7**

Source: Authors

a WhatsApp Language Error use of Numbers (WNS). The WEs were 'blv' instead of 'believe' and 'lyk' was erred for 'like', 'b4' was used instead of 'before', and 'some1' instead of 'someone'. On the other hand, the only WNs was '4' used instead of 'for'.

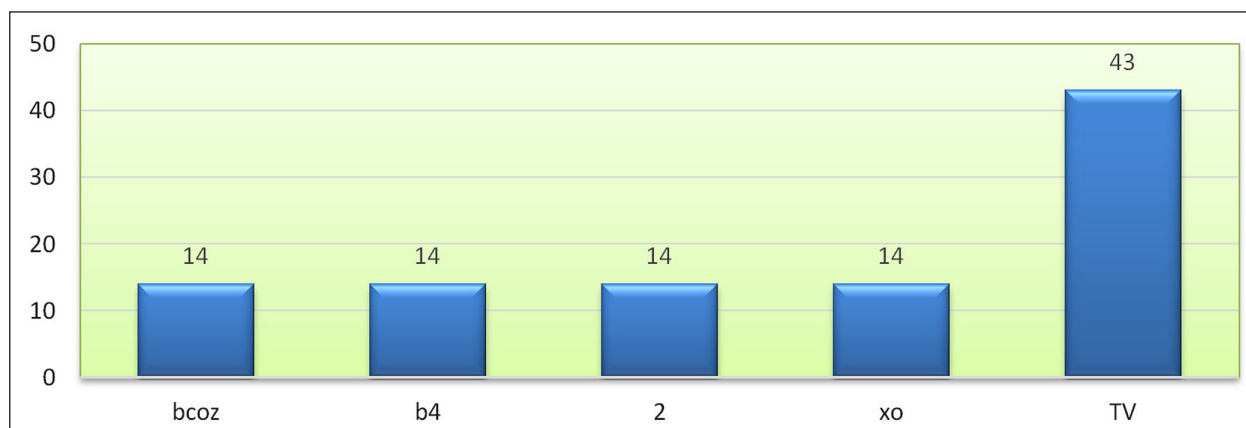
In Figure 8, the participant made seven orthographic errors from four words which were not repeated, thus they were weighed slightly above 14 percent, and one repeated. Of the five words, four were WEs, and these were 'bcoz' for 'because', 'x0' used for 'sure', 'b4' and 'TV' instead of 'television', which was repeated three times thus weighed 43 percent. The

only WNs was '2' to mean 'to'. The frequencies are depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 10 gives the commonly used orthographic errors from Figure 8 and Table 3 show that the participant committed five WhatsApp Language Errors out of which only one was repeated.

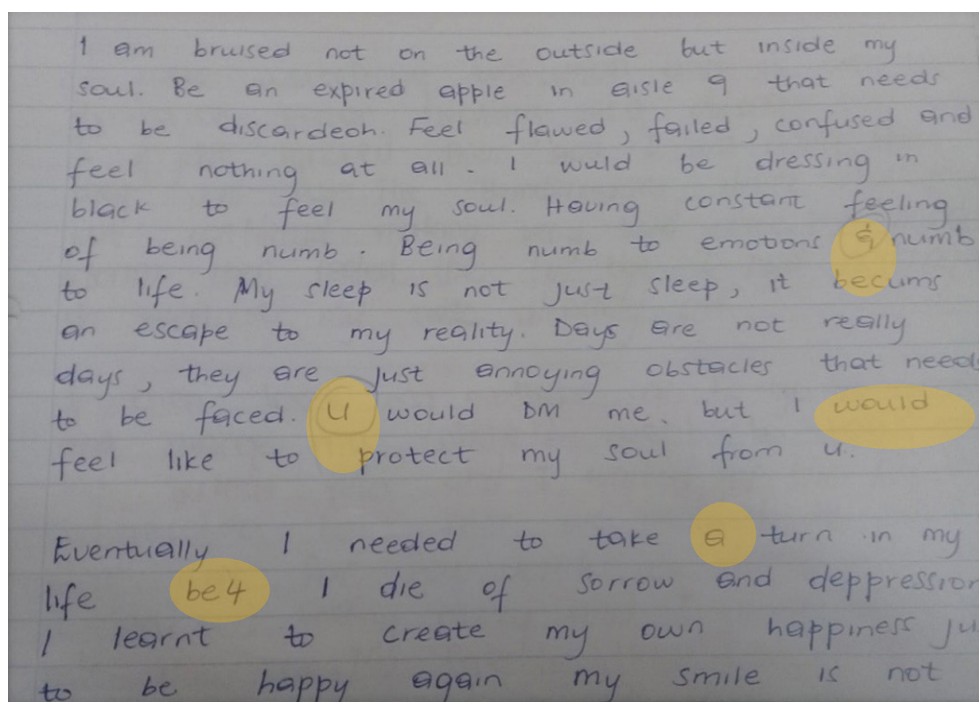
Table 3 shows that the participant committed six errors from a total of five words. Only the word 'u' instead of 'you' was repeated only once. Instead of correctly writing 'would', the participant wrote 'wuld', and instead of the full 'and', the participant used '&'.

**Figure 9: Frequency of Orthographic Errors for X7**



Source: Authors

**Figure 10: Commonly Used Orthographic Errors from Y8**



Source: Authors

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Orthographic Errors in Research Site X, Y and Z**

Number	Orthographic Error	Type	Correct Word	Frequency	%
1	wuld	WE	would	1	17
2	&	WE	and	1	17
3	becums	WE	becomes	1	17
4	U	WE	you	2	33
5	b4	WE	before	1	17

Source: Authors

## 14. Discussion of Results

Discussion for this study is done in line with the themes generated after critical analysis of data, as presented in Table 4.

### 14.1 Sub-Theme 2 Influence of WhatsApp on Spelling Errors

In comparison to all other social media networks, learners responded that WhatsApp was their favourite. As a result, it's crucial to figure out how learners' extensive use of a social platform model relates to their judgments of its impact on their skills. The results revealed that approximately 39% of the participants acknowledged that their spellings were influenced by their use of WhatsApp, and that they frequently used spelling in essay writing. Around 18 percent, on the other hand, attributed a considerable yet little effect of WhatsApp on their essay writing spelling problems.

Figure 2 shows that some participants believed WhatsApp influenced faults in their essay writing on occasion, even though roughly 28% claimed that they couldn't totally trace their essay spelling issues to WhatsApp. Those who said they utilized WhatsApp to write in brief message words in essays accounted for more than 48% of the total. This is in accordance with Mamba's (2012) opinion that correcting learners' errors and assessing whether learners' misunderstandings have been corrected is a critical component of constructivism's theory of developmental learning for learning to progress.

### 14.2 Sub-Theme 2 Learners' Natural Tendency to Commit Orthographic Errors

According to the findings, learners spend a significant amount of time on social media sites, which may be better utilised for academic purposes. This is in line with Osharive's (2015) findings that learners dedicate more attention and time to social media than to their academics; they will not be able to pass their exams if they do not learn. Obi *et al.* (2012) back up this claim, claiming that learners' use of English and grammar is influenced by their use of social networking sites. Franklin (2014), on the other hand, stated that phonemic/phonetic representations are used in English spelling.

Some participants reported they have an inherent predisposition to make orthographic errors with or without WhatsApp, according to this study. This is supported by research that shows that there are advantages and disadvantages to using any social network. When the media is overused in a way that does not academically assist learning or the process, they discovered a negative effect and influence (Shinga, 2019) inclusions from the results obtained.

### 14.3 Theme 3: Most Common Orthographic Errors Made by Learners in EL2 Essay Written Scripts

Furthermore, Al-Rahmi (2015) agrees with the findings of the study, which revealed that learners at all of the research sites made a variety of orthographic errors (see Table 1). What became clear was that the dominance of specific errors varied from one

**Table 4: Themes and Sub-Themes Generated from the Study Findings**

Research Questions	Themes	Sub-Themes
What is the influence of WhatsApp on learners' orthographic errors?	Influence of WhatsApp on learners' orthographic errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influence of WhatsApp on spelling errors</li> <li>Learners' natural tendency to commit orthographic errors</li> </ul>
Which are the most common orthographic errors made by learners in EL2 essay written scripts?	Most common orthographic errors made by learners in EL2 essay written scripts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common orthographic errors from single cases</li> <li>Orthographic errors with multiple meanings</li> <li>Formal meanings with multiple orthographic errors</li> </ul>

Source: Authors

research site to the next, with 75 percent (N=53) being the most common. School X had the highest percentage of participants who mistook 'l' for I with 47 percent (N=28) and 53 percent (N=27) in school Y and Z, respectively. Differences were also found in the number of meanings connected with specific faults.

## 15. Conclusion and Recommendations

While social media is widely used in the modern era, including online teaching and learning during COVID-19 pandemic, it, like every two-sided coin, has flaws, notably in education. People may generally be in a habit to reduce and abbreviate words to write faster and use less data, which leads to orthographic errors in EL2 essay writing. If errors are not constantly managed, they may lead to the English language's decline. As a result, this study offers practice and research recommendations.

### 15.1 Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education in South Africa

South Africa's Department of Basic Education may need to improve essay writing skills in order for education to have an improved quality of essay skills cultivated in learners. If essay writing skills are improved, light will shed on writing and reading, bringing life to a child's education in the classroom. Essay writing skills are a ray of hope for improving formal essay writing and a child's education in South Africa.

Teachers could formally follow the themes and discuss them at a set time online if the education system creates a booklet with essay writing topics from Grades 10 to 12. There may even be formal and informal essay subjects included in the booklet to allow for practice before the formal work is completed. Standardizing essay writing skills in Grades 10 to 12 may be aided by networking online essay writing talents.

### 15.2 Proposing WhatsApp Language Teaching and Learning in the Classroom

To avoid the overuse of informal words, it is critical to introduce WhatsApp language as a subject in EL2 Grade 10. For example, learners may be given an exercise to formally compose an informally written

discussion. If WhatsApp is used effectively in the teaching and learning of EL2 essay writing, it is reasonable to conclude that learning is occurring. Marks may be assigned while conversation and learning occur, which is the fundamental purpose of language acquisition in the first place, resulting in relevance and technological inclusion, particularly in online teaching and learning. Curriculum planners may need to perform the following without fail to measure the success of the rolled-out WhatsApp context in teaching WhatsApp.

South African national content curriculum planners must prepare relevant materials for curriculum planners for teaching and learning online in WhatsApp language. Departmental based workshops, school-based workshops and classroom-based online visits and monitoring, with departmental based trained personnel who would have to conduct online.

### 15.3 LEE SINCUBA's Proposed Model on WhatsApp Orthographic Free Errors

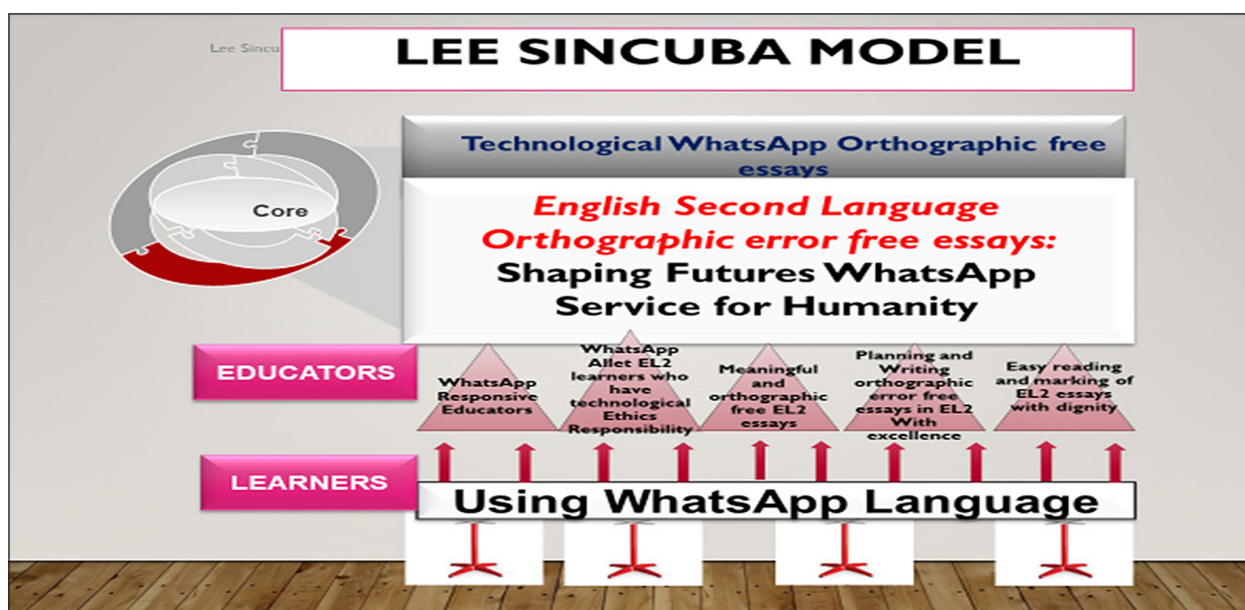
Figure 11 depicts the most important aspects of teaching and acquiring EL2 essay writing skills. In today's modern era setting, especially during COVID-19 pandemic, LEE SINCUBA's model which strives to make WhatsApp a learning and teaching tool in the classroom.

Using the proposed LEE SINCUBA Model, the researchers proposes that the educators and learners who are in the classroom during the online evolving technological distant learning era we live in are the primary people who would be exposed to WhatsApp's encirclement in teaching and learning.

**Educators** may need to maintain learners' interest because they have grown up using WhatsApp in dynamic technology and will continue to do so in the future. To break up the monotony of essay writing, WhatsApp should be employed in all classes, especially if internet teaching and learning are incorporated.

**Learners** are already ahead of the curve by utilizing WhatsApp Language informally in their daily conversation both inside and outside the classroom, necessitating the need to keep up with the times and use WhatsApp as a language of communication and, more importantly, for educational purposes.

Figure 11: LEE SINCUBA Model



Source: Authors

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# The Linguistic Obstacles in Higher Education During the COVID-19 Epidemic in a Multilingual Society: A Qualitative Evidence Synthesis (QES)

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**Abstract:** The Coronavirus (COVID-19) was declared a pandemic in March 2020, indicating that the disease had spread to all continents. Many South African universities began implementing online-based learning to replace classroom lectures. The problem in a multilingual society is that there are numerous impediments to students learning online with English as a medium of instruction. The purpose of this study is to identify the language challenges that arose as a result of the introduction of online learning in higher education. This study's investigative activities were guided by the theories of Cognitivism and Connectivism. The study conducted a Qualitative Evidence Systematic Review a summary of research literature that focuses on a single question, and purports the role of systematic reviews within evidence-based practices. A qualitative meta-synthesis according to the (Population/Place; Intervention; Comparator; Outcome) PICO framework seek to answer the question: 'Could proper implementation of e-learning in institutions of higher learning during COVID-19 pandemic resolve challenges in a multilingual society in Gauteng Province?' Articles were critically appraised for eligibility using the PRISMA flow diagram, screening the relevance and removing duplicates through assessment tool called CASP – Critical Appraisal Skills Programme. This method provides an opportunity to analyse data both deductively using positivist approach while using interpretivist approach to understand phenomenon. The researcher has used purposive sampling to select a number of articles that must go into the study. Thematic analysis was performed on a sample of 20 articles. The articles that were considered for analysis are those that have received Ethical approval by the authors. The findings of this ongoing study are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the language challenge in higher education with students in a multilingual society. Recommendations would be aimed at informing language policy makers.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Multilingual society, Online Learning, Pandemic

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## 1. Introduction

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) was declared a pandemic in March 2020, indicating that the disease had spread to all continents. Many South African universities began implementing online-based learning to replace classroom lectures. It should be noted that South African institutions of higher learning are characterized by multilingual societies. The Latin words "multi" (meaning many) and "lingua" (meaning language) combine to get the term "multilingualism" (Bussmann, 1996). As a result, the term "multilingualism" refers to the ability of a speaker to converse fluently in more than one language (Li, 2011). It has been found, however, that expertise in one language tends to outweigh others in a multilingual setting, in both written and spoken communication. It is also possible to think of multilingualism as the coexistence of multiple languages in a society (Li, 2011)

Many of these languages can be official or unofficial, native or foreign, and domestic or worldwide. When referring to the ability to speak two languages with native-like fluency, the term "multilingualism" is often employed. There are situations in which a single person can speak more than three languages fluently, and the term "multilingualism" is used in this article to refer to the capacity to speak two or more languages fluently (Lyons, 1981). Both "bi" and "tri" can be used to describe someone who is fluent in more than one language because the prefix "multi" means "more than one." We get more multilingual as we use more languages. To be labelled a multilingual country or society, its population or residents must be fluent in many languages (Lyons, 1981). Many times, the whole range of communicative competence in many languages is visible among the multilingual persons. However, perfect multilingualism does exist in the real world. Even if we learn

two or more languages at the same time, there is a noticeable tendency for one language to always take precedence over the others that are regarded inferior (Okal, 2014).

Furthermore, in a multilingual society, there are numerous impediments to students learning online with English as a medium of exchange. A study conducted by UNESCO (2016) and further ratified by Erling, Adinolfi and Hultgren (2017) found out that students who use English as a second or third language were often faced with challenges related to comprehension and application during instruction where English was the medium.

This problem is compounded by lack of skills regarding online platforms that are used by most universities. While the students are regarded as digital natives (Shtepura, 2018), navigating online and digital platforms does not present any form of impediment, but older lecturers and facilitators, regarded as digital immigrant (Wang, Myers & Sundaram, 2013; Prensky, 2001) seemed to struggle with use of digital platforms as part of instruction. So, in view of the above, a combination of generational challenges between digital natives and digital immigrants compounded learning delivery problems in a multilingual society that features prominently in South African institutions of higher learning. All these problems were attributed to improper implementation of e-learning. It is for that reason seeks to answer the question, 'Could proper implementation of e-learning in institutions of higher learning during COVID-19 pandemic resolve challenges in a multilingual society in Gauteng Province?'

## 2. Methodology and Techniques

### 2.1 Methods

A qualitative evidence synthesis (QES) was used as a method of inquiry for this study. According to Grant and Booth (2009), a qualitative evidence synthesis is an approach that does not seek to intergrate findings of qualitative studies, but seeks to configuratively inteprete these findings for broadening understanding on a phenomenon while at the same time solving a particular problem. Furthermore, the value of using a QES, sometimes referred to as a Meta-Synthesis is its inherent ability to:

- Build theory.
- Explicate theory.

- Develop theory.
- Social intervention (Chrastina, 2018).

An established approach to QES is first the determination of a research question alligned to the (People/ Place, Intervention, Comparator, Outcome) PICO framework (Leonardo, 2018). The research question of this study is 'Could proper implementation of e-learning in institutions of higher learning during COVID-19 pandemic resolve challenges in a multilingual society in Gauteng Province? To answer this question, the second step in the process of QES was to develop a search strategy (McGowan, Sampson, Salzwedel, Cogo, Foerster & Lefebvre, 2016) and reporting guidelines (McKenna-Plumley, Groarke, Turner & Yang, 2020). The strategy was to extract data (articles) from Google Scholar, Crossref, PubMed, Microsoft Academic, Scopus and Web of Science through the Harzing's Publish or Perish software (Harzing, 2010). Reporting guidelines for selected articles was conducted according to the Proffered Reporting Items in Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) Framework (McKenna-Plumley *et al.*, 2020). This is demonstrated in Figure 1 on the next page.

#### 2.1.1 Review Process

As proposed by Noblit and Hare (1988) and McKenna-Plumley *et al.* (2020), and as shown in Table 1 and further described below, the review procedure followed a step-by-step methodology.

#### 2.1.2 The Origin/Source of the Research Data

Systematic Review process involves collecting secondary data studies in a systematic, logical and organized way and Critical Appraisal to avoid biases.

**Step 1** has been addressed above using a PICO framework to establish the research question (Booth *et al.*, 2016). It is well understood that in most systematic reviews, the PICO deals with all variables mentioned above except the phenomenon of interest, which features suitably in systematic QES studies (Booth *et al.*, 2012). The proper implementation of e-learning in institutions of higher learning during COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, the phenomenon of interest was resolve challenges in a multilingual society in Gauteng Province.

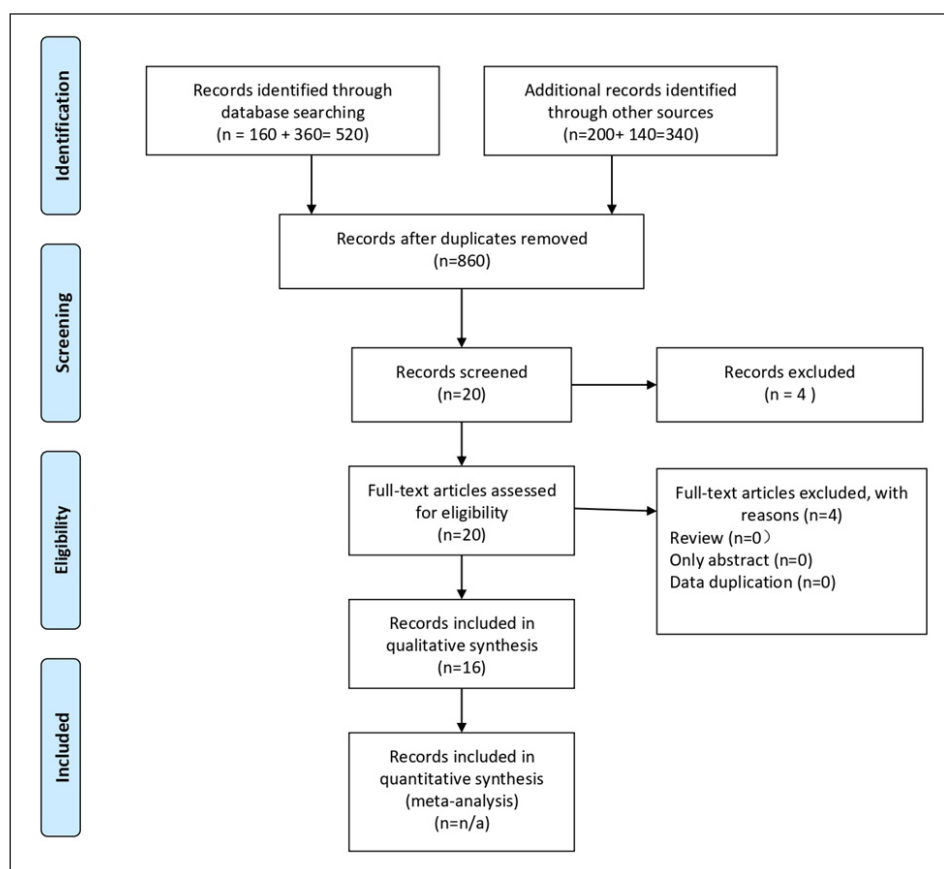
**Step 2** was met by using Harzing's Publish or Perish software, which provides access to databases and indexing platforms such as Crossref, Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, Semantic Scholar

and OpenAlex (Harzing, 2010). Google Scholar was chosen for this exercise, justifying this choice to minimise duplications if many databases could be used.

**Step 3 and Step 4** were integrated into this investigation. Search terms were made up of crucial concepts/variables within the research question and were used to obtain articles in the search. Using Google Scholar, Harzing's Publish or Perish

software returns a maximum of 1000 articles per hit. However, the purpose of QES is not to conduct an exhaustive search (Flemming & Jones, 2020), as in the case of systematic reviews, but to conduct a comprehensive search (Booth, 2019). The following figure reflects the workflow of articles selected through the search strategy mentioned in this paragraph, aligned to the PRISMA method (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff & Altman, 2009).

**Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart**



Source: Author

**Table 1: Study Protocol**

Step	Description
1	Crafting a specific question
2	Deciding on search databases
3	Developing search terms and retrieving articles
4	Screening articles for duplicates and later on relevance
5	Quality appraisal for legibility
6	Critical Skills Appraisal of purposively selected qualitative studies
7	Final synthesis and presentation of findings

Source: Author

**Step 5** focused on the quality appraisal of qualitative studies retrieved. In an unsettling contrast, the methodological approach of qualitative research quality assessment brings together the dual heritages of a systematic review of effectiveness and primary qualitative research. Epistemological and practical discrepancies emerge at every level, from what quality means to whether a quality evaluation is even necessary (Carroll & Booth, 2015).

### 2.1.3 Presentation of Protocols

This structure places rigor at the heart of all systematic reviews and requires researchers to fulfill certain procedural activities such as explication of how articles were Identified, Appraised, and Synthesized (PRISMA, 2015).

## 2.2 Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Studies

Articles for inclusion into the study were appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, recommended as a best-fit appraisal tool in academic research by Cochrane and the World Health Organization (Majid & Vanstone, 2018). Table 2 depicts 10 assessment criteria for appraisal of qualitative research studies in qualitative evidence synthesis.

### 2.2.1 CASP – Included Article Appraisal Report

Data analysis was conducted using synthesis guidelines for the literature review as propounded in Onwuegbuzie, Leech and Collins (2012). Out of the five critical approaches to synthesizing the

literature, such as constant comparison analysis, domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and theme analysis, this study used a themed approach to the literature analysis.

Criteria for inclusion in this study involved articles that:

- Were written in English and published in recognised journals.
- Were published between 2018 and 2021.
- Were based on qualitative research methods and designs.
- Met the CASP (Long, French & Brooks, 2020) criteria for article critical appraisal.
- Focussed on higher education and learning.

## 2.3 Data Analysis

In analysis of qualitative data within the tradition of systematic reviews, Meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare, 1988), meta-synthesis (Lachal, Revah-Levy & Orri, 2017, and narrative synthesis (Popay, Roberts, Sowden, Petticrew, Arai, Rodgers & Britten, 2006) are all acknowledged methods for analyzing and synthesizing qualitative research (Grant & Booth, 2009). For the current QES, the author used the method of thematic synthesis in order to gain a more comprehensive grasp of the various ways that affected the phenomena under investigation (Grant & Booth, 2009). Thematic synthesis refers to the development of descriptive themes that adhere closely to the source studies. As a next step, the

**Table 2: CASP – Included Articles Appraisal Report**

Appraisal Question	Yes	Can't Tell	No
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	13	0	0
Was a qualitative methodology appropriate?	13	0	0
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research	12	1	0
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	11	1	1
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	11	2	0
Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	6	4	3
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	9	3	1
Was the data analysis reported in sufficiently detailed manner?	13	0	0
Is there a clear statement of findings?	13	0	0
Does the paper provide information about the value of the research?	10	2	1

Source: Author

reviewer goes "beyond" the source studies' interpretations to build higher-order constructs or explanations based on these descriptive themes (Booth, Sutton & Papaioannou, 2016; Newton, Griffith & Soundy, 2020).

In this study, 20 articles were critically appraised using CASP and finally 16 articles met the requirements of the analysis and as such were included as demonstrated in Figure 1 (Munthe-Kaas, Glenton, Booth, Noyes & Lewin, 2019). In academic research, particularly in Systematic Reviews, The CASP tool is the most often used checklist/criteria-based instrument for assessing the quality of qualitative evidence synthesis in health and social care (Long *et al.*, 2020). For its flexibility and user-friendliness as a quality appraisal tool, both Cochrane Collaboration and the World Health Organization as a preferred tool have endorsed CASP for novice and academic researchers. Figure 2 below reflects of the results of CASP Inclusion and exclusion report.

### 2.3.1 CASP – Excluded Article Appraisal Report

Articles were rated in terms of their strength against the 10 key questions in the CASP rater for quality. All articles falling below the score of 10 were excluded and all articles above this quality score were included in the final analysis in this study. Figure 3 on the following page demonstrates the

strength and weakness of articles included as per the CASP tool.

## 3. The Theory of Connectivism and Cognitivism

A theory, in the words of Oladele (1998), "represents broad laws or principles of observed phenomena." According to Omideyi, Adesina and Adika (2002:73), a theory is an organized, integrated collection of claims that both explains and anticipates behavior. A theory of learning is the result of extensive research and analysis by academics in the field of education. The instructor can use the material from learning theory as a practical and useful set of teaching guidelines. According to Gagne, Ing (2012), there are three components of teaching that can profit from an understanding of learning theory.

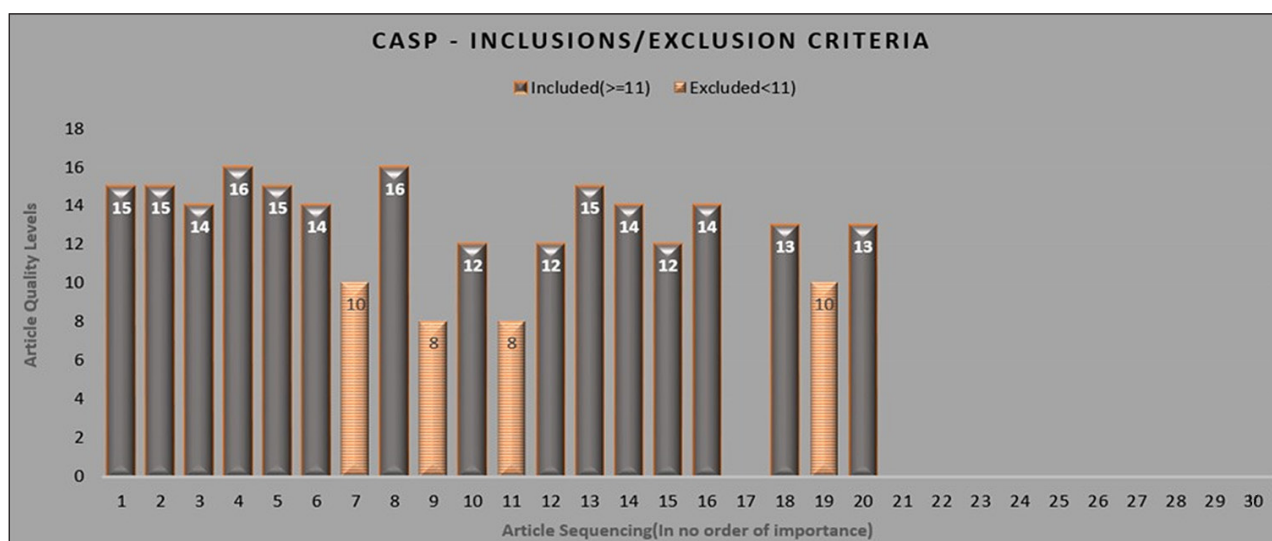
The first is the planning of courses, curricula and lessons. The second is the conduct of instruction; while the third is the assessment of what has been learnt. Teachers' adequate understanding of learning theories will greatly assist learners in gaining the most from learning activities. Ing (2012) adds that learning theory can help guide the presentation of what is to be learned. The investigative activities of this study will be guided by the theory of Connectivism and Cognitivism.

Figure 2: Inclusion/Exclusion Report

Article Number	Q1 Clear Research Aims	Q2 QUAL - Suitable Method	Q3 Research Design Suitable	Q4 Sampling Strategy Suitable	Q5 Data Collection Strategy Suitable	Q6 Researcher Role Consideration	Q7 Ethical Consideration	Q8 Data Analysis Rigor	Q9 Clear Statement of findings	Q10 Research Value Proposition	Rating	Decision
1	0	2	1	0	1	2	1	2	2	1	15	Include
2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	15	Include
3	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	14	Include
4	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	16	Include
5	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	15	Include
6	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	14	Include
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	Exclude
8	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	16	Include
9	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	8	Exclude
10	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	12	Include
11	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	8	Exclude
12	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	12	Include
13	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	15	Include
14	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	14	Include
15	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	12	Include
16	2	2	0	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	14	Include
17	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	11	Include
18	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	13	Include
19	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10	Exclude
20	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	13	Include

Source: Author

Figure 3: CASP Article Rating Report



Source: Author

### 3.1 Connectivism Theory

George Siemens (2004), one of the early MOOC (massive open online course) pioneers, has been the main proponent of connectivism, a learning model that acknowledges major shifts in the way knowledge and information flows, grows, and changes as a result of vast data communications networks. Internet technology has shifted learning from internal, individualistic activities to group, community, and even crowd activities. Siemens recognized the contribution of networks and Alberto Barabasi's work in creating the theory. Additionally, he mentioned Karen Stephensen's piece from 1998, "What Knowledge Tears Apart, Networks Make Whole," which briefly described how big networks have evolved into a necessity for helping people and businesses manage data and information. "The integration of ideas investigated by chaos, network, and complexity theories, as well as self-organization theories, in which learning occurs within hazy settings of shifting fundamental elements that are not static," is how Siemens describes connectivism.

Learning is more important than our existing level of knowledge because it can occur outside of oneself and is defined as "actionable knowledge," which focuses on building connections between specialized information sets (in an organization or database). According to Siemens (2004), the dynamic of information movement is what gives connectivism its momentum. The ability to traverse

and recognize huge, dynamic, and evolving amounts of information is crucial for pupils. Connectivism is particularly effective in courses with a very large enrollment where the learning purpose or objective is to generate and produce knowledge rather than to convey it.

### 3.2 Cognitivism Theory

Cognitive theorists, who aimed to focus on the time between the appearance of an external stimulus and the student's reaction, popularized the notion that the mind plays a fundamental role in learning (Rnic & Dozois, 2017). They believed that motivation and imagination – two mental processes that connect environmental cues and pupil responses – were crucial elements of education. For instance, Noam Chomsky (1959) stressed the significance of creative mental processes that are not evident in the physical world in his critique of Skinner's behaviourist approach. Chomsky's position acquired popularity in other disciplines, like as psychology, while being written primarily from the perspective of a linguist. In order to understand how the brain functions and the stages of cognitive development that lay the groundwork for learning and knowledge acquisition, cognitive science is an interdisciplinary field that draws on psychology, biology, neuroscience, computer science, and philosophy.

Cognitivism has consequently become one of the most popular learning philosophies. The development

of more sophisticated online software into adaptive and customised learning apps that aim to include learning analytics and artificial intelligence into training makes the future of cognitivism particularly intriguing. Behaviourism, which stressed the study and evaluation of numerous processes in the learning process, contributed to the creation of taxonomies of learning. To break down and clarify the components of learning, behaviourists continually examined learning activities.

One of the first psychologists, Benjamin Bloom, stressed the value of problem solving as a higher order ability and created a taxonomy of learning that corresponded to the development of intellectual talents in 1956. Using Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, published in 1956: The educational sector still considers Cognitive Domains to be a foundational literature and required reading.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Studies reveal that institutions of higher learning in South Africa and around the world were already accepting huge numbers of students from a variety of linguistic backgrounds before COVID-19, and they will do so going forward. Decolonisation as well as transformation is complicated by the fact that English monolingualism coexists in South Africa with the execution of multilingual policy. This is a challenge for Higher-Educational Institutions (HEIs) in particular. This research has shown, however, that these rules are out of step with contemporary views of language as a social practice and digital practices, as well as linguistic perspectives that emphasise translanguaging (Heugh, Li & Song, 2017; Hurst & Mona, 2017). The field of translanguaging has received a massive amount of academic attention. As a result, it has become incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to keep contained. Examples include translanguaging scholarship, which opposes the normative colonial-era ideologies that project monolingualism as a universal standard for theorizing languages. To the contrary, it recognizes and validates the linguistic repertoires of speakers of other languages that are flexible, hybridised, and cross-boundary in nature. The recognition of language's fluidity and complexity (Garcia & Wei, 2014; Makoni & Pennycook, 2012) is also a key component. When used in the classroom, translanguaging gives multilingual students, who are typically construed as linguistic outcasts and illiterates, a transformative praxis and a liberating voice. Translanguaging

in South African universities, on the other hand, is a theory with limited empirical support.

Despite the fact that online education is not considered a new phenomenon, electronic learning has grown in popularity over the previous decade across the globe (Bhuasiri *et al.*, 2012). While it has been widely disseminated, it has not been fairly distributed throughout all countries and cultures (Hodgkinson-Williams, Slay & Sieborger, 2008). With similar issues to those faced by other countries, South Africa shifted its higher education system from face-to-face to online learning. For face-to-face university courses to be given online there was a pressing need. The study investigated the perceptions, obstacles, and determinants of e-learning acceptability among university students and faculty during the COVID-19 pandemic in this study.

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study found out that most universities in South Africa were not ready for the use of online learning in multilingual societies. Despite the difficulties students face in transitioning from face-to-face to e-learning – particularly the prominence of the digital divide as the primary barrier to students achieving effective e-learning – customizing the Moodle LMS to meet the local needs of disadvantaged students is beneficial to achieving online learning in general. Furthermore, while there may be numerous obstacles that prevent students from realizing the full potential of e-learning, alternative pathways such as the provision of free data bandwidth, free physical and online resources, and the use of a blended learning information center, among others, appear to be the solution in the context of COVID-19. However, while this may be a viable option, students are unevenly challenged, necessitating continued capacity building in the use of learning management systems and other newly adopted online learning technologies. When supporting the use of online learning, it is equally critical that university-wide teaching and learning pedagogy, instructional designers, and e-learning policy examine the possible benefits and problems. Because of the digital gap in South Africa, there is an urgent need for increasing investment in upgrading resources, both in universities and in communities. While further study is needed, this paper emphasizes the practical as well as theoretical alternate pathways that can be employed to help university students and academics realize the full potential of online learning in multilingual societies.



The way literature appraisal is handled may make significant contributions to rigor in qualitative research. The CASP tool rigorously assesses all qualitative studies for quality appraisal, setting the standard for primary qualitative research investigators. It is recommended that primary qualitative researchers streamline their drawing conclusions to the rigorous methods used in Qualitative Evidence Synthesis. Their findings would be more realistic, reproducible, and provide funders with an alternative option.

## 6. Limitations

Qualitative Evidence Synthesis though they provide a rich account of the critical results of a specific study topic, synthesis and another type of systematic review can only address and synthesize the material presented in the primary studies. As a result, the large number of articles addressing opinions about the educational benefits of technology does not represent the world, but rather the research interests of the scholars. Another limitation is that QES only uses qualitative research studies to draw conclusions, as opposed to primary qualitative studies. There is no requirement to choose studies from a specific research paradigm.

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# The State of South African Universities with Regards to Corporate Governance and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

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**Abstract:** South African universities are going through a transformation and are responsible for engaging in sustainable projects. One of the transformation reforms involves having entrepreneurial ecosystems that adopt corporate governance. On that note, the paper explores the state of South African universities about available strategies that enable an entrepreneurship ecosystem. Some of the strategies include policies, frameworks and models that contribute to the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The desktop methodology is employed where the content and descriptive analyses are utilized. There is consideration of the following themes: good governance in universities as entrepreneurial firms; policies on the third-stream income; involvement of external stakeholders in entrepreneurial universities, and barriers facing entrepreneurship sustainability. Corporate governance ensures sustainability in that entrepreneurial firms are managed in a manner that does not compromise the funds of the business and investors; produces an impactful and economic output that addresses the needs of the community; and complies with environmental regulations.

**Keywords:** Corporate governance, Entrepreneurial ecosystem, Transformation, Sustainability

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## 1. Introduction

Transformation taking place in South African universities is necessary to advance historically disadvantaged institutions and subsequently improve the economic contribution of the university to its community. There are several projects underway to improve the universities such as curriculum transformation aimed at updating programs offered, transforming universities to be entrepreneurial with more focus on third-stream income and incorporating Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR, 2017), (Duval-Couetil, Ladisch & Yi, 2019; Lehmann *et al.*, 2020). One relevant skill is entrepreneurship which sharpens business acumen that enables university stakeholders to commercialize research, which subsequently creates accessible solutions for communities while creating third-stream income for the universities. Unfortunately, entrepreneurship education is overlooked in universities and is normally offered in certain programs (Badri & Hachicha, 2019). This is attributed to a lack of enabling entrepreneurial ecosystem with clear governing policies, roles of stakeholders and benefits for the institution (Hsieh & Kelley, 2020).

Good corporate governance is essential in addressing currently emerging tasks such as entrepreneurial ecosystems in universities to ensure *inter alia* effective implementation, transparency, accountability,

and integrity (Ramalho, 2016). Market confidence and business integrity acquired through good corporate governance improve relationships between stakeholders. For instance, accountable businesses stand better chances to access equity capital for long-term investment from financial institutions (Cumming, Werth & Zhang, 2019). Therefore, ethics and corporate governance intertwine and are important for the creation and sustaining of entrepreneurial university ecosystems (Aluchna & Idowu, 2017). Mukhejee and Sen (2019) highlight that entrepreneurship education plays an important role in creating sustainable businesses that contribute to regional and national economic growth.

An entrepreneurial ecosystem requires a commitment from university management to review the roles of all stakeholders involved so that they are afforded time, resources, and incentives. For example, entrepreneurship education taught in a participatory teaching method may require capital funds for students to do practical exercises such as starting businesses (EDHE, 2022). Academics must be part of curriculum redesign and be trained on effective pedagogies necessary to teach entrepreneurship education. Universities can undertake corporate entrepreneurial activities consisting of *inter alia*, new business venturing, commercialisation of research, innovativeness, self-renewal, and proactiveness (Kalantaridis & Küttim, 2021).

Consequently, entrepreneurial universities will assume new missions and relations that contribute to the knowledge-based society. Hence, this study seeks to unveil the status of South African universities in creating entrepreneurial ecosystems and the role of corporate governance. Findings from this paper aim to define roles for the different stakeholders and identify barriers to the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

## 2. Theoretical Perspective

The paper explores the state of South African universities on available strategies that enable corporate governance in an entrepreneurship ecosystem. To achieve that the paper adopts two theories namely the agency theory (Audretsch & Link, 2019; Colombo, Dagnino, Lehmann & Salmador, 2019; Cunningham, Menter & Wirsching, 2019; Lehmann *et al.*, 2020) and theory of change (Matschoss, Repo & Lukkarinen, 2020; Bhagavathy, Cardenes & McCulloch, 2021; Coombs & Meijer, 2021).

The agency theory entails governing relationships between governance structures, research-based ecosystems and agents that coordinate policies of an effective entrepreneurship ecosystem (Colombo *et al.*, 2019; Cunningham *et al.*, 2019). The organisational structure comprising of university governance, leadership and management have an absorptive capacity to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem. The capacity refers to the university ecosystem that forms strong knowledge flows among agents and the university identifies a key person called the principal (Audretsch & Link, 2019). Hence, the theory points to the principal-agent framework.

In the agency theoretical framework that follows corporate governance, there is knowledge capacity that spills over from the university to agents like large firms, multinational enterprises, small businesses, and communities (Lehmann *et al.*, 2020). The knowledge flow to the agents creates entrepreneurial ventures that are innovative and promote sustainable businesses. According to Audretsch and Link (2019), the key to university governance structure is usually the director of an entrepreneurship centre or any delegated leadership in the university. This relates to South African universities as most universities have opened centres or incubators, and directors are leaders with research skills (EDHE, 2022). The agent relationship in a university entrepreneurship

ecosystem assists in several things including promoting an efficient ecosystem and mitigating the risk of business ventures, especially of start-ups (Audretsch & Link, 2019; Colombo *et al.*, 2019).

Theory of change refers to how and why an initiative works and, therefore, finds a link between inputs, activities, outcomes and the context of the initiative. It is relevant in South African universities as they are in the transformation phase, especially in the entrepreneurship space. The theory of change can sharpen the planning and implementation of entrepreneurship through initiatives ranging from university start-ups, and university-community-based business ventures to commercialisation of research. The input phase involves the feasibility stage where the prototype or service is tested (Bhagavathy *et al.*, 2021). It should be noted that this stage is necessary though it's time consuming and expensive. However, there is seed funding provided by the universities and other private institutions that researchers can consider for a successful feasibility study. After a successful feasibility study, through the theory of change researchers engage in several activities. These activities entail research and development of the prototype, transfer of knowledge and collection of data for analysis (Bhagavathy *et al.*, 2021). The theory of change links to commercialisation because the initiative can be evaluated in a systematic and cumulative way to put activities and outcomes together (Matschoss *et al.*, 2020).

The theory of change involves that the entrepreneurship process begins with an entrepreneur stating the intended outcomes and putting them into context (Matschoss *et al.*, 2020; Coombs & Meijer, 2021). For instance, in this case, the intended outcome is for universities to produce impactful research for communities that have economic value through corporate governance of structures in the ecosystem. An important economic factor may be the policy environment, where universities provide legislation on funding models of the research project at the stages of an entrepreneurship process. Moreover, another contextual fact may refer to social networks such as how communities can accept the project or how intergroup relations are addressed, linking this theory to agency theory. The theory of change needs to be plausible in that implemented activities should lead to desired outcomes. There should be economic, institutional, and human resources for the change to be successful, hence corporate governance is essential. The

entrepreneurial outcomes in the ecosystem should have measurable records of accomplishment under conditions that enhance continuous improvement (Meoli, Paleari & Vismara, 2019).

### 3. Good Governance

The success of the university entrepreneurial ecosystem is hugely dependent on the ability of universities to create and sustain good corporate governance practices. This pertains to how entrepreneurship is established and maintained within the said ecosystem. This paper discusses good governance in the context of the idea of corporate university culture and governance. Pomeranz and Stedman (2020) state that good governance is a state of affairs that needs regulated, translucent, proficient, and accountable government. Furthermore, the need for a governance system to undertake its task in a manner that is participatory, consultative, and abides by precepts of formal democracy (Sridhar, Gadgil & Dhingra, 2020). According to Eloff (2021), good governance implies decision-making and public policy formulation processes, to be transparent and accountable. For the World Bank (1994), good governance is evident through predictable, transparent, and the progressive making of developmental policy. Good governance is a bureaucracy imbued with professional ethos. In the same vein, this phenomenon and practice is hinged on answerability for one's decisions or actions, an unwavering civic society that partakes in the interventions promoting public welfare within the ambit of the existing rules and laws (Bevir, 2007). These definitional perspectives show that good governance is hinged on public consensus, unanimity, and participation of the citizens who are the main stakeholders. In this article therefore, good governance speaks to the need for tertiary institutions like universities to ensure that they involve all pertinent stakeholders in the policy design together with the corresponding implementation of such to ensure that there is participatory democracy.

Historically, corporate governance originates from the concept of politics of ownership structure as well as the ideas of shareholder activism which are intimately embedded in institutional and regulatory frameworks (Haan, 2022). For Allen and Berg (2020) is a compound of multifarious components which encompass amongst others, strategies, supervision, auditing, control, and evaluation, which all point to the need to manage organisational affairs

to please all its stakeholders. Corporate governance is branded the governing for stakeholders approach. According to Aluchna and Idowu (2017), corporate governance is principally premised on the need to establish ample market confidence as well as business integrity that resultantly makes it a major requirement for entities that need access to equity capital for lasting organisational or market investment. Hence, it is the means to some business end, not an end itself per se. From this argument, corporate governance must promote an entity's investment. When focussing on its character, Aluchna and Idowu (2017) posit that, corporate governance is evidence based and its focal point is to pay attention to synchronising organisational tasks that are linked to the effective implementation of both structures and procedures that are ideal for performance of any corporate or business entity. Furthermore, Aluchna and Idowu (2017) note that the dimensions of these tasks are environmental and social in their nature, thus referring to the business environment and the social ecosystem into which the entity is located.

Released in 2016, the King Report on Corporate Governance IV addressing the context of South Africa emphasised an *ubuntu*-focused approach by placing ethical leadership as the key denominator to an organisation's success (Ramalho, 2016). According to Ramalho (2016), corporate governance shall abide by the golden rule of society that emphasises on reciprocity of human actions and social harmony. For Ferrell and Fraedrich (2020), ethics refers to aspects related to issues of decision-making, conduct, and intimate relationship between the organisation, its stockholders or stakeholders and the broader society. By conceptualisation, ethical leadership is solely exemplified by tenets that encompass *inter alia* integrity, fairness, competence, responsibility, accountability and transparency (Ramalho, 2016). Therefore, ethics and corporate governance go hand-in-hand and thus are important for the creation and sustaining of entrepreneurial university ecosystems.

Mukhejee and Sen (2019) posit that entrepreneurship serves a vital role in the establishment, survival, growth and success of businesses, as well as the socio-economic and sustainable development of society, regions and national economics at large. Entrepreneurial opportunities are, "those situations in which new goods, services, raw materials, and organising methods can be introduced and sold at

greater than their cost of production" (Mukhejee & Sen, 2019). Universities can undertake actions that can be viewed as corporate entrepreneurial, which is reflected in entrepreneurial activities as well as in top management orientations in organisations which consist of *inter alia*, new business venturing, commercialisation, innovativeness, self-renewal, and proactiveness (Kalantaridis & Kuttim, 2021). Furthermore, in the knowledge-based society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, tertiary institutions such as universities and colleges have adopted emergent focusses in a bid to play a pivotal role to the socio-economic and community development of their surrounding environments (George, 2006; Floststen, Fayolle, Guerrero, Mian, Urbano & Wright, 2019). According to Peris-Ortiz and others (2017), universities underwent a cumulative three kinds of academic revolutions. In the first academic revolution, there was the addition of a focus on the added the mission of creating knowledge by way of research and imparting such onto societies, which is arguably the very original or conventional goal of tertiary institutions (Peris-Ortiz *et al.*, 2017). In terms of the second academic revolution, new dimensions in the making of economic as well as social development were brought on board to expand from the research and teaching missions (Etzkowitz, 2013). Impliedly, universities are not static but rather are evolving centres of knowledge generation which are now hubs for social and economic development, a new feature that was not present in the past centuries.

According to Floststen *et al.* (2019), universities in the modern society need to therefore form solid synergies with industry and other stakeholders like government entities to play a part in socio-economic development, through what is known as the triple helix of innovation. Peris-Ortiz *et al.* (2017) construe that, the triple helix of innovation signifies a networked innovation based community development agenda that infuses the major actors such as universities, industrial players and the government itself. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this triple helix phenomenon is more than relevant and worth pursuance, especially in the context of South Africa. Audretsch (2014) argues that tertiary institutions must reform and adopt an entrepreneurial agenda as part of their core business as a way of enabling knowledge spill-overs that also bring in the innovation-based commercialisation of the knowledge that they generate. Such a bold stance is instrumental in the unlocking of socio-economic development of regions, localities and national economics since it

enables the creation and utilisation of generated knowledge through entrepreneurial opportunities (Urbano & Guerrero, 2013). Therefore, according to Badri and Hachicha (2019), an entrepreneurial university is a game-changer as far as the character and focus of these tertiary institutions is concerned in a contemporary knowledge-based society.

#### 4. Stakeholders of an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

This paper argues that in addition to academic knowledge generation, South African universities need to commercialise university products and build synergies with industry to qualify as entrepreneurial (Duval-Couetil *et al.*, 2021). These all depend on the ability of university leaders and management to undertake good corporate governance that ensures that the university becomes an active member of a well-knit ecosystem that is not separated from its society and the economy. There are various stakeholders in the entrepreneurial university concept such as government entities, the business community and university staff.

##### 4.1 Government Entities

The government is a major stakeholder in the creation, sustaining and expansion of the entrepreneurial university concept (Bozhikin *et al.*, 2019). This is because the funding of the various knowledge production and the co-production of other goods and services that are part of the entrepreneurial university is mainly from the government. The various research grants that different government units extended to universities for research, the creation of innovation and incubation hubs, the partnerships between universities and industry role players are hinged on this idea of entrepreneurial universities. Unfortunately, the current government funding initiatives and interventions in the creation and sustaining of entrepreneurial ecosystems in universities are not enough to push the agenda, which includes the 4IR (Hsieh & Kelley, 2020). For instance, developing countries like South Africa get allocated about 1% of the Gross Domestic Production (GDP) for research (World Bank, 2021).

One example is the 4IR thrust at the University of Johannesburg where funding is being directed to innovative and entrepreneurial projects that drive the technology-driven innovation for poverty alleviation, economic development, and sustainable

development. The 4IR promotes digital connectivity which comprises of available technology that allows people who have access to the Internet to connect with organisations in real-time (Jarbandhan, 2017; Moşteanu, 2019). The 4IR is regarded as a wholesome transformation phase of the industry standards and goods production using advanced technological inventions like biotechnology, three-dimensional (3D) printing, artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, and data mining (Oosthuizen, 2017; Kasza, 2019). This is referred to as the Internet of Things due to its direct link to web-based innovations and technologies that transformed how the world does its business and daily activities. Therefore, the government entities remain a major stakeholder in the creation of entrepreneurial universities by making sure that this agenda is a major cost item even in the drafting of departmental and national budgets (World Bank, 2021).

#### **4.2 Business Community**

Businesses are a valuable source of funding for university projects and give input in the drafting of curriculum content (Colombo *et al.*, 2019). This is usually realised through career fairs in which businesses engage students and faculties on expected skills that they can hire graduates on. Furthermore, the synergies that universities form in the research and creation of hubs are usually involving private sector businesses (Peris-Ortiz *et al.*, 2017). In the building of a viable and suitable university ecosystem, businesses are major stockholders especially when they demand corporate governance that is responsible, transparent, and accountable from those tasked with managing the hedge funds that businesses donate to universities (Solomon, 2020). This is one purpose of universities being required to furnish stakeholders such as business (project funders) with period performance reports as a way of apprising them on how their funds are spent.

Solomon (2020) further states that businesses have an influential role to play as far as their businesses-like entrepreneurial university ecosystem is concerned. From another angle, the business community must guide universities to create future entrepreneurs and businesses instead of just employees (Badri & Hachicha, 2019). Involving businesses in curriculum development ensures that graduates acquire relevant skills for the industry, making them employable. This is a sign of a viable

economy and such a competitive economy is good for businesses that can enjoy economies of scale and improve on the quality of goods and services because of the stiffness of the competition in the market. Additionally, universities that commercialise their products are sometimes dependent on businesses to create smooth supply chains and retailing chains for university-made products (Ghio *et al.*, 2019). The expertise of the business community in penetrating new markets is essential for the sustainability of start-ups (Audretsch & Link, 2019; Colombo *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, there is a need for good rapport between universities and the business community more than ever.

#### **4.3 Research Centres and Think Tanks**

The research centres, think tanks and incubations hubs are key role players in the creation of entrepreneurial university ecosystems. The centres have rich repositories of expertise in commercialisation, knowledge production, skills transfers and innovation initiatives. These skills are necessary for designing, implementing and sustaining entrepreneurial ecosystems (Cunningham *et al.*, 2019). One such example of a centre is the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) which is a bastion of expertise in human sciences research and innovation interventions (Chetty, Siswana & Josie, 2021). Universities in South Africa need to acknowledge this repository of experts to ensure that they always tap into their knowledge and experience. The expertise can be consulted for curriculum reviews or design of new curricula, the establishment of innovation hubs, the commercialisation of university products, and the building of self-sustaining university systems. A complete entrepreneurial agenda includes corporate social responsibility that responds to societal issues such as ending poverty, creating employment, small business ventures and addressing the huge disparities in wealth (Bozhikin *et al.*, 2019). Sustainable social development solutions can be formulated in collaboration with the centres by either sharing tried and tested or devising innovative ways (Aminova, Mareef & Machado, 2020).

This paper argues that the use of these units to advise on strategies that universities can adopt towards being a feeder into the social and economic development must not be under-emphasised. This is prudent in the case of South African universities such as Walter Sisulu University, which is domiciled in some of the poorest rural communities.

Partnerships and skills sharing with the centres can aid the fight against poverty and unemployment amidst the limited resources that the world always faces, particularly exacerbated by the geographical disadvantages of rural universities. Therefore, the socio-economic interventions that the government does must be augmented by what entrepreneurial universities offer to their local constituencies (Mshengu, 2019).

#### 4.4 Academics and Students

The creation of self-sufficient entrepreneurial university ecosystems is also dependent on the ability of academics and students to take part in the process (Urban & Chantson, 2019). This is based on the traditional setup of the university that placed lecturers and students as some of the key stakeholders in the knowledge production matrix (Haasan, 2020). Academics and students are both major stakeholders since they collectively build on this entrepreneurial ecosystem agenda (Urbano & Guerrero, 2013). Academics are experts in research, commercialisation and the administration of research of socio-economic development programmes. Further to this, academics have expertise in the market and the dynamics in the job market and hence they can create products and university products that can specifically target just that. However, academics are hesitant due to either lack of entrepreneurship education background or ambiguous understanding of their roles within the ecosystem. Students as the stakeholders that are at the receiving end of unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment, can help with their input on how best this culture can address their plight effectively and in a manner that is sustainable (Badri & Hachicha, 2019).

#### 4.5 International Financial Institutions

International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary as funders in developmental projects have a role to play in the establishment of entrepreneurial university ecosystem. Some of the combined roles of these two lenders include fighting of poverty and ensuring that there is economic development in developing countries (World Bank, 2021). South Africa is a developing country that can get loans and conditional grants for entrepreneurship from local universities. However, banks and financial institutions hold their resources because the universities do not have the

capacity to invest (Redda & van Deventer, 2020). In addition, universities need more practical answers than philosophical questions. Therefore, these are key stakeholders in the establishment and sustaining of entrepreneurial universities.

#### 4.6 Curriculum Development Experts

Gamede and Uleanya (2019) posit that entrepreneurial university ecosystems also promote the development of fresh kinds of curricula that create entrepreneurs rather than produce graduates that seek to be employed. Therefore, the experts in the design of time-compliant and relevant curricula are key stakeholders because they use their expertise to diagnose the various challenges and development interventive modules, diplomas, degrees and higher degrees for an effective entrepreneurial ecosystem. For Yamamoto and Shih (2019), the integration of abilities, projects, and problem-based curriculum in a qualification is important. Hence, this is one aspect of skills development that South Africa can utilise to address the skills deficit that is always bemoaned by academics, practitioners and the business community.

### 5. Policies and Third-Stream Income

Corporate governance and entrepreneurship ecosystems are found to link to the creation of wealth in the form of third-stream income for universities (Colombo *et al.*, 2019; Meoli *et al.*, 2019; Lehmann *et al.*, 2020). This occurs through investor confidence in entrepreneurial ecosystems with effective and corporal governance structures. For instance, South African universities adopt different approaches to the accumulation of third-stream income (EDHE, 2022). Through the corporate agency theory, South African universities collaborate with the government (ministry of small business development) and get sponsors on opening incubators or centers of entrepreneurship. The centers promote good governance with interactions between the university and different stakeholders in the entrepreneurship chain and govern start-ups that emanate from the university. A well-established incubator within the university designs policies that allow economic participation through venture creation and accumulate income for the university (Audretsch & Link, 2019). Therefore, the venture increases the university's third-stream income while empowering its community in job creation. The corporate governance in the centres lies in the capability of



the leadership to attract investors and some form boards for effective governance. Where there is an incubator/center, the directors can formulate boards to facilitate control of the system and design activities that can attract funding (Cunningham *et al.*, 2019). The corporate governance issues determine the size and composition of boards (functioning and membership).

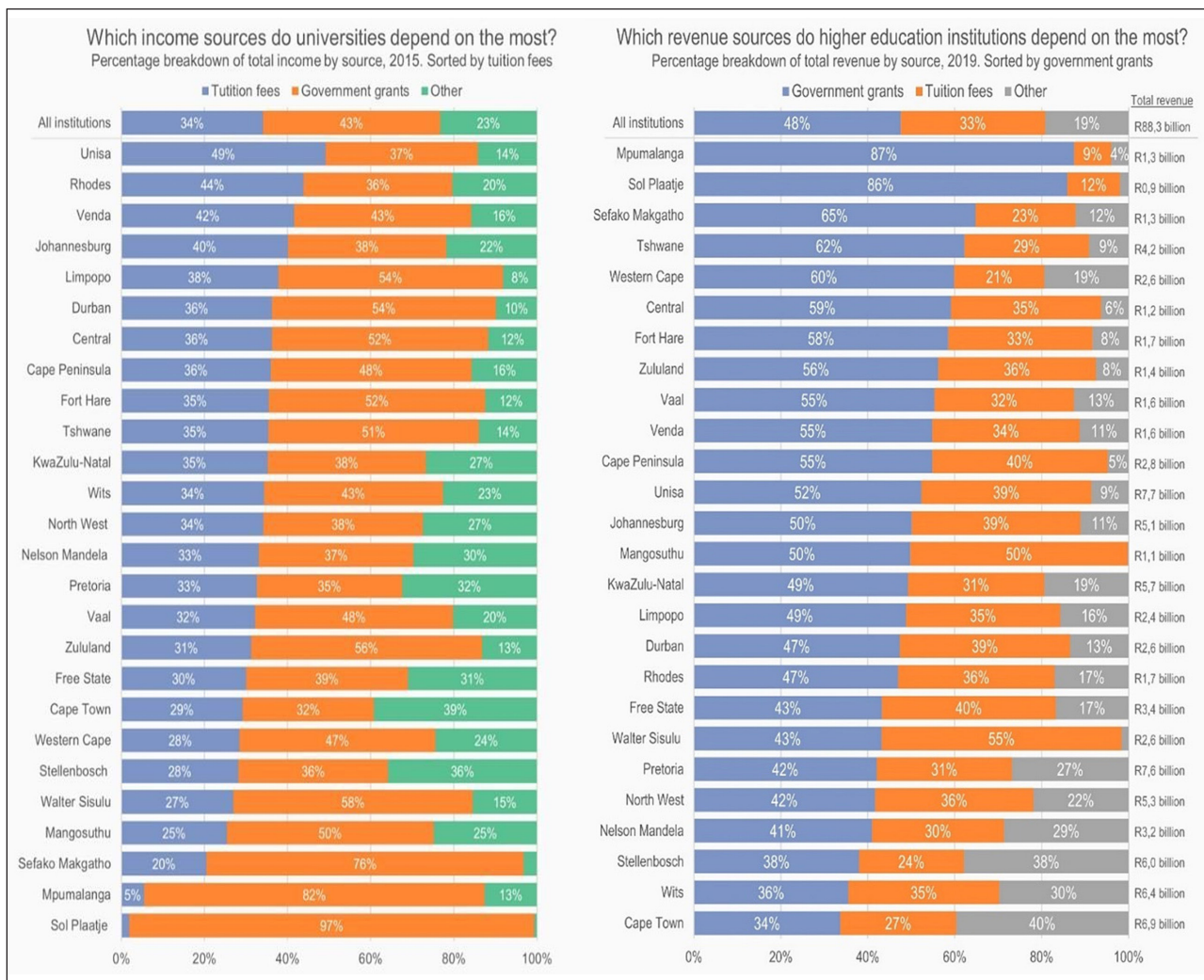
Universities need to have policies on how their ecosystem can interact with agents like financial systems and local businesses to acquire third-stream income (Ghio *et al.*, 2019). Though banks are restricted by their risk aversion policies, they build trust in universities that have a well-governed entrepreneurial ecosystem, because of the strength in university knowledge. Funders use a memorandum of understanding agreements to support business ventures coming from universities based on the trust in the knowledge system in the ecosystem. Cumming *et al.* (2019) suggest that strong policies on the accumulation of third-stream income rest on micro policies in the negotiating skills of the principal investigator in an entrepreneurial ecosystem. This mitigates risk and lowers costs involved in the entrepreneurship journey through the principal-agent relationship, where the principal has the research skills. In addition, venture creation from start-ups to well establish innovations need continuous research and strong collaborations with firms. Good governing institutions like universities are centers of knowledge production and exploration, and therefore strategically form a collaboration that attracts funding and increases their third-stream income. In the future, universities need to come up with strategies for increasing the third-stream income as government funding is decreasing annually (Bruwer, 2021).

South African universities have three main sources of financial resources namely government grants provided as state funding, tuition fees paid by students and third-stream income indicated as "other" in Figure 1 (Stats SA, 2019). These financial resources are strained by the poor economic conditions in South Africa such as weak currency, escalating fuel prices, unemployment and others, the fees must fall student protests and the associated issues, and magnified by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bruwer, 2021). The reports from Stats SA (2015; 2019) indicate discrepancies in the funding system of South African universities, especially on the third-stream income (see Figure 1).

For instance, most historically disadvantaged universities show a decline in third-stream income from 2015 to 2019, see the Mangosuthu University of Technology dropped from 25% to 0%, Walter Sisulu University 15% to an insignificant number, and the University of Fort Hare from 12% to 8%. On the other side, the University of Cape Town increased from 39% to 40%, and Stellenbosch from 36% to 38% (Stats SA, 2015, 2019). This means even those that are increasing, are slowly increasing third stream income, and this impact of the funding reductions largely affects vulnerable institutions (Bruwer, 2021). The solution is that universities must engage in entrepreneurial ecosystems with a more efficient revenue-cost model that factors in the reduced financial resources available to the university (Moyo & McKenna, 2021). Corporate-governed universities should develop a framework for new partnerships and collaborations that can generate a better reputation and revenues for the institution. There should be projects that seek to investigate new and innovative ways on how universities can leverage technological advancements to better position themselves as well as to generate revenue through third-stream income.

Access to financial resources, particularly third-stream income can be reached by universities through incubators and other funding supporting mechanisms. As alluded by Aminova and others (2020), lessons from the Arabian case that natural resources where universities exist can act as agents in the building of entrepreneurial ecosystems. The emphasis is on policies on building strong entrepreneurship ecosystems that emanate from online business registrations, ease of energy permits, and opportunities to start new business ventures (Aminova *et al.*, 2020). To relate this to South African universities, there should be business opportunities relating to solving critical issues like energy on easing regulations. This can contribute to increasing sustainable third-stream income for universities. Meoli *et al.* (2019) confirmed that policies relating to intellectual property and reward systems stimulate new venture creation. This needs buy-in by university management to provide policies and provide entrepreneurship education for venture creation. A well-governed entrepreneurial ecosystem, established collaborations and technology transfer activities provide sustainable relations of universities with stakeholders to assist in guiding them to pursue successful entrepreneurial endeavours that can strengthen third-stream income.

**Figure 1: Trends of the Funding System in South African Universities, 2015 & 2019**



Source: Statistics South Africa (2019)

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper explored the state of entrepreneurial ecosystems regarding corporate governance in South African Universities by using a desktop methodology that incorporated content and descriptive analyses. The state of entrepreneurial ecosystems in South African Universities differ significantly based on historical background, even after 28 years of democracy. South Africa is a developing country that allocates only 1% of its GDP toward research and innovation. The limited government funding challenged by other economic factors such as rising inflation, high unemployment rate and unstable political climate need to be supplemented for the sustainability of the universities. Therefore, South African universities must adopt

a different approach to generate third-stream income. Established universities like the University of Stellenbosch are slowly improving their third-stream income from 36 to 38% between the period of 2015 and 2019. Contrarily, previously disadvantaged institutions reported a decline where for example the Mangosuthu University of Technology dropped from 25 to 0% in the same reporting period. This is one of the challenges that hinder the establishment of entrepreneurial ecosystems, given that access to funding is an enabler of entrepreneurship.

The disparities are evidence of a lack of good corporate governance in the universities and South Africa at large. Corporate governance is defined as an Ubuntu-focused approach that supposedly ensures

mutual benefits for all stakeholders involved. The revenue report of the universities shows a lack of partnerships and skills sharing, which could be facilitated by having frameworks and memoranda of agreement that are mutually beneficial. This paper further revealed that ethics and corporate governance are interlinked, implying that it needs to be rule-based, transparent, efficient, and accountable and implemented in a participatory, consultative, and abides by precepts of formal democracy. This study calls for university management to commit to the creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem by reviewing policies to enable the incorporation of entrepreneurship education in all programs offered, employment conditions for academics that provide time, resources, and incentives, and involvement of communities and financial institutions.

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# Evaluation of Budget Implementation in the Municipality: A Case of the City of Tshwane

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**Abstract:** The objective of the study is to evaluate the budget implementation plan in the municipality in accordance with the required budgeting processes. Municipalities are frequently none complying with legislation because of not spending the allocated budget. As a result, it affects the provision of services in the municipality. The study followed a quantitative approach to evaluate the implementation of budget estimates in the municipality using questionnaire to collect data from budget office in the operational budget sector, for a specific reason that it is a key component of municipal financial management. The result of the study reveals that the municipality is not spending according to their implementation plan as stated in their Service Delivery and Implementation Plan (SDIP) in monitoring performance between the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and its annual budgets, which may prompt service delivery and budget spending protest. Possibly the community may not have been consulted in the planning phase or engaged, and needs are not aligned with the IDP of the municipality during the budget draft. The management may not have implemented what the ward councillors as representatives have prioritised. The study employed social cohesion and systems theory to evaluate the budget implementation plan for service delivery target. This study recommends that for management to implement a realistic or implementable budget they need to comply with budget processes as preferred by Municipal Finance Management Act (56 of 2003) MFMA and in line with their IDP.

**Keywords:** Budget, Financial management, Implementation plan, Municipalities, Service delivery

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## 1. Introduction

A priority of any municipality in South Africa is to provide basic services within its local boundaries using available financial resources (Joseph & Van Rensburg, 2002). In order to comply with the governance provisions of the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003, amongst others, many government organisations endeavour to implement their operational plan in their budgeting and decision-making processes. The primary aim is to provide management with the information needed to ensure optimal use of available financial resources and to manage costs associated with achieving the organisation's strategic goals and service delivery (Chauke, 2016; Hilton & Platt, 2011).

In a public sector, accurate and reliable budgeting implementation is expected in terms of their service delivery implementation plan (SDIP) within their budgeting process in line with their integrated Development Plan (IDP). However, if the budget implementation plans are not executed and/or are not properly applied, incorrect decisions regarding the service delivery are almost inevitable. This may lead to dissatisfaction among

the officials, ward councillors and the community at large. The resultant of a properly prepared and executed budget implementation plan will result in the elimination of unnecessary expenditure and protests and should increase the efficiency of service delivery and preservation of municipal financial management (Tassonyi, 2002; Tapela, 2015). However, budget implementation is affected by various external factors including inflation, government policy directives, and politics (CoT, 2005; Narbón-Perpiñá, Arribas, Balaguer-Coll & Tortosa-Ausina, 2020). Services within the public funds have always caused a challenge in trying to balance professional practice and political involvement and the real needs of the citizens are overlooked (Bohler-Muller, Davids, Roberts, Kanyane, Stuwig, Masiya & Nomdo, 2016). Such practices increase on the already existing social distress to provide service delivery (Zhang, 2020). The implementation of an inappropriate budget estimates in a municipality has the potential to undermine the decision-makers' ability to make effective decisions in internal reports (CoT, 2003; Nzama, 2019).

The effective budgeting techniques have been utilised in the preparation of budget estimates

for budget implementation, the resultant financial information on the utilisation of available financial resources has proved to be useful and appropriate to give preference to basic services (Chadwick, 1998:149; Oosthuizen & Thornhill, 2017). Therefore, accurate and consistent budgets permit better-informed estimates and simplify budgeting implementation by management. It is important to note that, even though the budget estimates may be reliable, without informed efforts from management to implement the plan as SDIP, taking all its components into account, could just as easily compromise the process.

Management should make themselves familiar with the preferred services for delivery and their essential uses to the community, if they are to discharge their responsibilities effectively municipal financial resources (Adewuni, 2022). For municipalities to maintain their credibility, the ability to implement their budget plan effectively with available financial resources is important. Even though, there is still an agenda between politicians and academics concerning the implementation of an effective system for public funds in local government (D'Inverno, Carosi & Ravagli, 2018). Consequently, the objective of the municipal budget is to estimate the amount of funding required accurately over a specified period for the execution of reliable functions assigned to it through legislation (Cirolia & Robbins, 2021). Stated slightly differently, implementation plan plays a major role in ensuring that budget estimates that feature in the compilation of a credible and balanced accurately, thereby improving basic service levels, and enabling alignment with the five-year strategic IDP (CoT, 2007).

In addition, municipal budgets and implementation plans must be reliable because of being the basis for the performance measurement of the public sector organisation. Therefore, the budget office has the responsibility, to the municipality, to provide management with accurate and relevant information on that service for practical implementation. Furthermore, planning in municipalities implies that management wishes to determine ahead of time the cost of resources that will be consumed and implementation is when the resources are expected to be executed (Govender & Reddy, 2019). However, the basic idea of identifying implementation plan and its changes, as the volume of services increase or decrease, lies at the heart of legislature and by extension to budgeting (Hirsch, 2000; Ingram,

Albright, Baldwin & Hill, 2005). In that manner, South African policies are adequate but for the fact that they are tokenistic; it makes implementation of the plan to achieve municipal objectives impractical (Bond, 2014).

## 2. Research Problem

The City of Tshwane municipality is faced with a problem of frequently none complying with legislation because of not spending the allocated budget. This disconnect continues to create uncertainties within the framework of the implementation plan. Due to the budgeting process being overly optimistic, and combined with management uncertainty, inaccurate budget inputs may lead to very serious diverted implementation and service delivery problems in the future. This inability could also create problems in the IDP. In the process of achieving the research objective, this research project endeavours to conduct an evaluation of the CoT's budget implementation regarding the application of the plan in their budgeting process, and of the reliability of the final budget input estimates. It also attempts to determine whether, when budgeting for a service, management follows the budgeting process requirements of the National Treasury whose aim is to improve the control of expenditure, financial decision-making and ultimately financial accountability at municipal level.

## 3. Research Objective

The objective of the research is to evaluate if the management is implementing the budget in compliance with legislation and maintaining their ongoing budget estimates in accordance with the requirements of recognised budgeting processes within the municipality.

## 4. Literature Review

In budget implementation, budget estimates are used to solve different budget problems such as determining the estimated price for the service. The availability and proper budget estimates can provide reliable and accurate information which can be used for implementation (Wordsworth, Ludbrook, Caskey & MacLeod, 2005). Due to budget being optimistic this may render municipalities with high expenditure poor implementation or inefficient managed operational systems (Phong Nguyen, Vihn Vo, Thuan Anh Tran & Kim Thao Tu, 2018).

Most importantly is how these budget estimates are applied depending on how stakeholders are qualified or well informed. The whole aim of a municipal budget is to use available financial resources for service delivery efficiently, effectively, adequate and transparent (Jong, 2022). This allows the municipality to determine estimates on services and whether the available budget is spent accordingly. The budget estimates can also assist officials to report on the progress of the municipality during and after implementation. Each department must prepare its budget estimates, assess and reviewing for sustainability prior submission against targets and strategic objectives before consolidation and implementing deliverables (National Treasury, 2002; Estova, Majerova & Szarowska, 2018). This approach is part of performance measurement on efficiency of service delivery, reporting and disclosure of spending in their audits (Coetzee & Erasmus, 2017).

The budget inputs must be supervised by superiors with sufficient knowledge to avoid any discrepancies to boost decision making and enhance performance measurement. This will eliminate the quality of municipal finances being compromised due to lack of uniform classification of budget estimates, as most municipal budgets do not contain narrative information and transparency (National Treasury, 2009; Folz & Shults, 2018). Hence, some municipalities may have inadequate financial management capacity, and in budgeting, their accounting practices and financial reporting systems are weak (Lee & Min, 2022; National Treasury, 2011a). Therefore, their budgeting is often not properly linked to municipal planning, and less or non-participation of direct community. This will also reduce unnecessary use of discretions and severe fiscal stress by budget officials on budget estimates in an attempt balance their budgets due to unavailability of supervision (Pierson, Thompson & Thompson, 2022). Such practices, budget dishonesty can manifest through manipulation of estimates and funds which will halt and affect the implementation plan (Fisher, Mitchel, Peffer & Webb, 2019)

Financial management in the public sector must be performed under supervision of personnel with the necessary technical training and proficiency to apply a wide spectrum of budget estimates fit for implementation (National Treasury, nd:4). Specific context of municipalities, authors such as Narbón-Perpiñá *et al.* (2020) states that municipalities face challenges in terms of social, demographic, economic, political, and financial factors, among others which may be

affected not only by inadequate management or implementation but by inadequate programmes and lack of staff development. As such, municipal officials probably make, or ward councillors provide uniformed decision in the absence of credible data and poor advice. This could affect consistence information across the IDP and budget. This may compromise and weaken the municipality's ability to use budget estimates as a redistribution tool for budgeting towards implementation (National Treasury, 2009; CoT, 2020).

There is growing evidence that municipalities are not executing their budget estimates in accordance with their implementation plan as aligned in the IDP. Municipal budget activities not aligned with IDP will result in the implementation plan not achieved. This may be due to absence of budget inputs from the community during budget draft or inability to properly apply the prescribed costing techniques for budget estimates (National Treasury, 2011b). This dissatisfaction among municipal officials, ward councillors and community at large may prompt service delivery and budget spending protest. Consequently, the unreliable budget data could result in sub-optimal decision-making in their financial management affecting the implementation plan which may not comply with the Municipal Financial Management Act (56 of 2003).

The availability and appropriate budgets will ensure consistent, reliable, transparent, and accurate implementation plan based on financial resources availability, encouraging efficiency of service delivery (Imuezerua & Chinomona, 2015). Municipal budgets can be used to assess performance in important areas, and to use those measures to plan and control operations that will in turn improve efficiency and financial management (Gunasekaran, Williams & McGaughey, 2005; Mbatha, 2020). Scholars agree that budgets are needed for the evaluation of service innovations, and good municipal governance criteria establishment (McLean, 2006; Cartwright, 2008). Consequently, the use of budgets will enable municipalities to estimate specific projects more accurately, and general operational costs to analyse and interpret estimates and inputs enough for implementation (Yereli, 2009; Mathur, 2019).

Arnold and Atrz (2019) and Brandt (1982) argue that the purpose of an implementation plan in a municipality is not simply a matter of executing budget estimates, but also for multi-purpose to provide

municipal managers and officials with a strategy they can use to deliver service every time. Budget inputs are needed to plan for future service delivery while highlighting the need for a municipality to estimate funding of their services (Cartwright, 2008; Sennewald & Baillie, 2021). In this sense, the implementation plan should be executed according to the essential services as prescribed and described in the IDP.

Municipalities are expected to meet their service delivery targets and to strive to improve on their implementation plan. Therefore, an IDP focused on the achievement of objectives, within the constraints of available resources, should be prepared and adopted for implementation on a sustainable basis (CoT, 2008; National Treasury, 2022). This strategy implies that budget is essential for costing as it will reflect in the inputs, outputs, and outcomes (Mofolo, 2016). The implementation of budget estimates within the municipal services is a management-orientated activity. That means, once declared reliable they are forwarded to management, where budget retrenchments to these services can be made (Horngren, Datar, Foster, Rajan & Itter, 2009; Choi, Kim, Jung & Cho, 2021). Municipalities will increasingly need to consider implementing budget as plan to improve the efficacy of their estimates and community needs when budgeting (Valle-Cruz, Fernandez-Cortez & Gil-Garcia, 2022; National Treasury, 2010).

#### 4.1 Legislative Framework Pertaining to Municipal Budgets

The availability of legislations were designed to support the financial management in terms of procedural and institutional approach in improving municipal budgeting and basic service delivery, *inter alia*, the implementation plan (National Treasury, 2008; Folz & Shultz, 2018).

##### 4.1.1 The Constitution of South Africa, 1996

Section 215(3)(a-b) states that budgets in each sphere of government must contain estimates of revenue and expenditure, differentiating between capital and operating expenditure, and financial proposals for budget year. Section 41 states that the municipal officials must exercise their authority within the constitutional system to practice corporate governance. Managers, as an accounting officer with specific responsibilities and duties, are obliged to take effective and appropriate measures

to ensure that municipal finances are sound and efficiently managed.

Section 153(a-b) states that, a municipality is tasked with structuring and managing its budgeting and planning process and its administration, prioritising basic needs, and promoting the social and economic development. This process enables policy makers to re-assess the financial resources available for municipal priorities and to increase credibility by providing sound planning (Pearson, 2002). Policy makers in the planning process are faced with challenges whether to fluctuate a service due to economic, political desires and social development (Ren, Zhao, Zhong, Fu & Wu, 2021). This should require the preparation of budget estimates for implementation. In terms of the Constitution, the MFMA was promulgated to lay down guidelines for the management of finances of a municipality in South Africa.

##### 4.1.2 Municipal Finance Management Act (56 of 2003)

The MFMA is part of a broader municipal reform plan, intended to improve service delivery and to encourage participatory governance. It aimed to improve the efficiency and efficacy of public spending at municipal level in South Africa (Vennekens & Govender, 2005). In fact, the MFMA brought about numerous significant changes in the management of municipal finances in South Africa.

Before the MFMA, the CoT followed a top-down, exclusive budget preparation process which was compiled by municipal officials and approved by politicians (National Treasury, 2006b). Even nowadays the political intervention in the budgeting processes of all government's spheres cannot be ignored (Narbón-Perpiñá *et al.*, 2020). After a series of financial disasters, Fiscal statute (MFMA) was introduced to increase transparency in financial planning in service delivery (Grootjes & de Haan, 2022; Vennekens & Govender, 2005). Section 72(3) states that it is essential that the financial plan of the local government be based on a balanced approach. Expenditure should not exceed available resources, and the budget must be based on realistic estimates for implementation.

##### 4.1.3 Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) (MSA)

Section 25(1)(a-c) states that each municipal council has to adopt a single, inclusive and strategic plan for the development of the municipality. This plan links, integrates and co-ordinates existing plans,



considering the financial proposals for the development of the municipality. This plan forms the policy framework and provides the foundation on which the annual budget has to be based to be in line with Section 41 of the Constitution. Therefore, all municipalities are required to prepare their own budgets, and to approve and implement them independently, in compliance with approved legislation. The IDP will assist the municipality to identify its priority issues and problems, and to develop strategies to be incorporated in the budgeting process (National Treasury, nd:6; Vennekens & Govender, 2005).

Following the promulgation of the MFMA and the MSA and other legal procedures, the budgeting process has become a transparent, consultative process (National treasury, 2006b). Promoting reforms and other legislative frameworks encourages involvement, transparency, and accountability as well improves the municipality's fiscal performance (Jung, 2021). CoT (2005) vows that the records of the municipality indicate that the municipality was the first municipality to introduce a consultative, community-driven IDP as described in the MFMA.

Difficulties will be experienced in the practical application of fiscal statutes and reforms that were intended to bring about improvements in the quality of municipal financial governance and the importance of implementation (Ford, 2006; Garcia & Hayo, 2021). Current practices are complex and based on different provincial ordinances (de Azevedo & Pigatto, 2020). Generally Recognised Accounting Practice (GRAP) was also supposed to be applied to overcome shortcomings experienced within the existing municipal accounting practices. Unfortunately, this does not promote transparency in municipal financial practices, which may lead to fiscal profligacy of municipalities that can affect the implementation plan (Scott, 2008; Picchio & Santolini, 2020).

As the CoT is a large municipality it could be assumed that they are able to cover what they budget for to achieve their implementation plan. Vennekens and Govender (2005) with the CoT (2009) assert that all municipalities should outline their plans spending funds as part of their budget documentation. The inputs should be linked to priority needs that feature in master planning, and then forwarded to budgeting and then implementation. Concluding the plan to implement the budget as the final step should be compliant with legislation for the approved budgets, making use of the balanced budget estimates for

implementation. (National Treasury, 2006a; Pierson *et al.*, 2022). It is imperative that the overall financial plan be based on a balanced approach to budgeting and implementation (CoT, 2009).

## 5. Research Methods

### 5.1 Research Design

The research of this study took a form of case study. Case studies allow the researcher to closely examine data from within a specific context, the parameters of which include a select geographical area and a limited population (McCullum, 2004:19; Li, Yang, Sun, Ji & Feng, 2010). Case study research is also a way of learning about complex situations, based on a comprehensive understanding of a single event (Morra & Friedlander, 2005; Gray, 2009). In the case of CoT, the research wants to understand reason(s) why the municipality is not spending within the implementation plan.

### 5.2 Research Approach

The study followed a quantitative approach to evaluate the implementation of budget estimates in the municipality using questionnaire to collect data from budget office in the operational budget sector, for a specific reason that it is a key component of municipal financial management. The questions required respondents to respond according to a 5-point Likert and dichotomous scale, thus providing data that is categorical and is of ordinal or nominal type. In contrast, the rating-scale questionnaire gives an indication of how well the respondent understand the questions, by providing them with a choice from progressively more accurate and more nearly complete answers (Peterson, 2007).

#### 5.2.1 Targeted Population

The target population comprised 50 CoT municipal officials involved in the budget estimates and implementing the budget plan at the municipality. These include accountants, Municipal Manager, heads of departments, Chief Financial Officer, Assistant Directors and Financial advisers. From the targeted population 31 questionnaire responses were received.

## 6. Data Analysis and Discussions

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. SPSS is a comprehensive

and flexible statistical analysis and data management tool that can take data from almost any type of file and use it to generate tabulated reports, charts and trends (Collier, 2010). It also delivers descriptive statistics and is able to conduct complex statistical analysis. The current practices within the CoT were then compared with the theoretical approaches encountered in the literature review. The conclusions flowing from this study should expand the body of knowledge on municipal finance, particularly budgeting implementation process.

55% were not sure whether the Constitution prescribes the use of budget estimates for implementation even though 42% agreed that it did. However, as this Act is the foundation for all other legislation in South Africa it also applies to municipal finance, whether one is aware of this, or not. The Constitution requires officials to exercise sound corporate governance to ensure the efficient compilation and management of municipal finances. While corporate governance is not specifically mentioned, it can be assumed that municipal officials, in implementing sound governance policies, will include the proper budgets to implement the plan for efficacy in financial management (see response to Q3).

Furthermore, all respondents indicated that the MFMA is important for managing municipal finances in that it outlines the framework within which the policy and procedures for compiling a municipal budget may be drafted. The Act also provides guidelines for effective financial management and furthermore requires that submission deadlines have to be met.

Most respondents (71%) rejected the statement that the MSA guides the municipality to implement the budget according to plan, nor did they agree that the provisions of the MSA have to be integrated with the MFMA to enhance the quality of the budgeting process. This piece of legislation (MSA) encourages the efficient use of available financial resources. In this case, "efficient use" may be assumed to include ward councilors priorities in terms of community needs. While this legislation encourages, it does not provide specific guidance on the application for implementation, nor does it spell out the terms of its integration with the MFMA, which may be the reason why more than 70% of respondents disagreed with the statement presented. Most respondents (71%) believed that the CoT has no internal reports that indicate that the budget plan was followed. The benefit of executing the implementation plan lies in their potential to contribute to the improvement of decision-making in municipalities by the accuracy of their output, and by extension, the improvement to financial reporting. It seems obvious therefore, that the municipality must not only have a report stating what was spent, but also which budget estimates were used and whether they were properly executed for service delivery.

Respondents (71%) believed they do not spend according to their IDP. If budget estimates are reliable, spending accordingly should happen, and would provide a municipality with its best chance of achieving its service delivery targets. The responses here imply that budget estimates are not accurate or reliable, corroborating earlier responses questioning the accuracy of budgeting processes.

<b>Q1: Are budget estimates in the MTERF submitted in time?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Strongly agree	6	19.35	6	19.35
Agree	25	80.65	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q2: Does the constitution compel the use of budget estimates for implementation?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Agree	13	41.94	13	41.94
Not sure	17	54.84	30	96.77

<b>Q3: Are appropriate measure taken to ensure efficacy and effectiveness of financial management?</b>				
Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Agree	31	100.00	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q4: Is the MFMA being used to manage municipal finances?</b>				
Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	30	96.77	30	96.77
Agree	1	3.23	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q5: Is the MFMA being used to outline the criteria for budget estimates in the budgeting process?</b>				
Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	8	25.81	8	25.81
Agree	23	74.19	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q6a: Is the MFMA being used as a guide for costing and budgeting?</b>				
Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	13	41.94	13	41.94
Agree	18	58.06	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q6b: Any other financial guidelines?</b>				
Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Assist on municipal finances	1	50.00	1	50.00
Guides on financial management of the municipality	1	50.00	2	50.00
Sample Size = 2				

<b>Q7a: Is the MSA being used as a guide to implement the budget?</b>				
Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	8	25.81	8	25.81
Not sure	1	3.23	9	29.03
Disagree	7	22.58	16	51.61
Strongly disagree	15	48.39	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q7b: Does the MSA promote integration with the MFMA?</b>				
Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	8	25.81	8	25.81
Not sure	1	3.23	9	29.03
Disagree	6	19.35	15	48.39
Strongly disagree	16	51.61	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q8: Do internal reports disclose that the budget plan was executed accordingly?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Strongly agree	1	3.57	1	3.57
Not sure	7	25.00	8	28.57
Disagree	2	7.14	10	35.71
Strongly disagree	18	64.29	28	100.00
Sample Size = 28				

<b>Q9: Do officials spend according to the operational plan (IDP)?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	9	29.03	9	29.03
No	22	70.97	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q10: Are service delivery targets being achieved?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	29	93.55	29	93.55
No	2	6.45	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q11: Is there enough time to consolidate the budget estimates?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Not sure	8	25.81	8	25.81
Disagree	5	16.13	13	41.94
Strongly disagree	18	58.06	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q12: Is there enough time to consolidate the budget estimates for implementation?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Not sure	8	25.81	8	25.81
Disagree	5	16.13	13	41.94
Strongly disagree	18	58.06	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q13: Do officials spend according to the operational plan (IDP)?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	9	29.03	9	29.03
No	22	70.97	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q14: Are service delivery targets being achieved?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	29	93.55	29	93.55
No	2	6.45	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q15: Any measures taken when budget inputs are due?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Inform the responsible SED and if no action is taken use own discretion	1	100.00	1	100.00
Sample Size = 1				

<b>Q16: Are budget estimates assessed and necessary changes made?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Not sure	1	3.23	1	3.23
Disagree	7	22.58	8	25.81
Strongly disagree	23	74.19	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q17: Do officials align the IDP to operational and capital budgets?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Yes	31	100.00	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q18: Do you use cost estimates to consolidate the budget input for the operational plan?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Strongly agree	13	41.94	13	41.94
Agree	18	58.06	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q19: Do you discuss changes made to cost estimates received?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Strongly agree	2	6.45	2	6.45
Agree	29	93.55	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

<b>Q20: Does the legislative framework assist to manage the budgeting process more effectively and efficiently?</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Frequency</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Strongly agree	26	83.87	26	83.87
Agree	5	16.13	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

Respondents (94%) agree that service delivery targets are being met. Previous paragraph it was noted that respondents had indicated that the IDP was not being followed, yet in response to Q13 they believed IDP targets were in fact being met. The only reasonable explanation for this discrepancy appears to be that the budget submissions contained in the IDP, are not reliable for implementation which means the spending pattern targets are not followed. Respondents may feel that their inputs are reliable and accurate can be since IDP targets are reached by the year-end. One respondent indicated that all officials are obliged to inform the SED if they believe that their budget submissions are not up to standard. If no response is received about the proposed estimates, they use their own discretion, and create the illusion that all estimates are prepared in full compliance.

It is assumed that all budgets are scrutinised and consolidated by the finance department and presented to municipal executives for approval. These estimates are not subject to assessment for reliability and accuracy. Responses may corroborate those where respondents use own discretion if no supervision was taking place. Respondents indicated having insufficient time to the budget inputs. Note, more than 25% were unsure. This throws more doubt on the validity of their budget inputs. The literature supports the notion that municipal departments need to regularly re-assess their strategic planning and budgeting. Respondents agreed that they do align their IDP with their operational and capital budgets. This alignment means that their service delivery targets within the allocated budget estimates are efficient for implementation. However, if this alignment takes place why did they indicate that they do not spend within the IDP limits? Similarly, respondents indicated that they do not discuss changes made on the budget estimates. It appears also here that the incorrect, influenced, and inappropriate budget estimates will result in incorrect budget inputs. This is supported by comments made during an interview, to the effect that budget implementation remains a problem even though they spend within their budget.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Municipal budgets should be prepared over a specific period with all necessary consultations and inputs considered. Only fewer municipalities have complied with legislature when preparing and implementing

budget plans over the past years. Most municipalities to-date have been put under administration. Even so, during the epidemic period most municipal funds had to be redirected towards supporting to combat the (COVID19) pandemic. These decisions have threatened high priority basic services and further added more problems and delays in the existing in service delivery problems, increased non-compliance and implementation plan backlogs.

Despite the implementation plan, budgets should be prepared by person(s) with relevant experience/qualification in that field of finance. If any problems exist, they should have a contingency plan to ensure that the plan is followed. Even if municipal budgets are politically motivated, relevant discretionary measures should be in place to redirect the implementation plan back to its original form to meet service delivery. To achieve budget implementation plan, the nature of the relationship between politicians and municipal administrators must be well-managed, and skilled people must be hired towards improving service delivery. Budgeting is a long complex consultative process; municipalities are still experiencing difficulties from the pre-democratic socio-economic exclusion gaps while simultaneously trying to unleash its potential in service delivery. Adequate planning and community consultation are the most important aspect of municipal budgeting, therefore knowledge on how basic municipal budgeting operates is key. Continuous consultations to inform on developments, implementation or diversions of a municipal budget plan should be conducted. Even though municipal financial statements are publicly available, most communities do not understand the financial aspects due to financial illiteracy. Future studies should be conducted on financial literacy programs to educate on basic aspects of municipal finances that affect their community specifically budgeting. Venture on smart budgeting by municipalities employing artificial intelligence (App or message box) to reach communities at their comfort zone on budget consultation and service delays.

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# Land Rights: Mpumalanga Communities' Attitudes Towards Women's Land Ownership

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**Abstract:** The role played by women in agriculture in the world is a salient one, though they continue to face discrimination in accessing and owning land. Notwithstanding the fact that most countries worldwide have signed treaties on women empowerment, and laws that protect women's land rights, women are still unable to assert equal land rights. Patriarchy with its discriminatory social norms and practices is cited as barriers between women and their land rights. Inadequate enforcement of laws regarding women's land rights compounded by poor implementation of policies and lack of political will exacerbates the problem. The South African Constitution of 1996 coupled with other legislation, protects the full rights of all citizens as enshrined in the Bill of Rights under Chapter 2. Access to land for women is said to be crucial in combating discrimination and alleviating poverty. Women who own land are said to have better financial autonomy than those who do not. This qualitative study analysed Mpumalanga communities' attitudes towards women's land ownership. Data was collected through semi-structured interview schedules from one hundred and twenty-three (123) members of the community.

**Keywords:** Access, Attitudes, Communities, Customary, Land ownership

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## 1. Introduction

In many countries, land is indicated as a right as it is with other rights like housing, health and equality. Rights are described as claims bound by law and socially recognisable. They can be enforced through the courts or at village level. Rights to land can be classified under three categories, i.e. (i) use rights, which are the rights to use land, (ii) control rights, which are rights to make decisions about the land, deciding on the type of crops to plant and benefits from the sale of crops, and (iii) transfer rights which include to right to sell, lease, giving the land to someone else through inheritance and making overall decisions about use and control rights. From the three rights that have been mentioned above, most women only have use rights which can be changed or taken away at any given moment by the person who has transfer rights. Having legal rights however does not mean that rights to land by women are recognised socially (Paradza, 2011; CSV, POWA & WCNOVAW, 2011; Massay, 2019; Veit, 2019; Claeys, Lemke & Camacho, 2022). Culturally, there are predetermined gender ideologies which describe rights and responsibilities for both men and women. Access to and control of resources such as land is mainly in the hands of men who,

culturally, are seen as decision makers. These ideologies reinforce the position of women as inferior or dependent on men. Women can only have secure land rights if the rights to the land are documented like having a title deed which renders the rights enforceable by courts should problems arise (UN, 2012). Women's security of land tenure is said to depend on women keeping good relationships with male relatives, should such a relationship change, her security tenure becomes non-existent (Villarreal, 2006; Kathewera-Banda, Kamanga-Njikho, Malera, Mauluka, Mazinga & Ndlovu, 2011).

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Even though equality between men and women has been enshrined in constitutions and other legislation around the world, structural disadvantages, discrimination and gender inequalities still persist, especially for rural women (Federici, 2011). Access, control and ownership of land and other productive resources is crucial not just as an economic tool but as a right to equality. Studies indicate that women who access land directly are few (Kambarami, 2006; ICRW, 2008) and most women who have access do so through marriage or family ties. Access to land by women is normally through male kinship (Nyukuri,

2006; Paradza, 2011a). As an effort to eliminate discrimination against women and improve access to resources, most countries signed treaties which are legally binding and thus enable women to have access to productive resources as well. The aim of such statutory laws is to protect the rights of women and assist with easy access to land, however, that is just in theory because it is the implementation of these laws that is a problem (Nyukuri, 2006; Villarreal, 2006; Federici, 2011).

### **3. Theoretical Perspective**

This paper is anchored on the Patriarchal Theory which refers to a system of male dominance that is characterised by dominance where men are the dominating ones and thus viewed as superior and women the dominated ones and hence viewed as inferior to men (Kambarami, 2006; Stopler, 2008; Rao, 2012; Sultana, 2011). This system defines women in relation to their reproductive roles only, which has a direct impact on the allocation of resources both within and outside the household. Since there is no monetary value attached to reproductive roles, the patriarchal system then relegates women to positions of subordination to men. Patriarchy is also embedded in cultural beliefs and norms which dictate masculinity and femininity roles attached to each gender. Due to their low status, women face a lot of constraints like inability to participate in politics, decent work, access to land and other resources (Palama, 2008; Albertyn, 2009; Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2010; Sultana, 2011; Kabeer, 2012). Reproductive work is crucial for the existence of families and communities. These roles make it easy for everyone; men included, to go about everyday business because there are people who take care of the children, the cooking, fetching of firewood and water and also involved in community businesses like attending funerals and tending to the sick.

In terms of access to land, due to the inferior status assigned to women by patriarchal practices, it becomes difficult for women to access land (UN, 2008; Swaminathan, 2008; Sultana, 2011). Land is owned and controlled by males who are regarded as head of households, irrespective of the fact that there are other people, mostly women, who are contributing or working on it without necessarily being recognised (World Bank, 2013; Federici, 2011; UN Women, 2013; Claeys, Lemke & Camacho, 2022). The violation of women's land rights is often hidden within culture, tradition and religion

(Benschop, 2002). When social responsibilities are deeply entrenched and defined along gender lines, it becomes very difficult for women to deviate from what is socially acceptable. In patriarchal societies, husbands are supposed to take care of their families hence they are regarded as head of households. These cultural patterns according to Shaffer (2019) help perpetuate household and community poverty because they do not allow women to own land.

### **4. Methodology**

A snowball sampling method was utilised to collect data through semi-structured interview schedules from one hundred (100) members of the community from three districts in Mpumalanga, i.e. Ehlanzeni, Nkangala and Gert Sibande in a four months period. A semi-structured interview schedule was utilised to probe societal attitudes towards women's land rights. Collected data was read and notes of emerging themes were made. Summaries of each interview discussion capturing opinions, attitudes and perceptions were drawn. Most community members were able to answer the questionnaire unassisted whilst some were assisted due to their low literacy levels. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the respondents were interviewed at Ehlanzeni District, thirty-two percent (32%) from Gert Sibande and thirty-three percent (33%) from Nkangala districts. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the respondents were Swati speaking, nine percent (9%) IsiZulu, two-percent (2%) IsiNdebele, nine percent (9%) XiTsonga, twelve percent (12%) SeSotho, nine percent (9%) TshiVenda and six percent (6%) Afrikaans speaking. Forty-nine percent (49%) of respondents were between the ages 18-30; twenty-five percent (25%) between the ages 31-35; twelve percent (12%) between 36-40; eight percent (8%) between 41-55 and six percent (6%) were from 56 years upwards. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the respondents were males and forty-four percent (44%) were females. In terms of educational levels of the respondents, twenty-eight percent (28%) had grades 1-7 and fifty percent (50%) grades 8-12, fourteen percent (14%) had degrees or diplomas whilst eight percent (8%) had post graduate degrees.

### **5. Literature Review**

#### **5.1 Legislative Framework on Land Rights**

Land rights are human rights and these are contained in treaties and conventions which are legally binding, especially to countries that have ratified

them. Despite the provision of laws and ratified treaties, women still struggle to access, control and own land. A few legislative frameworks with regard land will be briefly outlined below.

#### **5.1.1 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is based on the principle of equality between sexes with emphasis on the discrimination faced by women. Countries are expected to submit reports about periodic progress made with regard to gender equality with specific reference to women (Nyukuri, 2006; Villarreal, 2006; IWRAW, 2008; Palama, 2008). Article 14 of CEDAW is more relevant to rural women and their access to land. Agriculture is the main source of living for most rural women, yet women have less access than men to agriculture related assets, inputs and services including land ownership. CEDAW calls for incorporating the principle of equality of men and women in legal systems, tribunals and other public institutions to eliminate discrimination against women by individuals, organisations or enterprises.

#### **5.1.2 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**

Article 2(1) of this covenant specifically addresses women's property rights amongst others. In many countries women are regarded as minors hence they cannot enter into contracts without the assistance of male relatives. This is because women's roles are defined along the lines of motherhood, domestic workers and child-rearing (Pati, 2006; Lorber, 2010) and thus are viewed as unable to own land. There are similarities between CEDAW and ICCPR (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006) because both recognise customary, traditional, historical and religious attitudes and practices employed as a reason for the oppression of women.

#### **5.1.3 African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR)**

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights recognizes women's equal right to an equitable sharing of the joint property deriving from the property of separation, divorce or annulment of marriage.

#### **5.1.4 The Beijing Platform for Action (BPA)**

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA) of 1995 is a visionary agenda for the empowerment of women and is the outcome of the Fourth

World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, in September 1995. It emphasises the protection of women's human rights, the eradication of poverty and promotion of women's economic independence, including ensuring equal access for all women to productive resources including land. Member States are mandated to put in place legislation regarding inheritance rights of girls and women, access to land, control of productive resources, access to credit, capital and property (Nyukuri, 2006; Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006; UNECA, 2007; UN-Women, 2013). The BPA is critically concerned about persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women and inequalities (Palama, 2008). The equal distribution of economic resources such as land will assist in reducing feminisation of poverty.

#### **5.1.5 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996**

The South African Constitution of 1996 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, age, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, language, social origin, culture and religion, conscience and belief. It also includes non-sexism on the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996; Ikdhah, Hellum, Kaarhus, Benjaminsen & Kameri-Mbote, 2005; Knox, Duvvury & Milici, 2007; Budlender, 2011). These rights are listed in the Bill of Rights, in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Whilst the constitution has the equality clause, it also recognises customary law. The Constitution allows that "a traditional authority that observes a system of customary law to function subject to any applicable legislation and customs, which includes amendments to, or repeal of that legislation or those customs." In some instances, the courts apply customary law recognising and acknowledging traditional leadership and its role in democracy. This then creates conflict between customary law and statutory law in terms of implementation since it is in customary law where women's land rights are violated (Albertyn, 2009; Mhago & Samson, 2011; Budlender & Alma, 2011; Ndulo, 2011; Nnadi, Chikaire, Osuagwu, Ihenacho & Egwunwu, 2012). Religious and customary laws are known to perpetuate discriminatory practices towards women.

#### **5.1.6 The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) No. 4 of 2000**

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) prohibits unfair discrimination on the grounds of gender and sex both in the public and private spheres which includes

relations, employment, land rights and social benefits. It calls for South Africa to develop plans and legislation that promotes equality. Both government and private sector are compelled to come up with programmes and action plans that will show how gender equality plans will be implemented and measured (Mutangadura, 2004). In terms of inheritance, PEPUDA prohibits norms and practices that unfairly discriminate against women in terms of inheriting property (sec 8(c)). PEPUDA also played a role with regard to inheritance; important advances were made by courts through judgements on cases such as the *Bhe vs Shibi*. The Constitutional Court declared the African Customary rule of male primogeniture which allows the oldest male descendent or relative to inherit in terms of a deceased black person, unconstitutional (Palmary, 2006; Joireman, 2006; Albertyn, 2009; Ndulo, 2011; Budlender & Alma, 2011). Sec 8(e) deals specifically with access to land and admonishes the discrimination of women from accessing land, finance and other resources. PEPUDA was instrumental in the establishment of Equality Courts which are responsible to deal with matters covered by PEPUDA. The Equality Courts are housed within Magistrate's Courts in all the nine (9) provinces of South Africa.

### 5.1.7 Chapter 9 Institutions

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) was established according to sec 184 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, and has the power to monitor, investigate research, educate, lobby, advise and report on issues regarding gender equality. Its mandate is to check compliance of the country with international and regional treaties and local legislation about human rights (RSA, 1996; Palmary, 2006; Budlender, 2011; Williams, 2014).

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) has the powers, as regulated by the national legislation, to investigate and report on the observance of human rights; take steps and secure appropriate redress where human rights have been violated; carry out research and do awareness campaigns on rights and responsibilities of all South African citizens (RSA, 1996). There are however challenges that are faced by the commission which include budgetary constraints due to underfunding, the location of the offices which are in urban areas and thus making the commission to be inaccessible to the poor or people in rural areas and the monitoring of adherence to ratified treaties due to shortage of staff (RSA, 2014/2015).

## 5.2 Women and Access to Land

Studies on poverty and development indicate that 80 million hectares of land has been leased for agricultural purposes but only one percent (1%) of the world's women own land (Lorber, 2010; UN, 2012). Despite the provision of laws and ratified treaties in countries such as Uganda and South Africa, women are still the ones who suffer from discrimination, which is caused by customary and religious laws that seems to overrule property laws and constitutions (Veit, 2019). A study done by Moyo (2000) on the analysis of the socio-economic and political implications of land acquisitions in Zimbabwe revealed that eighty-seven percent (87%) of registered landowners are male and less than five percent (5%) are women. According to Veit, (2019), whilst Ugandan women cultivate about 80% of food, they own less than 8% of the land. In Kenya, 98% of men have access to land as compared to 1.6% women (Shaffer, 2019), whilst South African women own 18% of the land (Fynn & van Schalkwyk, 2022).

The fact that only a few percentages of women have access to land, unlike their male counterparts means that wealth lies in the hands of men since land is equated with wealth. It is documented that an increasing proportion of the world's poor are women (Moghadan, 2005; Harrington & Chopra, 2010). Poverty is thus said to be characterised by an increase in female-headed households (Lingam, 2005; Quan, 2006). It can then be deduced that the increasing level of female-headed households is attributed to lack of access to resources that can uplift their economic statuses, such as land. It is postulated that women who access land directly are few (Kambarami, 2006; ICRW, 2008) as access to land by women is normally through male kinship. The kinship can be in a form of a marriage relationship, through their sons, fathers or male relatives; they however have to give consent. This is because patriarchy dictates that men are head of families and thus decision makers (Duncan & Brants, 2004; ECA, 2004; Nyukuri, 2006; Paradza, 2011a; Veit, 2019; Shaffer, 2019). Unmarried women, widows, childless women or women who cannot bear male children will assumably have difficulty accessing land since there won't be anyone to veto for them.

Formal policies and informal cultural norms and expectations impact on women's potential and must be acknowledged and changed to achieve household

resilience and women empowerment. There is dire need for behavioural, attitudinal and drastic change in norms and practices that discriminate against women in order to create an enabling environment for women to access and own land (Pathways Theory of Change, 2014). For women to have a voice, they need to be involved in important structures that determine how resources are to be distributed.

Female headed households, unlike male headed ones are the one who suffer the brunt of poverty since they are the ones who are less likely to have access to land and other services like water, financial inputs and extension services (Lingam, 2005; Quan, 2006; Morrison, Raju & Sinha, 2007; World Bank, 2012). This can be attributed to societal patriarchal tendencies that regard male headed household as legitimate than female headed ones. Formal and customary practices like inheritance are some of the obstacles that make it difficult for women to have access to and control of land. Patriarchal tendencies seem to favour men over women in terms of land inheritance reaffirming the position of women as inferior and thus their land rights (Deininger, Goyal & Nagarajan, 2010; Harrington & Chopra, 2010; Murungani *et al.*, 2014; Veit, 2019; Shaffer, 2019). Whilst addressing the female land rights through inheritance practices it is important to note that since women are not a homogenous group, there are women who are able to inherit and have secure

land rights and tenure especially women who have inherited through matrilineal descent.

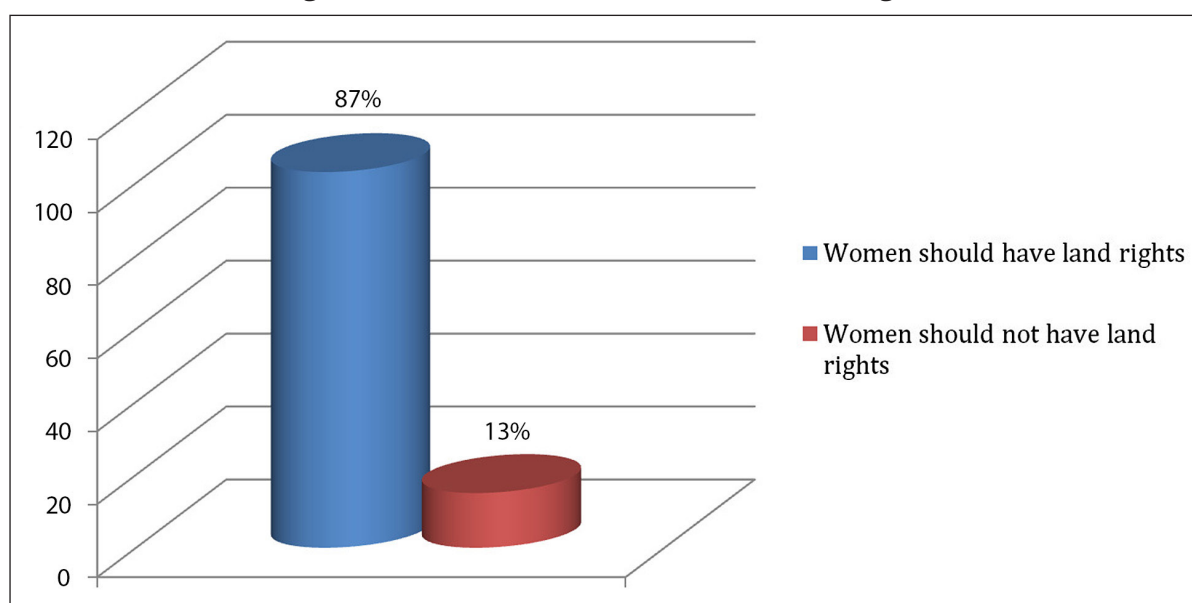
## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 6.1 People's Attitudes Towards Women's Land Rights

According to the perused literature in this paper, of all the three categories of land rights which are stated as use rights, control rights and transfer rights, it is argued that women only have use rights. Use rights are not secure for women because they can be taken away at any time due to change in women's relationships with men such as divorce or widowhood. The variable was used to determine respondents' views on women having land rights. See Figure 1.

Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the respondents are of the opinion that women should have land rights. The South African constitution was cited as the basis of women having land rights. Respondents argued that since women have been and are still the ones who provide food for their households through agriculture, it makes sense that they have land rights as well. Most respondents indicated that having land rights will enable women to feed their children, eradicate hunger, increase their bargaining powers at household level, assists them to

**Figure 1: Attitudes Towards Women's Land Rights**



Source: Authors

become financially independent as they contribute to the household thus lessening the burden of taking care of families from men and create jobs for others.

The twenty percent (13%) of respondents who argued against women having land rights indicated that women would be disrespectful towards their husbands and would be controlling should they have land rights. They also indicated that since women marry into other clans, having land rights will enrich other clans and disadvantage the clan they are born from. The findings of this study thus reveal that women should have land rights because women provide food security, take care of their households by contributing financially using proceeds from land.

### 6.2 Opinions on Whether Women's Land Rights are Regarded as Having the Potential to Cause Conflict in Marriage or Other Relationships

The aim of the question was to determine if respondents viewed women's land rights as having a potential to be a source of conflict in marriage or other relationships. See Figure 2.

Forty-nine percent (49%) of respondents said women's land rights can be a source of conflict in marriage and other relationships whilst fifty-one percent (51%) said women's land rights cannot be a source of conflict in marriage and other relationships as it benefits households financially and with the provision of food. Those who viewed women's land rights as having the potential to cause conflict in the marriage and other relationships (49%) said

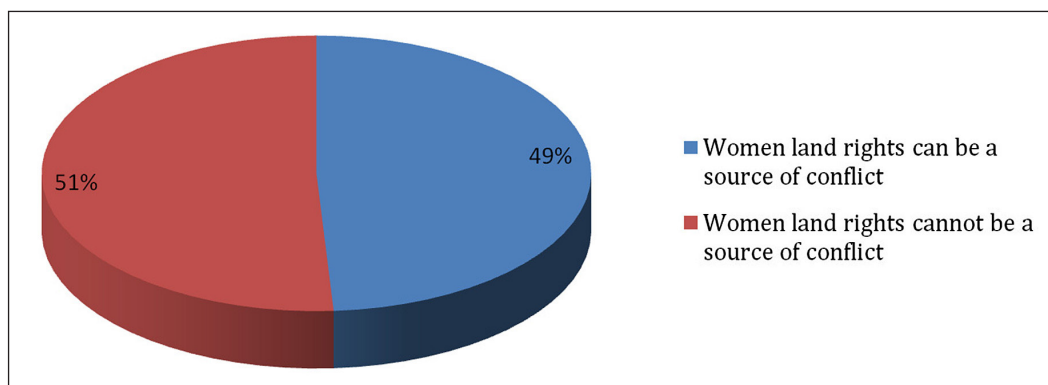
women's land rights contribute to the high divorce rate as women disrespect, control and divorce their husbands. A woman is said to be brought into a family to increase a clan and not to own land. The findings of the study indicate that customary barriers still play a role in the inequalities of access to land since almost half of the respondents regard women's land rights as having a potential to cause conflict in the marriage or other relationships and the other half of respondents regard women's land rights as not having the potential to cause conflict in marriage or other relationships.

### 6.3 Attitudes on Women Inheriting Property on Equal Footing with Men

Respondents were asked for their views on who should inherit marital property including land should a man pass away, the variable intended determining attitudes towards women inheriting property should a man pass away. See Figure 3.

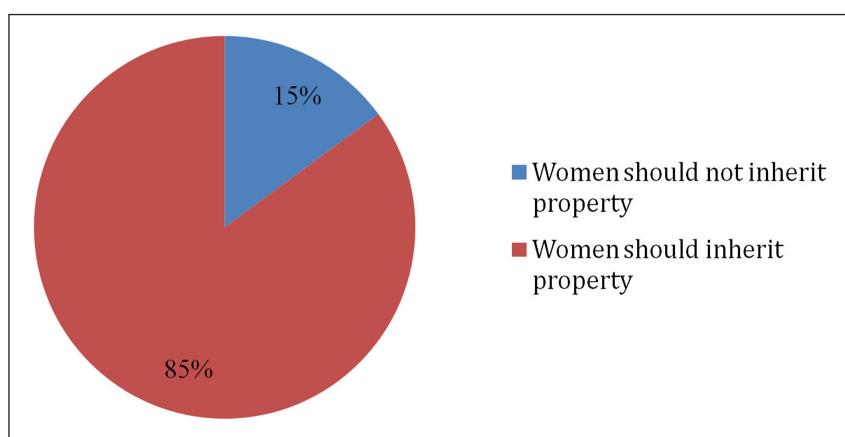
Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondents said women should inherit property on equal footing with men whilst fifteen percent (15%) said women should not. The eighty-five percent (85%) quoted the South African Constitution's equality clause which indicates that women and men are equal before the law and thus should inherit equally. Respondents who said that women should not inherit property argued that the first born son is the one who should inherit because he will be able take care of the mother. They argued that a man continues the family name and if a woman remarries into another clan she will unfairly enrich the other clan.

**Figure 2: Opinions on Whether Women's Land Rights are Regarded as Having the Potential to be a Cause of Conflict in Marriage or Other Relationships**



Source: Authors

**Figure 3: Attitudes on Women Inheriting Property on Equal Footing with Men**



Source: Authors

**Table 1: Attitudes on Women Forming Part of Political, Traditional and Other Structures that Deal with Land**

Responses	No	Percentage
Women should form part of political, traditional and other structures that deal with land	90	88%
Women should not form part of political, traditional and other structures that deal with land	14	12%
Total	100	100

Source: Authors

#### 6.4 Views of Women Forming Part of Political, Traditional and Other Structures That Deal with Land

The prohibition of women's participation in structures that deal with land is said to have a negative impact on women having their needs articulated and thus enabling development initiatives to take their needs into cognisance. The variable was used to determine respondents' attitudes towards women forming part of political, traditional and other structures that deal with land. See Table 1.

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the respondents support women forming part of political, traditional and other structures that deal with land. They said such structures give women a voice whilst allowing them to gain information about processes and regulations regarding access to land. The twelve percent (12%) of respondents who said women should not form part of political, traditional and other structures mentioned that women become disrespectful when

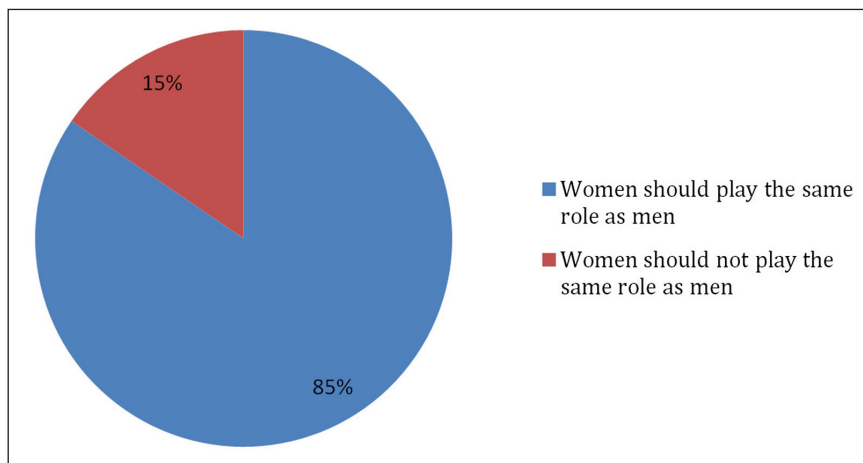
they form part of such structures because they tend to look down upon their men. Participating in such structures is said to cause division in some marriage structures. They said women must take care of their children and husbands and leave traditional and political structure participation to men. Responses by the majority participants in this study support women forming part of political, traditional and other structures that deal with land.

#### 6.5 The Role Women Should Play Within Structures that Deal with Land

Perused literature postulate the lack of representation of women in decision making structures such as traditional, political and other structures that deal with land as contributing to their difficulty in having their needs articulated and being involved in development initiatives. The variable was therefore used to probe societal opinions on what roles women should play in political, traditional and other structures that deal with land. See Figure 4.



**Figure 4: Opinions on the Role of Women within Structures that Deal with Land**



Source: Authors

Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondents are of the opinion that women should play the same role played by men. Women should make decisions about processes or requirements regarding land allocation and leadership roles. Fifteen percent (15%) postulated that men should make decisions about finances and play leadership roles whilst women must execute decisions made by men. According to the respondents, the first priority for women should be taking care of the husbands and children. Customary practices are regarded as a barrier towards women participating in decision-making structures where decisions are made about land. This view is supported by the response from the fifteen percent (15%) of respondents who are against women forming part of political, traditional and other structures that deal with land. The responses from the majority of respondents (85%) are supported by body of literature which support the involvement of women in structures that empowers them and facilitate their access to land.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

For women to access land there should be huge changes in laws and negative societal attitudes towards women owning land. Accessing land increases the security of tenure for women. Women with secure land rights are less likely to become vulnerable and dependant on other people for their survival. Secure land rights for women ensure that the livelihoods of their families are taken care of. The results of the study support women's land rights in that eighty-seven (87%) of Mpumalanga community members endorsed women's land rights as a

human right and also that access to land by women has the ability to eradicate hunger and poverty. They did not view access to land for women as having the ability to cause conflict in marriage but said it lessen the burden of providing for families for men. The results also support women's property inheritance on the same footing as men. Eighty-eight (88%) percent voted for women's involvement in traditional and political structures citing the fact that it gives them a voice for fair representation and ability to influence policy. This is also the results of the good work done by government, NGOs and Chapter 9 institutions on raising awareness and empowering communities on women's human rights. The paper therefore recommends the following:

- Work with the house of traditional leaders, to assist in the monitoring of violations and the implementation of women's land rights. This will assist in addressing violations of women's land rights especially since there are those who still believe women should not have land rights, although on a small scale.
- Advocate for the representation of women in decision-making structures both within government and outside.
- Continue involving multistakeholder participation to assist with raising awareness of women's land rights.
- Create easy access for rural women to institutions that assist with redress on violations.

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# Fiscal Implications of Illegal Migration: Impact on South Africa as a 'Receiving' Country

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**Abstract:** International migration is a worldwide phenomenon that happens due to various reasons such as economic stability, war, political situations and so forth. South Africa's migration started around the 1860's with the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand and diamonds in the Orange Free State. The change of political leadership from apartheid system to the new democracy drew many migrants all over the world to South Africa. Whilst volumes in migration are said to have increased since 1990, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia are said to be destinations of choice in the SADC region for illegal migrants. Illegal migration is said to be difficult to measure clandestine migration due to its complexity such as political, socioeconomic, wars and other factors. South Africa's migration control and deportation rate is said to have increased post 1990 having a serious dent on the fiscus. There is however, no publicly available financial information on South Africa's expenditure on immigration enforcement. This paper is a desk top analysis of the fiscal implications of illegal immigrants on South Africa as a 'receiving' country. This paper focuses on areas where there are financial implications caused by illegal migration. The results of this desktop research indicate that access to records on how much South Africa spend on the detention and deportation of illegal immigrants is not easily available as such information on the budget spent by the country is collected from limited resources. The limited studies on the fiscal implications on 'receiving' countries such as South Africa indicate that it is a sizable amount.

**Keywords:** Deportation, Economy, Fiscal implications, Illegal migration, Receiving country

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## 1. Introduction

South Africa has experienced inflow of migrants since the 1860's with the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand and diamonds in the Orange Free State. The discovery of these precious stones led to the high demand for cheap contract labour by the mining industry during the apartheid era. All the countries surrounding South Africa like Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, and Swaziland acted as reservoirs for cheap contract labour (McDonald, 2000). When the apartheid government ended in 1994, it was noted that there was an increase in migration into South Africa due to its social, economic and political climate (McDonald, 2000). The political and economic turmoil in Zimbabwe for instance, led to a high migration rate of Zimbabweans into South Africa, the majority of whom are said to be undocumented (Forced Migration Studies Programme, 2007). Migration is a thorny issue affecting the global world as a humanitarian concern, hence the coming together of the United Nations Member States to finalize two global compacts on migration, i.e. the Global Compact for

Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. This Global Compact is based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda which is informed by the Declaration of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, adopted in October 2013 (International Organisation for Migration, 2019). Sec 15 (c) of the Global Compact which is on the acknowledgement of the national sovereignty of states reaffirms the sovereign right of States to determine their national migration policy and their prerogative to govern migration within their jurisdiction within the ambits of international law. States are allowed to distinguish between regular and irregular migration status of migrants and to determine their legislative and policy measures for the implementation of the Global Compact. It is argued that with the upward migration trends in South Africa, there has been an increase in human rights violations, which if not attended to, have a potential to create strained relationships between South Africa and the international communities (Solomon, 2000; Crush & McDonald, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2006; Forced Migration Studies

Programme & Musina Legal Advice Office, 2007; Landau, 2007; IRIN, 2008).

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Internally and external migration were severely restricted during the apartheid era with the Pass Laws requiring both residential and work permits for blacks to live in restricted areas. In comparison to other African countries post-apartheid South Africa is seen as having increased economic opportunities by both legal and illegal migrants (Solomon, 2003; Maharaj, 2004; PHAMSA, 2005; HRW 2006; Tsheola, 2008) hence the said high illegal migrant population. There are many reasons for the high irregular migration into the country as cited by researchers and human rights organisations ranging from the perceived wide differences in income levels, economic and political conditions (Maharaj, 2004; HRW, 2006; FMSP, 2007). According to ILO (1998) people migrate to South Africa due to the perception that South Africa's employment rate is high making it easy for migrants to get jobs; the truth is the unemployment rate for South Africa has risen post 1990 especially amongst the youth and the unskilled. Countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland and Lesotho, although little is written about the last two countries, share borders with South Africa making it easy for migrants to decide whether to migrate or not (Solomon, 1996; Kok *et al.*, 2006; FMSP & MLAO, 2007).

Another reason that is mentioned for the high illegal migration is the assistance that was given to black South Africans during apartheid. The international community is said to have played a major role in bringing about the end of apartheid through various endeavours such as financial assistance, provision of arms, accommodating exiles, etc. (SAHO, ndp). The expectations of people in the SADC regions is that South Africa has a moral obligation to help them as these countries helped establish and develop the South African economy (Kloppers, 2006; Cross *et al.*, 2006; Mello, 2008). Another reason given for the high illegal migrants in South Africa is because its borders are seen as "porous" and thus encourage illegal migration coupled with corruption by Department of Home Affairs (DHA) (Maharaj, 2004; McDonald *et al.*, 1998; HRW, 2006; Kok *et al.*, 2006; Landau, 2007; Johnson & Altbeker, 2011).

Whilst immense research is done on immigrants in countries there is still a vacuum on their impact on the

fiscus of 'receiving countries'. Most literature focuses on immigrants who are asylum seekers than those who enter the country whilst they are not asylum seekers. Arguably illegal immigrants are bound to apply for asylum seeking status because they are not immediately deported if detected, but investigations are done to confirm their assertions whilst they stay in the country. In the SADC region, it is affirmed that South Africa, Botswana and Namibia are the primary destinations for illegal immigrants with the majority coming from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Somalia, Rwanda and Malawi and Mozambique. Botswana and South Africa are said to be the countries actively apprehending and deporting illegal immigrants (Campbell, 2006; Hiropoulos, 2017).

The socio-economic impact of illegal immigrants in South Africa is viewed by different researchers, although on a small scale, as negative resulting in high crime rates (Solomon, 2000) whilst the majority view it as positive in terms of skills development and transfer (McDonald, 2000). This is true for legal immigrants, it is however debatable whether illegal immigrants have a positive impact on receiving countries, this is because they are said to be competing for scarce resources with the locals leading to tensions and sporadic xenophobic attacks. The number of illegal immigrants in South Africa cannot be confirmed because of the clandestine nature of migration, the same is also said for Botswana and Namibia (Campbell, 2006; Segati & Landau, 2011). The estimation, however, is that between 2.5 and 12 million illegal immigrants are in the country according to Campbell (2006). Vigneswaran & Dopunchel (2009) indicate that around 350 000 deportations were done in the country in 2009. The estimation of undocumented migrants according to Segati & Landau (2011) can be done by calculating the number of people who overstay their visas, number of people arrested and those repatriated by South African police and immigration services. The aim of this paper is to postulate fiscal implications of illegal migration on South Africa as a 'receiving' country. This paper aims at answering the question 'how much South Africa spends on controlling illegal migration'.

## **3. Measures South Africa Has in Place to Manage Illegal Migration**

Immigration issues in South Africa are regulated by the 2002 Immigration Act with its accompanying Regulations and the Refugees Act both administered

by DHA. The South African Police Service and the South African Defence Force also provide immigration enforcement (Republic of South Africa, 2002). South Africa is criticized by migrant researchers as grossly xenophobic likening it to the apartheid regime which was only interested in skilled immigrants (Christie, 1997; Maharaj, 2004; Crush *et al.*, 2005(a); FMSP, 2007). The truth however is, there is probably no country that is interested in unskilled illegal immigrants because besides breaking immigration laws, they are a burden to host countries since they do not contribute to the GDP but utilize services and resources meant for locals. South Africa's measures to control the inflow is seen as ineffective and contributes to high levels of xenophobia and human rights abuse. Deporting is not seen as a solution as it seems as merely putting a bandage on a complex issue rather than addressing the root causes according to Ranchod (2005). It is not only the receiving countries that must address reasons for the outflow of people from their countries, whilst it is everyone's responsibility, the burden is felt by host countries. The biggest challenge with illegal immigration is that 'sending' countries seem not to take responsibility to curb illegal immigration. It is left to the 'receiving' countries to deal with the problem, hence countries such as Botswana, Namibia and South Africa take the brunt of criticism in dealing with illegal immigration.

Another measure that was taken by South Africa in conjunction with SADC regions was the drafting of the Protocol of Free Movement of People in 1995. The aim of the policy was to facilitate the movement of citizens of SADC member countries by eliminating internal borders between SADC member states. The Protocol was rejected by South Africa, Namibia and Botswana due to the wide disparities and economic imbalances. For countries like South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, the free movement of people will add a burden on the socio-economic infrastructure as it will intensify the brain-drain to the core and consolidate the underdevelopment status of the region (Solomon, 1997). The Facilitation of Movement of Persons was then developed which was aimed at co-operation of SADC member states in preventing illegal movement of citizens and the promotion of common policies with regard to immigration matters where necessary and feasible. The Facilitation of Movement of Persons was signed by nine states and South Africa (Solomon, 1997; Ranchod, 2005; Cross *et al.*, 2006; Kok *et al.*, 2006; Millard, 2006; FMSP, 2007; Ocho, 2007). It is not clear what then happened to

the protocol except that besides signing it, only four countries had ratified the protocol.

#### 4. The Fiscal Impact of Illegal Migration on South Africa

Campbell (2006) stipulates that "Illegal immigration is an economic exercise that includes all factors associated with the rationalization of costs and benefits involved in the maximization of profits from an economic enterprise". The pivotal issue when discussing illegal immigration is to allude to the fiscal impact illegal immigration has on the host country. Massive budgets are used not only to trace, apprehend and deport, but other areas such as health care, crime, jobs, social security, etc. are greatly affected. Most research focuses on the rights of illegal immigrants without giving due diligence to the fiscal implications. Section 27 of the Constitution of South Africa guarantees basic rights to all who live in it, the right to education, and health care, housing and social welfare (RSA, 1996; Crush, 2001; HRW, 2006; Millard, 2006; Landau, 2007; CoRMSA, 2008). This right extends to South Africans and immigrants alike. However, non-nationals are said to be generally excluded in South Africa which is the juncture where most pro-illegal immigrants argue about. Their argument is that illegal immigrants do not access services and rely on church organizations and social networks for help albeit the fact that such organisations are not coping with the demand of illegal immigrants (Millard, 2000; FMSP, 2007). It is argued that South Africans feel that migrants have a negative impact on South African resources (Crush, 2001; Harris, 2001).

##### 4.1 Economy

In 1994 it was estimated that illegal immigrants cost the state 221 million rands which was one tenth of the Reconstruction and Development Programme budget, and the estimation by then was that the figure would increase to 941 million by the end of the century (Maharaj, 2004). It is also true that immigrants whether legal or illegal also rely on public welfare and social services whilst contributing close to nothing on taxes which have to be carried by the host country (IOM, 2005). South Africa has in the past benefitted from migration through the supply of cheap labour by countries such as Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Mozambique in the development of the mining sector and on white farms (ILO, 1998). Sriskandarajah (2005) indicated that countries that

have a shortage of manpower benefits from labour supply from sending countries, and in turn labour sending countries also benefit through remittances and that boost economic development in both sending and receiving countries. The challenge is balancing the percentage of illegal immigrants to what host countries can carry, a higher percentage has a negative impact on the fiscus than what illegal immigrants contribute. It is argued that the majority of immigrants have not more than three years of education and no skills, except in subsistence agriculture, hence their inability to contribute positively to the economy of South Africa (Solomon, 2003). Illegal immigrants are bound to compete for low level jobs with South Africans which in turn is arguably what causes the tension between immigrants and locals. Stern & Szalontai (2006), argue that the impact of migration was thought to be positive on receiving countries as immigrants were skilled and less likely to depend on state welfare. However, Christie (1997) asserts that the threat posed by illegal immigrants on the receiving country's economy is real. This is supported by Sebola (2008) who contends that the negative impact on immigrants on South African resources cannot be ignored.

#### **4.2 Job Sector**

Generally, unemployment has increased drastically in South Africa; evidently, young people being at the top as compared to adults (Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002). Cross-country comparisons regularly affirm that South Africa's unemployment rates are among the highest in the world (ILO, 2015). Formal employment sector reached about more than 8 million in June 2014, where there were 5.1 million unemployed at that time which is a very disturbing social problem in South Africa with the youth topping the list with higher rates than adults at an average of 13.4% in 2008 rising to 15.6% in 2014 (Stats SA, 2014). Accordingly, one can argue that youth unemployment from 2008-2016 has increased and is gradually increasing. The unemployment rate has increased from 27.6% in 2018 to 29% in the second quarter of 2019 (Stats SA, 2019) which is a worrying factor. It is a continuous scourge posing a significant challenge for South Africa and the added burden on the state by illegal immigrants will worsen the situation.

Immigrants in general, whether legal or illegal, are seen as taking jobs away from South Africans and increase the unemployment rate in the country because they accept low wages whilst competing

for jobs with the lower class. They are seen as depressing the remuneration of local labour (Tevera & Zinyama, 2002; Maharaj, 2004; Campbell, 2006; OECD/ILO, 2018). This is because they accept wages below market wages which local people refuse to take, and this causes conflict and contributes to unemployment rates of local people (Solomon, 1996; Simelane, 1999; Harris, 2001; IOM, 2005) despite the fact that South Africa had a high unemployment rate of 35-45% according to Danso & McDonald (2000). They are said to be undermining the ability of the South African labour unions to fight for better wages for the South Africans. According to Crush (2008), organisations like the FMSP (2007) indicate that the perception that illegal migration impact negatively on the job sector is true because it is impossible to enforce legal labour standards due to their illegality and the fact that they avoid being identified for fear of deportation. Whilst acknowledging the impact of immigration on the job market, the impact on the citizenry is downplayed.

The ILO (1998) does not dispute that illegal immigrants may have an impact on South Africa's employment sector; the challenge is that since illegal immigration is not documented, it is thus difficult to gauge the extent of the impact and determining how they contribute to South Africa's unemployment rate. Instead, South Africa is said to be getting a "docile" cheap labour especially in labour intensive sectors like agriculture and mining which make-up 15% of South Africa's GDP (ILO, 1998; Cross *et al.*, 2006; Kok *et al.*, 2006). The argument according to Christie (1997) on the other hand is that countries which allow illegal immigrants to work gives illegal immigrants the ability to remit money and goods to their countries and may thus prevent future migration. The high number of illegal immigrants in South Africa negates the assertion by Christie in that the ability of illegal immigrants to work and send remittances home instead serve as a "pull factor" encouraging others to migrate.

#### **4.3 Crime**

It cannot be denied however, that there are researchers who have confirmed that excessive illegal immigration create a climate for survival crimes such as drug trafficking and gun-running, and thus contributes to violent crimes in South Africa (Simelane, 1999; Danso & McDonald, 2000; Tevera & Zinyama, 2002; Solomon, 2003; Maharaj, 2004; FMSP, 2007; Landau, 2007). This is supported by Vigneswaran and

Dopunchel (2009) who postulates that the majority of illegal immigrants detained at South Africa's Lindela repatriation centre were arrested for committing crimes. The dawn of the new democratic South Africa has undoubtedly seen an increase in illegal migration and as such an increase of crime; hence South Africa is viewed as one of the most dangerous countries in the world. This however does not mean that there are no South African criminals, the country has its own ills but the argument here is that illegal immigration does add to the percentage of crime in the country. The fact is, fighting crime has an impact on the fiscal policy of receiving countries, which according to Solomon (1996) leads to the channeling budgets into fighting crime instead of attending to other important issues of receiving countries is something that most immigration researchers do not dwell into. The clandestine nature of illegal migration does make it difficult to estimate the cost (IOM, 2005). Clandestine immigration according to Cross *et al.* (2006) is not positive on receiving countries but can only benefit migrants, their networks, communities and countries. Intriguingly, the fact that illegal immigration has an impact on the increase in crime, safety and security in the host country is something most organisations and immigration researchers vehemently deny.

#### 4.4 Health Sector

It is said to be normal for immigrants to engage in cross-border movement to countries that have better facilities to obtain better health care (McDonald *et al.*, 2000; Crush *et al.*, 2005(a); PHAMSA, 2005; Kok *et al.*, 2006). There is a high number of Mozambique, Swazi and Zimbabwean nationals that are adjacent to the South African border, who utilise health resources in South Africa. According to Sing [ndp] and FMSP (2007), the perception that Zimbabweans are putting a strain on the South African health sector is true due to the collapse of the health system in Zimbabwe. Mozambicans and eSwatini nationals who are close to the borders obviously utilise health services in South Africa. Those who can afford it pay for the services and those who cannot afford access free services just like South Africans. Solomon (1996), Trevera & Zinyama (2002) and Maharaj (2004) argue that since immigrants come from "strife-ravaged areas" they are said to need more medical attention than South Africans and as such are bound to put a burden on the health system a matter that researchers and immigration organisations deny or ignore.

Contrastingly, pro-illegal immigrant organisations and some researchers argue that illegal immigrants are barred from receiving health care and harassed by officials, thus few of them use the services (Crush & Williams, 2005; Williams *et al.*, 2005; Lefko-Everett, 2007; Landau, 2007). This is arguably speculative, since there are organisations such as Chapter 9 institutions and organisations that advocate for the rights of illegal immigrants, and if such were factual, it would be reported and dealt with by them. This notion is supported by Kloppers (2006) that illegal migrants rely on hospitals and clinics in South Africa which is a pull factor for them since health services are said to be poor in the countries of their origin. Once more in September 2007 the National Department of Health in South Africa passed a directive that asylum seekers and refugees, including illegal immigrants, should have access to ART at public health facilities (CoRMSA, 2008) and that has been the case ever since.

#### 4.5 Social Security

In a study undertaken by Kloppers (2006), Mozambican citizens were said to be collecting old age pension and other welfare grants from the South African government. This is not only the case for Mozambicans but a normal thing for communities living next to South African borders (Solomon, 2000; Ranchod, 2005). The same is also done by eSwatini, Lesotho and Zimbabwean nationals, putting a lot of economic pressure on South Africa to achieve socio-economic growth. This goes to the extent of also fraudulently acquiring South African documents and thus accessing housing that is meant for South Africans (Sebola, 2008). The South African Department of Home Affairs under Dr Aaron Motswaledi is fighting to curb the criminality of acquiring South African identity documents by foreign nationals. Illegal immigrants are said to be contributing to the growth of illegal shacks or squatting especially near urban areas (Solomon, 2003; Cross *et al.*, 2006). The impact of illegal immigration on social security cluster still needs further research. The impact may be more serious than postulated. It is however obvious that illegal immigrants fraudulently collect social grants meant for South Africans.

#### 5. Deportation Costs

The costs of illegal migration are too complex to articulate due to lack of information on the actual expenditure on controlling illegal migration.



Estimations however would suffice because of limited available literature focusing on the costs, as most literature instead focuses on the rights of illegal immigrants. It is however noted that research on the costs of deporting illegal immigrants postulate it to be extremely high and is said to be a waste of tax payers' money. Zimbabweans, not excluding Mozambicans, eSwatini and Lesotho nationals, as compared to other groups of illegal immigrants such as Nigerians and Ethiopians, are said to be likely to have been deported previously. This is indicated as a waste of tax payer's money and the capacity of the Department of Home Affairs and the South African Police Services according to CoRMSA (2008) and Solomon (2000). The closer to the South African borders that nationalities are, the easier and more economically viable it is for them to keep on coming back. Repeated offenders are not charged criminally hence they keep on doing it. It was even a norm for illegal immigrants to make it easy to be detected especially during December and Easter time, so they can get a free ride home.

Literature on illegal migration is always almost flawed as it leans more to the offenders than the impact on the receiving country. This is arguably mainly due to organisations fighting for the human rights of immigrants. Researchers however rely more on the literature produced by such organisations because there is limited literature or research/reliable data produced by host countries. When counting the cost of illegal immigration on countries, researchers tend to focus on litigation against DHA but seldom count the cost of detaining, deporting on the host country. Whilst Lindela Repatriation Centre is viewed as a "prison" since keeping illegal immigrants there is seen as "unlawful", the cost chips on the fiscus of the country. Admittedly getting information on how much exactly is spent by government, specifically the Department of Home Affairs at Lindela is difficult (Amit, 2012; Leresche *et al.*, 2012; Hiropoulos, 2017). Information about the cost is collected from the small number of immigration researchers who have showed interest in the fiscal implications of illegal migration. It is said that the Department of Home Affairs spent about R647 million in the 2013/14 fiscal year (National Treasury 2014). Vigneswaran & Copunchel (2009) made an estimation in 2009 that the South African Police Service (SAPS) in Gauteng only was spending around R 8,566 for every illegal foreigner arrested in Gauteng. The African Centre for Migration & Society in its 2009 study on the costs of policing immigration

by SAPS in Gauteng Province found that the province spent about R362,5 million annually to detect, detain and transfer migrants to Lindela (Leresche *et al.*, 2012). This estimation can be safely applied to provinces that share borders with Mozambique, eSwatini, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. There are no estimations by the South African Defence Force, even though they also play a role in protecting South African Borders, they obviously are also spending quite a sizeable amount. This assumption is also supported by Leresche *et al.* (2012), Mthembu-Salter *et al.* (2014), and Camarota (2017). Statistics on the number of deportations done by the Department of Home Affairs also assist in an abstract calculation of the budget spent, information that proves to be difficult to obtain from the department. It is however postulated that between the year 1994 and 2000, about six hundred thousand (600 000) illegal immigrants were deported from South Africa (Crush, 2001).

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

In comparison with other African countries post-apartheid South Africa is seen as having increased economic opportunities by both legal and illegal migrants. In the SADC region, it is affirmed that South Africa, Botswana and Namibia are the primary destinations for illegal immigrants with the majority coming from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Somalia, Rwanda and Malawi and Mozambique. Botswana and South Africa are said to be the countries actively apprehending and deporting illegal immigrants. It is estimated that the number of immigrants in South Africa are between 2.5 and 12 million. Around 350 000 deportations were done in in the country in 2009. Even though South Africa has in the past benefitted from migration through the supply of cheap labour, things have since changed because South Africa at the moment has a very high unemployment rate, especially with the youth and those within the low skills bracket. The cost of illegal migration is too complex to articulate due to lack of information on the actual expenditure on controlling illegal migration. Research on the fiscal impact of illegal migration on receiving countries is limited as most immigration researchers focus on the rights of illegal immigrants. It is however noted that research on the costs of deporting illegal immigrants postulate it to be extremely high and is taking away from the budget that could be servicing South Africans. The country has a high number of people who do not have access

to basic services, the budget could be ploughed back to South Africans, instead the country is "bleeding" money. A substantial part of the South African fiscus is spent on controlling illegal migration, fiscus that could be channelled into the economy of the country. There are repeated offenders who do not get punished, it is like money washed down the drain. The paper therefore recommends the following:

- There is a need for in-depth research on the financial impact of illegal migration on receiving countries.
- The specific budgets and financial information should be easily accessed by researchers to enable the analysis of the impact of illegal migration. This will make it possible for both sending and receiving countries to assess the impact instead of focusing solely on the rights of illegal immigrants.
- There is a need for conventional bilateral relations between South Africa and sending countries, so that they also can play their part in controlling illegal migration in their own countries. The stance as it is right now is as if sending countries do not assume accountability for failing to control illegal migration but leave the onus on receiving countries.
- A system should be developed to recoup money spent on tracking and deporting illegal immigrants.
- The cost of keeping illegal immigrants at Lindela is said to be excessively high, supplying countries of illegal immigrants should bear the cost. This money can be used in creating employment for the youth in the country as it is experiencing a high youth unemployment rate. This will also act as a motivation for countries to control illegal migration from their countries.
- It is important to re-look at the possibility of criminally charging repeated offenders instead of repeatedly deporting them.

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# Embracing Mobile Learning Technology-Based Innovations to Improve Mathematics Teachers' Pedagogical Orientations During COVID-19 and Beyond

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**Abstract:** During the COVID-19 era, remote mathematics curriculum delivery was a challenge to many teachers. Teachers struggled to effectively integrate virtual environments in order to improve their Technological Pedagogical Orientations (TPO). This study examined South African teachers' perceptions towards incorporating Mobile Learning Technology-Based Innovations (MLTBI) to remotely facilitate quality delivery of mathematics as construed by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. It also determined the degrees of TPO and hurdles to integrating MLTBI among mathematics teachers in the wake of COVID-19. The study adopted a mixed method approach and a descriptive survey research design. Fifteen out of thirty-two senior secondary school Mathematics in-service teachers in one Circuit Manager Cluster, participated in the study. TPACK and TAM theoretical frameworks underpinned the study. The conclusion was that usage of cell phones in mathematics classrooms has an impact on both teaching and learning processes. Findings were that teachers might be classified as either innovative or instrumental. Innovative teachers make transition from traditional chalk and talk to innovative teaching. Altered teaching methods alter classes to make use of the enhanced benefits that MLTBI may provide. Instrumental teachers used the device as a "glass book." The distinction between the two groups' ramifications is in terms of mathematical learning outcomes. In the wake of COVID-19, the advent of MLTBI signals a shift in Mathematics curriculum delivery, as the devices create interactive, media-rich, and interesting new environments. Introduction of technological and pedagogical support to help teachers comprehend MLTBI's full potential in education is recommended for policy makers.

**Keywords:** Mobile Learning Technology-Based Innovations, Mathematics, Technological Pedagogical Orientations, COVID-19, 21<sup>st</sup> Century skillset

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## 1. Introduction

Development of competencies for 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills are gathering increasing attention as a means of improving teacher instructional quality, a key challenge in bringing about desired improvements in mathematics education lies in the lack of context-specific understanding of teaching practices and meaningful ways of supporting teacher professional development (Kim, Raza & Seidman, 2019). Hedding, Greve, Breetzke, Nel and Van Vuuren (2020) claim that surviving in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century [and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic] requires a sound education which offers a wide perspective on issues of global awareness, environmental literacy, digital literacy, and civic competence.

In March 2020, economic activities in South Africa were forced into an induced lockdown in which all operations, including face-to-face teaching and learning, were halted abruptly. The effect was

compounded for rural schools that did not ordinarily possess the capacity to provide alternative teaching and learning systems (Hedding *et al.*, 2020). Mncube, Olawale and Hendricks (2019) assert that prior to the advent of the pandemic, there had already been calls for the education system in South Africa to embrace technologies as a response to the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). Furthermore, Gravett (2012) argues that appropriate technological pedagogical choices to enhance the quality of mathematics teaching, is an aspect that is questioned in literature as universities are still criticised for their unsatisfactory attempts to prepare teachers for the classroom, thus producing incompetent teachers.

## 2. Literature

### 2.1 Trajectory of COVID-19 in South Africa

The South African government decided to declare this pandemic a national state of disaster under

the Disaster Management Act (South African Government, 2020), which instituted a national lockdown, when the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in South Africa. While there were significant attempts made by the education sector to continue teaching and learning during this difficult period, the bulk of learners were forced to rely entirely on their own resources to continue learning remotely via various platforms. Teachers had to adapt to new pedagogical concepts and remote lesson delivery in which many had no formal training. Learners in the most marginalised communities, who did not have access to digital learning resources or lacked the resilience and engagement to learn on their own, were at risk of falling behind (Schleicher, 2020).

## **2.2 Impact of COVID-19 on Mathematics Education**

The pandemic has shown the flaws and shortcomings of the current educational systems. Rakes, Ronau, Bush, Driskell, Niess and Pugalee (2020) posit that educational [Mobile Learning Technology-Based Innovations (MLTBI)] could improve learner performance in these crucial areas if implemented in a way that fosters meaningful and effective use of technology in the classroom. However, Saal, Graham and van Ryneveld (2020) assert that professional development in this area is required because South African teachers are unable to integrate [MLTBI] into their classrooms effectively.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges of 4IR, Sincuba and John (2017) posit that research must guide policy and drive transformation in order to build a mathematically and scientifically literate community for South Africa to engage in the technologically developing global village. Spaul and Kotze (2015) concur with Sincuba (2016) who attests that few studies have been conducted in developing countries such as South Africa to assess teachers' attitudes towards integrating MLTBI in 21<sup>st</sup> Century classrooms and how the teachers' experiences can be used to identify best practices for integrating MLTBI to improve educational outcomes in mathematics. This assertion makes it evident that there is still much to understand about how pedagogical approaches of mathematics teachers and their use of MLTBI for teaching and learning are related. For students and teachers in underdeveloped nations, the availability of virtual classrooms and remote teaching and learning during the COVID-19 era has presented many obstacles.

## **2.3 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching Skills**

The breadth of skills required for quality student learning, and concomitantly quality teaching, call for essential competencies and skills beyond literacy and numeracy. This 21<sup>st</sup> Century skillset is understood to encompass a range of competencies, (critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, meta-cognition, communication, digital and technological literacy, civic responsibility, and global awareness) (Dede, 2010). The 21<sup>st</sup> Century pedagogies have developed the capacity to allow learners and teachers, to discover and master content, create and use new knowledge (Lazarov, 2018) to counteract the fourth industrial revolution's (4IR) challenging world of work. This corroborates with Fullan and Langworthy (2014), who asserted that developments have profound implications for curriculum, learning design and assessment. Sikhakhane, Govender and Maphalala (2020), propose an evaluation of these developments in terms of enhancing learning acquisition and developing critical and emotional intelligence, computational and communication competencies and dexterity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century generation. These developments are more important in developing country contexts (South Africa included), where substantial lack of improvements in learning outcomes has suggested that the task of improving instructional quality is urgent.

## **2.4 Mathematics Teachers' TPACK in the Wake of COVID-19**

In developing, a technology based learning environment to improve teaching, one has to consider a number of pedagogical imperatives (Mji, 2021). Alexander (2001) cited in Mji (2021) considers pedagogy as comprising of teachers' ideas, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and understanding about the curriculum, the teaching and learning process and their students, and which impact on their teaching practices. Tarling and Ng'ambi (2016) advance that a focus on teacher training is needed to help improve the learning deficit in South Africa. If South Africa is to participate in the technologically advancing global village, it is imperative that research should inform policy and drive transformation in order to create a mathematically and scientifically literate society (Sincuba & John, 2017). It is also true that the positive and negative effects of cell phone devices on humans, particularly in the classroom, are within the field of interest of social sciences, as are those of all new technologies.

Even with the Department of Education engaging teachers in numerous training and upskilling professional development initiatives, teachers' practices seem to remain fairly unchanged and continue with the use of traditional and lower order thinking pedagogies that do not effectively utilize technology for teaching and learning (Tarling & Ng'ambi, 2016). Accordingly, the TPO of teachers who naturally have the highest opportunity to monitor learners' progress on cell phone devices that are considered likely to affect learners in social, psychological and learning-related terms, gain importance. Teachers' TPO form a reference to teachers' capacity to utilize this innovation within and outside of the classroom for teaching purposes. These concomitant changes put a very high demand on mathematics teachers and as such impact on educator behaviour. In the bid to teach for mathematical proficiency, the teacher needs to be intimately familiar with the content of the topics being taught, as well as how his/her learners are likely to interact with that content. It also means that the teacher needs to be knowledgeable about the trajectory of the topics being taught, thus bringing to the fore what Shulman (1986) referred to as teacher's subject matter knowledge, curriculum knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. Furthermore, the mathematics teacher needs to know that in his class of diverse learners they are not all going to learn in the same way, hence the need for 'differentiated learning approach'.

While there has been an increasing focus in the literature on the use of mobile devices such as cell phones for teaching and learning (Ali & Irvine, 2009), the majority of the studies appear to make assumptions about the relative ease in which such innovations could be incorporated into the classroom (Buck, McInnis & Randolph 2013). Clayson and Haley (2012), attest that only a few studies have considered psychological, pedagogical and administrative barriers to the use of such technologies in schools and in the minds of the teachers. Specifically, few studies have been conducted in developing countries such as South Africa to assess teachers' TPO towards using cell phones in the mathematics classrooms and how the teachers' experiences can be used to identify best practices for integrating MLTBI in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the abundant research literature regarding the benefits of cell phone usage among learners, a gap exists in terms of the teacher who happens to be an important dimension of a school's instructional capacity. Furthermore, since much of

the research often occur in developed countries (Ali & Irvine, 2009) and institutions of higher learning, the degree to which findings can be generalized as "one-size fits-all" is of concern.

Kafyulilo (2012) asserts that to date, little research has explored the views of teachers or the actual educational contexts in which they teach on the use of mobile technology devices in the classroom. Some researchers have raised some concerns, including evidence that texting during classes negatively impacts learning and distracts other learners, and issues such as learners using cell phones for sex messaging or other inappropriate activities (Clayson & Haley, 2012). While benefits are commonly reported in the literature, these studies lack investigations on the drawbacks and challenges faced by teachers in trying to incorporate MLTBIs such as cell phone devices for Mathematics teaching and learning. Through this study, the researchers aimed to shade some light in this uncharted area of research. In this respect, it was therefore imperative to conduct a survey research to assess the attitudes among teachers towards MLTBIs and generating sustainable initiatives for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century classroom.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The following theoretical frameworks constructed the theoretical Framework for this study.

#### 3.1 The Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) Framework

This study was underpinned by the TPACK framework developed by Shulman (1986) and Mishra and Koehler (2006). The TPACK framework describes how teachers can strategically integrate virtual environments in their teaching to create meaningful learning experiences. The TPACK framework consists of three primary knowledge domains (Koehler, Mishra, Kereluik, Shin & Graham, 2014). Firstly, the technology knowledge (TK), associates teaching and learning with the incorporation of knowledge of traditional analogue and digital technologies. A teacher with TK understands how MLTBI integration can improve teaching methods and enhance learners' content knowledge; how MLTBI tools fit into teaching and learning, but also in learners' daily life; and how to use MLTBI. Secondly, the pedagogical knowledge (PK) domain relates to knowledge of teaching strategies to support learner understanding. Lastly, the

content knowledge (CK) domain describes the disciplinary knowledge a teacher conveys to learners.

### **3.2 The Technology Acceptance Model**

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) is one of the most popular research models to predict use and acceptance of information systems and technology by individual users. The TAM posits that individuals' behavioural intention to use an Information Technology (IT) is determined by two beliefs:

- **Perceived Usefulness**, defined as the extent to which a person believes that using an IT will enhance his or her job performance.
- **Perceived Ease of Use**, defined as the degree to which the prospective user expects the Target system to be free of effort.

### **4. Statement of the Problem**

The South African education system has had inherent systematic dysfunctionalities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. A study conducted by Mji (2021) revealed that between 2014 and 2018, 63% to 68% of Grade 12 learners did not achieve a mathematics mark that allowed them to register at a university. Emergent unique problems wrought by the pandemic have compounded the problem especially for rural South African schools. Closing the academic gap caused by the pandemic in the last two years will be a tall order. Research-based classroom instructional strategies and effective forms of professional development should aim at reducing the variations in the teaching practice to the point that every teacher ensures that no child is left behind. This study addressed challenges faced by South African Mathematics teachers towards proficiently embracing and integrating MLTBI to improve educational outcomes in Mathematics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century classroom and in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

### **5. Research Questions**

- What Subject Content Knowledge do Mathematics teachers hold for effective curriculum delivery?
- What are the teachers' attitudes towards integrating technology in teaching and learning of Mathematics?

- What are the barriers to integrating MLTBI inform the design of CPTD programmes for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Life Long Learner and in the wake COVID-19 pandemic?

### **6. Purpose of the Study**

This study explored the TPO among Grade 10-12 teachers towards integrating MLTBI to improve educational outcomes in Mathematics. Teachers' TPO were explored in relation to cell phone educational usage during Mathematics classes in the wake of COVID-19. This study further reported on mathematics teachers' levels of TPACK and barriers to integrating MLTBI in order to inform the design of Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) programmes for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learner and in the wake COVID-19 pandemic. The authors argue that mathematics teaching in South Africa could improve by providing well-designed CPTD programmes that address mathematics teachers' current levels of TPACK and specific MLTBI-integration barriers.

### **7. Significance**

The study is important because it describes the pedagogical methods that mathematics teachers employ to design their teaching actions with MLTBI in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, researchers are looking into mathematics teachers' experiences towards integrating MLTBI to improve remote teaching and learning.

### **8. Methodology**

#### **8.1 Research Approach**

The study adopted a mixed method approach which was apt for the research since it concerns both the statistical data and descriptions of thinking exhibited by the participants' answers to specific questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

#### **8.2 Research Design and Sample**

This study used a descriptive survey research design which describes the opinions of the in-service teachers regarding their TPO on integrating MLTBI for teaching and learning in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The design involves the collection of data as presently constituted to describe a phenomenon,

without a conscious effort to control any variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The adopted descriptive survey research design enabled the researchers to measure and assess the level of TPACK of Grades 10 to 12 mathematics teachers. This research design was employed to allow the researchers to explore teachers' views about MLTBI-integration barriers affecting teaching and learning. The researchers' questionnaire was grounded on the revised framework on teacher behaviour by Van der Sandt (2007). See Table 1.

This study was contextualised in Amathole East district, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. In terms of performance at Matric level, Eastern Cape has been among the low performing provinces in the country. Every year, Eastern Cape receives large budgets towards educational programmes. Due to this large financial investment, the province issued most of its schools with laptops and tablets and as such it was expected that it should include many schools that have access to resources which include virtual environments infrastructure. In the selected district, JENN Training and Consultancy in collaboration with the Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education further beefed up the availability of technological devices to improve virtual environments for teaching and learning of mathematics and science in schools. In view of these efforts, authors assumed that mathematics teachers in schools might have received more training opportunities in the use of MLTBI than teachers in other districts. Fifteen participants were purposively selected from a population of thirty-two mathematics teachers teaching grades 10, 11 and 12 to participate in the survey. They were selected according to the following criteria:

1. All teachers had to teach mathematics in grades 10, 11 and 12.
2. Mathematics teachers were from public schools.
3. Schools were located in Dutywa Circuit Manager Cluster, Amathole East district, Eastern Cape Province, Republic of South Africa.
4. Participation was voluntary.

This sample was requested to complete a questionnaire which was then used to assess the level of TPO of the participants towards the integration of MLTBI for mathematics remote teaching and learning in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. By examining the differing experiences, skills levels and opinions of participants, the researchers sought insight into the varying levels of teachers' TPACK. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percent) were used to analyse the data from Likert scale type of questions while thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013) was used to analyse data from the open-ended questions.

### 8.3 Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from the questionnaires developed by Schmidt *et al.* (2009) and Chai, Koh and Tsai (2011). The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A, surveyed participants' biographical information, Section B, consisted of eight items that dealt with their digital literacy and devices for virtual teaching and learning, Section C, participants' PCK competences in integrating MLTBI for teaching and learning mathematics. Section D, included 26 Likert scale type items with a four-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree) to assess participants' levels of TPACK according to the seven primary knowledge domains, namely 5.1: TK (items 1-6), 5.2: CK (items 7-8), 5.3: PK (items 9-14), 5.4: PCK (items 15-16), 5.5: TPK items 17-19), 5.6: CK (items 19-21) and 5.7: TPACK (items 22-26) (De Freitas, 2018).

**Table 1: Revised Research Framework on Teacher Behaviour**

Teacher Behaviour		
1. Teacher knowledge	2. Teacher views and beliefs	3. Teacher attitude
1.1 Curriculum knowledge	2.1 Teaching of subject	3.1 Subject
1.2 Subject content knowledge	2.2 Learning of subject	3.2 Students
1.3 Pedagogical content knowledge	2.3 Nature of subject	3.3 Teaching of subject
1.4 Student learning	2.4 Students as learners	

Source: Van der Sandt, 2007



### 8.4 Validity

An overview of literature focusing on the TPACK framework and CPD of mathematics teachers contributed to the theoretical validity of the study. The questionnaire was based on two standardised TPACK surveys, which had been previously validated by the developers. However, due to changes in the number of items used and the wording of some items, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the internal structure of the questionnaire, thus validating the extent to which the test items sufficiently match and exemplify the construct (Clark & Watson, 2019). The questionnaire was amended with regard to language and wording of items to make it more suitable for a South African context. Thereafter, the questionnaire was piloted with four mathematics teachers with regard to clarity, readability and terminology before being administered to the participants in the sample. The piloting process contributed to the coherence and consistency of the questions.

### 9. Reliability

The questionnaire was adapted for in-service mathematics teachers within a South African context from two standardised TPACK instruments, namely the Survey of Preservice Teachers' Knowledge of Teaching and Technology (Schmidt *et al.*, 2009) and a TPACK survey developed by Chai *et al.* (2011).

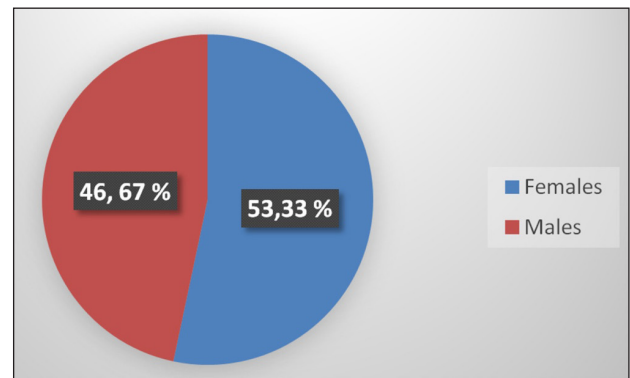
## 10. Results and Discussion

From the sample of 15 participants, 8 (53,33%) were female while 46,67% were male participants. See Figure 1.

Emerging from Figure 2, the sample consisted of three ethnic groups, namely 11 black African teachers (73, 34%), 2 coloured (13, 33%) and 2 Asian teachers (13, 33%).

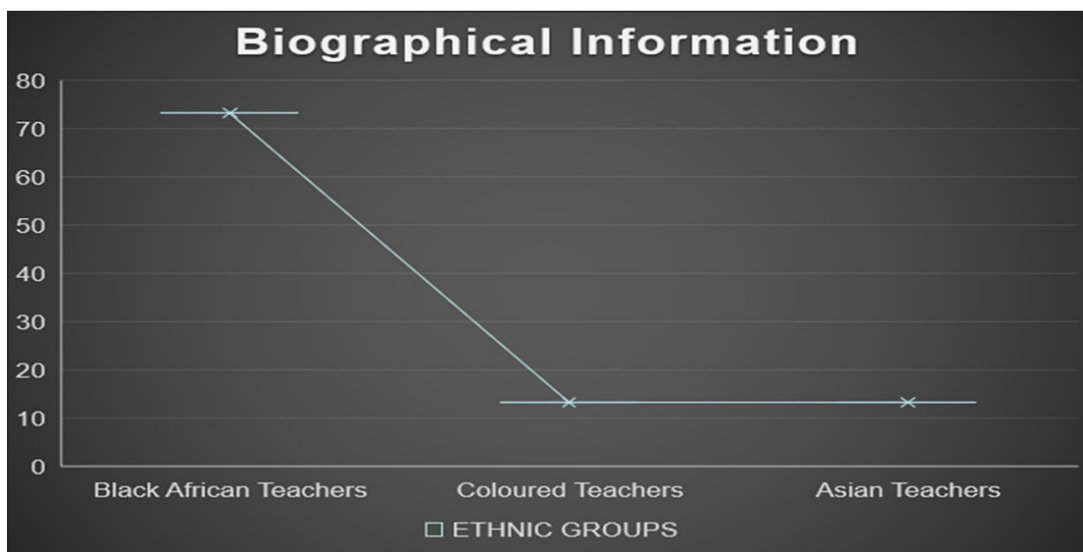
From Figure 3, the mean age of the sample was 40.5 years (standard deviation, SD = 12.1) with a range between 23 and 71 years.

**Figure 1: Biographical Information**



Source: Authors

**Figure 2: Biographical Information**

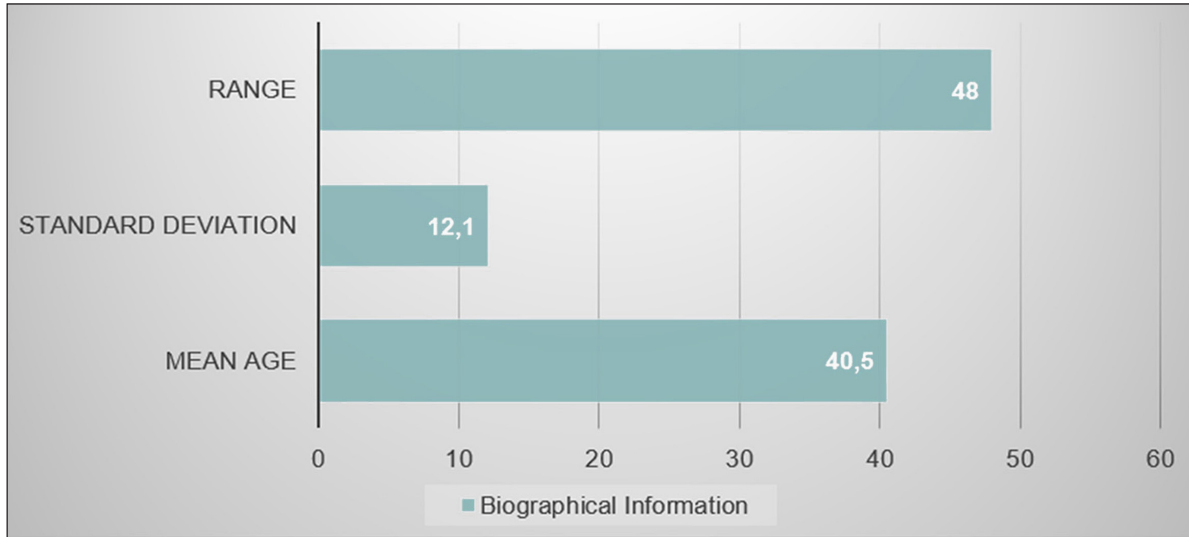


Source: Authors

Emerging from Figure 4, all participants agreed or strongly agreed with statement 5.2, 5.4 and 5.7 and disagreed or strongly disagreed with statement 5.5.

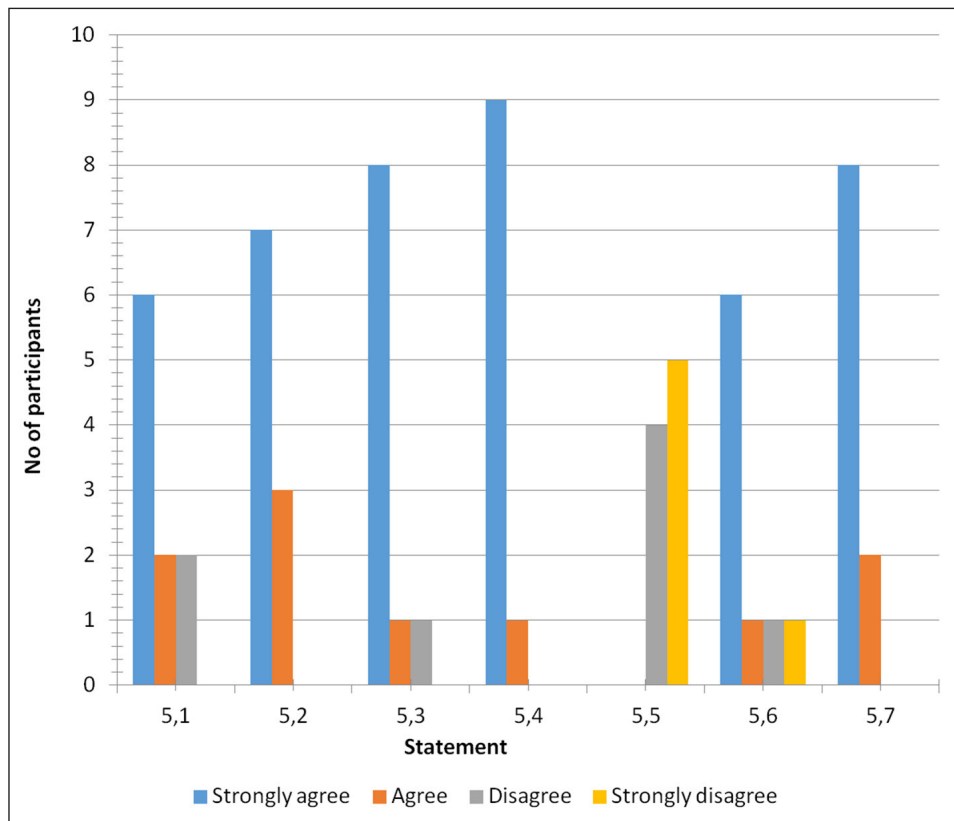
On statements 5.1, 5.3 and 5.6, some participants agreed or strongly agreed while others disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Figure 3: Biographical Information**



Source: Authors

**Figure 4: Teachers' Competences in Integrating Mobile Learning Technology-Based Innovations**



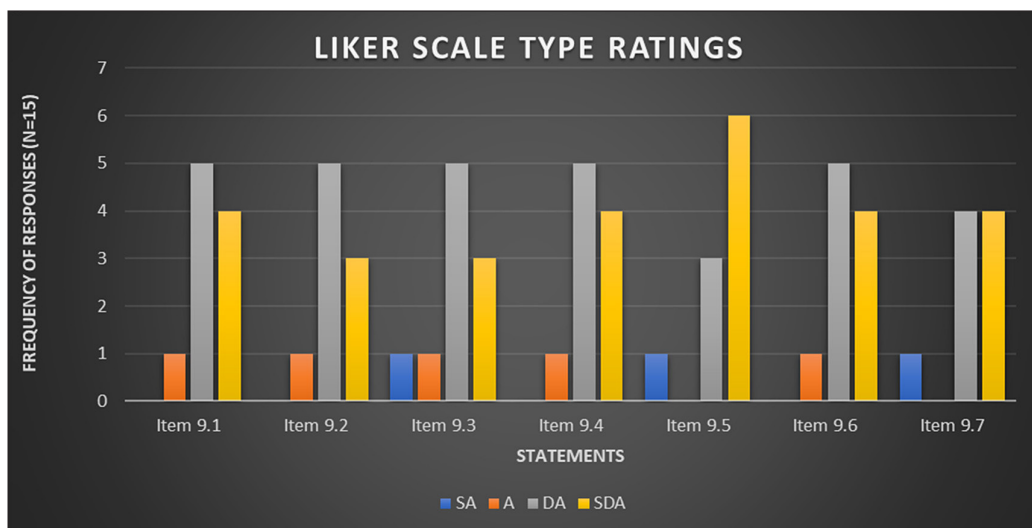
Source: Authors

Emerging from Figure 5, there is a general disagreement by the teachers to the itemised statements. In Item 9.1, 90% of the participants did not agree with the statement that "the use of cell phones in teaching and learning of mathematics is interesting". Items 9.2 and 9.3, 80% of the participants did not agree that "designing of lessons with a cell phone was of interest to me" and "the use of cell phones has the potential of enhancing my pedagogical competency". In Items 9.4 to 9.6, 90% of the

participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the itemised statements. In Item 9.7, 80% of the participants were of the view that use of cell phone devices in the classroom cannot provide alternatives to problem-solving Mathematics.

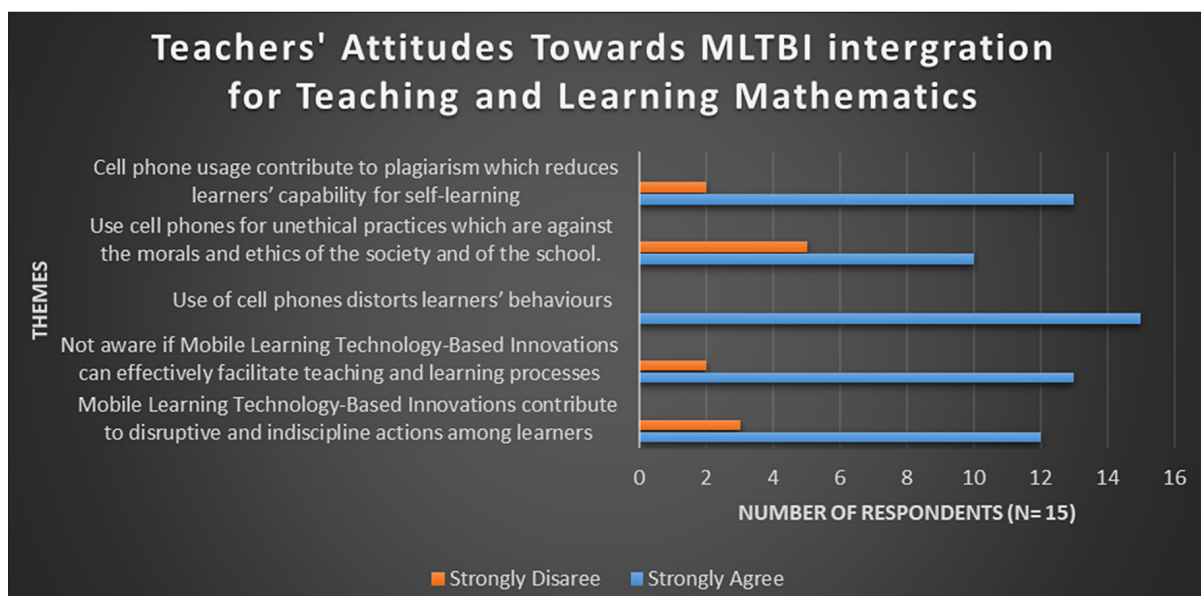
Emerging from Figure 6, most respondents strongly agreed with the items under each theme. 100% of the participants strongly agreed that using cell phones for teaching and learning distorts learners'

**Figure 5: Teachers' Responses to Impact of MLTBI in Teaching and Learning Mathematics**



Source: Authors

**Figure 6: Teachers' Attitudes Towards MLTBI Integration for Teaching and Learning Mathematics**



Source: Authors

behaviours while 33% strongly disagreed that unethical practices among learners are caused by cell phone usage. 80% of the participants strongly agreed that MLTBI to disruptive and indiscipline actions among learners.

## 11. Discussions

### 11.1 Administrative Issues

Regarding responses on teachers' attitudes towards Mobile Learning Technological-Based Innovations (Figure 6), it emerged that most respondents agreed with most statements. This is in concurrence with Hedding *et al.* (2020) who claimed that surviving in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century requires a sound education which offers a wide perspective of global awareness, environmental literacy, digital literacy and civic competence. However, all respondents disagreed with statement 5.5, which included ethical issues, mobile phone bans in schools and curriculum adaptations. The majority of the participants raised fears about the inclusion of cell phone devices in the classroom. Some teachers also argued that cell phones contribute to plagiarism which reduces learners' capability for self-learning. The findings are consistent with Lazarov (2018) who advanced that one particular critical challenge noted with regard to integration of mobile learning into the classroom is the prohibition of cell phone usage within schools, which may affect teachers' attitudes regarding mobile learning in their classes or prevent them from making any efforts to that end. Responses to statement 5.6 affirmed that the schools' geographical locations contribute to teachers' incompetency to integrate MLTBI. Schleicher (2020) concurs by stating that learners in most marginalised groups, who did not have access to digital learning resources or lacked the resilience and engagement to learn on their own, were at risk of falling behind. All respondents strongly agreed or agreed with statement 5.7 which indicated that subject specialization contribute to teachers' incompetency in integrating MLTBI aided programs in their teaching. In agreement, Tarling & Ng'ambi (2016) advanced that a focus on teacher training is needed to help improve the learning deficit in South Africa.

### 11.2 Pedagogical Issues

Emerging from Figure 5, most participants were of the view that lack of mobile learning technology devices in their respective schools contributed to teachers' incompetency in integrating MLTBI

during the country's lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants further confirmed that lack of in-service training on integrating MLTBI for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century classroom was another attribute that contributed to the incompetence of teachers in integrating MLTBI in virtual mathematics classes. In concurrence, Foulger *et al.* (2013) asserted that teachers received minimal technological and pedagogical assistance from higher education institutions with regard to effective implementation of mobile learning in the classroom education. Another finding was that participants affirmed that teachers' ages and experiences contributed to their incompetency in integrating MLTBI aided programs during their teaching. In their research findings, Kim *et al.* (2019) confirmed that limited, unclear best practices regarding preparing teachers for the integration of mobile devices is a definite barrier.

### 11.3 Classroom Management

One prominent finding emerging from Figure 4, was that teachers were of the view that the use of cell phones distorts learners' behaviours as the majority of them do engage in some non-learning related activities, such as texting each other during class hours. The finding contradicted Mncube *et al.* (2019), who asserted that prior to the advent of the pandemic, there had already been calls for the South African education system to embrace technologies as a response to 4IR. Some teachers also reported that some learners actually used cell phones for flirting and watching pornographic contents which are against the morals and ethics of the society and of the school. Kim *et al.* (2019) asserted that teachers raised concerns about potential ethical issues such as cyber-bullying, privacy, archiving and record keeping, sharing classroom experiences and artefacts, parental and learner informed consent, and e-safety.

## 12. Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings revealed that although MLTBI has generally benefited learners during the pandemic era in developed countries, it is still a bone of contention among teachers in developing countries. Buck *et al.* (2013) concur that the findings in developing countries contradict the general implication in mobile learning literature that the use of mobile phones is inherently good and is easily integrated into the school context. Issues raised by teachers are clear contributory factors towards their unpreparedness to embrace cell

phone usage and the concept of MLTBI to enhance mathematics teaching and learning. Lastly, there appears to be general attitudes among Mathematics teachers that MLTBI are not for 'educational' purposes. The paper recommends the following:

### 12.1 Transforming Teacher Education Practices with Theoretically Sound Approaches

Teachers need to go beyond the MLTBI tools' potential to explore pedagogical benefits of mobile learning within the mathematics content areas. Embracing this change in education practices will help practising teachers realize the pedagogical advantages of MLTBI that may shift their perspectives toward the integration of MLTBI into 21<sup>st</sup> Century classrooms. While a number of studies presented the benefits of embracing MLTBI within field experiences, more research is needed to understand its unique applications as well as its impact on teachers' successful implementation of school-based practicums. To understand the sustained effect of MLTBI initiatives in mathematics education, teachers and researchers need to conduct longitudinal studies in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic and enacting pedagogical approaches to MLTBI within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century classroom settings (Kim, Raza & Seidman, 2019).

### 12.2 Investigating Additional Strategies for Mobile Learning Integration and Expanding Data Corpus on Cell Phone Usage and MLTBI Incorporation

Teachers may be assisted in developing classroom management strategies to minimize the so called 'bad smart phone' behaviours. Moreover, teachers may need support to identify appropriate, useful and relevant teaching activities that incorporate MLTBI. Research needs to investigate how different types of mobile learning projects, time requirements, and site contexts have an impact in the way teachers develop outcomes and how different types of planning, design, engagement, observation, reflection and assessment activities effect these outcomes. Based on the findings, it is also recommended that interested researchers expand the data corpus on MLTBI and establish its relationship to desired teacher outcomes, such as TPACK within MLTBI contexts and address issues endemic to teacher development and education in the teacher preparation phase.

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# Ethical Dilemmas Emanating in Politics and Administration: Concomitants Effects on Chapter 9 Institutions in South Africa

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**Abstract:** This paper employs empirical and intuitive theory to argue that ethics remains critical and vital in transformation and delivering services to the public and this is the responsibility of both the elected and appointed public officials. Therefore, ethical dilemmas continue to be the greatest threats to improved and efficient political and administrative governance. This paper deduces and denotes that public servants have the mandate to ensure that public administration is carried out swiftly and efficiently, as well as effectiveness, are practiced in executing public policies. This paper deduces that efficacious public administration and political governance are contingent on the trust of the citizens. Poor conduct, deficient performance as well as ethical dilemmas generate public cynicism and create room for political as well as administrative instability. This paper makes a conclusion that ethical dilemmas continue to weaken governance and infiltrate public sector institutions blurring the lines of accountability and transparency in South Africa and Chapter 9 institutions still have no clear role to play in addressing ethical dilemmas emanating from the political and administrative arena due to the limited powers allocated to such institutions. Therefore, this paper has noted that Chapter 9 institutions are failing to address ethical dilemmas facing politics and administration due to limited powers and shifting as well as the transfer of responsibility to the perpetrators to execute as well as implement remedial actions by Chapter 9. This is more of a "shoot yourself" approach which has proven to not be effective. Chapter 9, as independent institutions, should be allowed and granted the power and freedom to implement and execute the remedial actions proposed in their reports. This will result in impartiality and independence not limited to theory but practice.

**Keywords:** Administration, Chapter 9 institutions, Empirical, Intuitive, Politics

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## 1. Introduction

The notoriety and effectiveness of the actions of public officials and what the public believes about them. Therefore, it is of essence that both the elected and appointed officials act fairly and impartially toward everyone, not just political pandering to ethical behaviour, but also ensure that it is clearly and unequivocally shown to be done. When embracing government employment, all public functionaries must acknowledge that they have a specific responsibility of exercising openness, equitability, and nonpartisan in their interactions with any member of society. Self-serving should be completely subservient to the public benefit on all occasions, especially when the prospect of a conflict of interest creates an ethical quandary. The private lives of public figures must be of such high calibre that they do not introduce delegitimize to their positions and disapprobation of the administration (SA News, 2020a). South Africa is currently confronted with intensifying ethical dilemmas in both administration and politics, leading the electorate and public to lose confidence

in service delivery as well as reliable and efficient oversight free of ethical quandaries.

According to Madumi (2018), the allegations of corruption that headlined the Zondo and Mkoqoro Commissions show how serious ethical dilemmas have filtered through in South African public administration. The scandal involving the Gupta family, which included previous President Jacob Zuma on allegations of corruption and several government members, is important. This indicated an ethical violation (February, 2019). Despite the fact that the hearing was contested, and all parties denied the allegations, scholars and columnists were unable to turn a blind eye as the media throughout the country regarded this as 'state capture.' According to the latest Zondo Commission investigations, fraud, self-serving, and nepotism in the government service monopolize both administrative and political sphere, and Chapter 9 institutions are merely bystanders in the ordeal as ethical quandaries remain and monitoring degrades and collapses (SA News, 2022b). Disoloane (2010) asserts in his

study that leaders should enforce acoustic ethical behaviour in the performance of their obligations, which is necessary to improve public service delivery in a developing state. This paper opposes the notion that both designated and political leaders bear responsibility for service delivery. As a result, the South African public service through public officials plays a critical role in carrying out the public service's developmental obligation.

Menyah (2010) emphasizes the importance of public oversight, which necessitates authorities to disclose to their higher authority as well as the general public. As moral arbiters of the people, government leaders can use their prerogative in policymaking to ensure that every initiative they consider taking advantages the citizens (Thornhill, 2012). As a result, when public administration in the political landscape fails to centre people in developmental mandates, ethical quandaries persist. This is the dilemma that South African public service is currently facing, and it has commensurate consequences, as Chapter 9 institutions are disclosed to be captured. The involvement of the justice system in politics, coupled with the impact of holders of political offices on Chapter 9 institutions such as the Public Protector, demonstrate the severity to which the state has been captured, and Chapter 9 institutions are failing to practice oversight (Mathebula, 2020).

## **2. Legislative Framework Underpinning Ethical Dilemmas in South Africa**

The paper use the Public Service Act 103 of 1994 which serves as a signatory and normative regime that outlines the discourse to which public administrators must adhere in order to safeguard acoustic ethical principles in the performance of service duties. According to Auriacombe (2005:221), this legislative framework enhances appropriate ethical standards and specifies the protocol and mechanisms that must be followed when interacting with incompetent and inefficient public figures. The Public Service Regulations of 1999 must be regarded as the most important legal provision ensuring the relevance of how public officials must also function when carrying out their responsibilities effectively. Holtzhausen (2007:72) asserts and makes the argument that Section 20 of this Act speaks to and raises concerns concerning public service malpractice. It is a perfect illustration of the government's legislative efforts to eradicate embezzlement and misappropriation of resources of public entities. This paper

argues and denounces Section 21 of the Act, which intends to castigate public officials' malpractice and the consequences of such deeds as clearly stipulated. As a result, any impropriety will be penalised under the law.

The Public Audit Act 25 of 2004 is another framework that promotes ethical behaviour in good governance. This paper contends that this form of legislation requires the Office of the Auditor-General to perform tasks and act independently of the government's dominion. It must therefore, be acknowledged that Article 46 of the Act prohibits any manager or worker in the public sector organisations from participating in party politics, which could jeopardize the Office of the AG's independence. This, however, does not include taking part in a public meeting in a personal or private capacity. Additionally, according to Article 41, all government servants employed at the Auditor-General's Office to deteriorate unauthorised payments because accepting them would necessitate that payments would be incurred from their salaries. According to February (2019), public funds misused can be recovered from the organization where they were settled. Overall, this framework summarizes the ethical behaviour anticipated of public figures in the AG's Office.

## **3. Theoretical Approaches to Ethics in Politics and Administration**

Theoretical approaches to ethical behaviour contend that ethics is more concerned with assisting people in deciding what is right than with getting them to incorporate and enforce what they presume to be appropriate and right in public service (Menyah, 2010). The paper employs two theoretical diverse strategies to deciding what is right and wrong, what is ethical and what is not, which will be discussed further below. This paper will continue to be relevant to the following theories:

### **3.1 Empirical Theory**

Observations based on perception impressions or explicit conceptual expansions of sense impressions are referred to as "empirical" (Menyah, 2010). According to empirical theory, all expertise must come from what can be seen, empirically validated, and evaluated. Empirical theory adherents recognize that the activities of both political and public officials can be right or wrong, but they require extensive corroboration before consenting that a distinctive



action is acceptable or immoral. Additionally, an empiricist would translate a common value judgment about right and wrong into perceptible terms, allowing an individual to interact with it on a substantiation (Pillay, 2004). According to Pauw, Woods, Van der Linde, Fourie and Visser (2009), empirical theory is concerned with "interactions to sweeping statements about empirical reality (with this reality consisting primarily of phenomena which can be perceived by the senses". Thus, empirical theory is based on the notion that all scientific consciousness is acquired through experience, and that true extensive understanding of reality can only be obtained through substantiated perception impressions (Sibanda, 2017). As such, by establishing appropriate guidance, a code of conduct may formalize what government servants may view to be improper.

### **3.2 Intuitive Theory**

According to Disoloane (2010), intuitionism is "a doctrine that holds that moral and pragmatic quandaries can be remedied through intuitions or basic realities that are intuitively known." The intuitive theory arose in response to the rational theory, and it held that public sector employees are not forced by any law enforcement to go undergo any coherent or exploratory process to determine what is ethical or unethical, because humans are born with a basic knowledge of moral truths. Individuals' native intuition would alert them instantaneously whenever something is wrong, but individuals have diminished their intuitive powers as a result of ethical dilemmas of external forces such as poor settings, insufficient political structures, impoverished literacy, and misguided religious teaching all contribute to natural moral philosophy. This condition could only be rectified if individuals restored living healthy, high standard of living. Sindane (2011) contends that a code of ethics would be extremely useful in the fight against corruption as eventually as it is evident that a public official's intuitive powers are becoming corrupt. A code of ethics would allow public administrators to rediscover their true intuitive abilities.

## **4. Public Administration, Politics and Ethical Leadership in South Africa**

As a result of prevalent ethical dilemmas and the interference of the elected officials in various government bodies, attempts to maintain consistent morally upright leaders in South African Public Administration as well as the political landscape

has proven to not be a simple task to execute. According to a study conducted by Chene (2012:2), public officials in South African local government are frequently caught breaking the law – guilty of fraud, corruption, and money laundering, which impedes the effective delivery of public goods and services. This paper also argues that ethical dilemmas are confronting the public service, and this is great threat to democracy. In South Africa, the public sector is subjected to disproportionate political influence, which destabilizes decision-making processes. Conflicts between appointed and elected officials have a negative impact on public service delivery, causing policymaking and fund disbursement to be delayed. According to the State of Local Government Report, which incorporates the Local Government Turnaround Strategy, socio-political turbulence is the leading source of poor effectiveness and immoral governance in South African public sector (Godinho & Hermanus, 2018). Therefore, it is significant to argue that three spheres of government as well as the political arena are confronted with a concerning and serious surge of ethical dilemmas and Chapter 9 institutions are ineffective and inefficient to address the challenges facing the two arenas.

February (2019:16) contends that the involvement and overlap of public protector and chief justice into the political space has led to the compromise of the independency of chapter 9 institutions as well as the judiciary leading to the public to questioning the integrity of the two houses. There is a serious challenge of ethical leadership. The Zondo Commission reports support this paper's conclusion that the appointed and elected have become blind to ethical quandaries. The third section of the report detailed corruption in Bosasa, where the vast majority of authorities are impacted. The review finds rampant corruption in government departments, SOEs, agencies, and entities awarding contracts and tenders to Bosasa and its associated business entities or organizations. Members of the national executive, public officials and members of various state organs influenced tender awarding to benefit themselves, their families, or entities in which they had a self-need (Ries, 2020:473-485).

According to Swilling (2019:24-27), Zondo's report also recommended that ANC leaders and government officials such as former President Jacob Zuma, Gwede Mantashe, and Nomvula Mokonyane be probed for possible corruption. In accordance with the Zondo commission report, this paper asserts that

the leadership personally accountable for administration in South Africa has been impacted in ethical quandaries at some point, and that, despite numerous attempts by Chapter 9 institutions, ethical quandaries persist to dominate, reflecting negatively on the responsibility and principles on which Chapter 9 institutions operate and are founded. Zuma benefited from lavish birthday parties endorsed by the company Bosasa, as well as purported payments to the Jacob Zuma Foundation, according to the report. The commission found "reasonable grounds" to presume Zuma's actions in relation to Bosasa violated his "duties as president under the Constitution". It was about the alleged R300,000 per month payment to the foundation, as well as the former president's purported obstruction in deterring government departments, primarily the correctional services department, from cancelling Bosasa contracts (SA News, 2022b).

The study advised law enforcement to take action against Mokonyane. According to the Zondo panel findings, the matter should be sent to the authorities for further inquiries and indictment of Ms Mokonyane on corruption charges. The study also suggested that Deputy Defence Minister Thabang Makwetla be probed for alleged corruption for agreeing to have a security system installed at his home. Makwetla paid Bosasa R25 000 for the security system, far less than the stated R90 000, and only after the system's presence was made public (February, 2019). The involvement of prominent ANC officials as well as designated public officials in ethical quandaries with no repercussions and retributive justice for allegations made against them demonstrates how captured and biased the justice system as well as Chapter 9 institution is in establishing ethical leadership and democratic South Africa free of ethical quandaries (SA News, 2022b). As a result, this article suggests that ethical leadership is a subject of concern as governance and administration in public service continue to degrade. The amount of conflict of interest as an ethical quandary in public institutions necessitates Chapter 9 institutions free of coercion. Leadership guided by ethics is required to save what remains of good politics and government.

## **5. Ethical Challenges Confronting Politics and Public Administration in South Africa**

This section of the article examines and critiques the issues that state sector and the political sphere face

in South Africa. The following issues have been identified as crucial by public figures when doing their jobs in the public sector. This study discusses ethical concerns that have made the rounds and are important in a variety of peer-reviewed studies and documents from South African public administration and politics.

### **5.1 Ineffective Control Systems**

Several factors are root causes contributing significantly to the exploitation and disregard of statutory frameworks, as well as the abuse and poor upheld of ethics in the administration arena and politics, including a lack of willingness to provide excellent services, corruption, and a lack of internal controls. Recent incidents of ethical problems in public administration and politics reveal that there is a severe problem with a schism amongst Chapter 9 institutions and the judiciary in terms of maintaining certain provisions of the constitution. Corruption is on the rise in the country, and the culprits are not being held accountable as a result of the chasm. When government officials identify a gap within a certain policy or legislative framework or code of conduct, they have the responsibility of being inclined to fulfil it. Corruption is caused by weak control mechanisms that are not enforced. Madonsela's presentation at the Nigerian Conference in 2010 focused on the status of corruption in South Africa's public sector. She bemoaned the corruption that has quickly become the fundamental cause of bad community service delivery.

Van de Merwe (2006:32) asserts that "effective anti-corruption measures should consider both the nature and causes of public sector corruption". This remark supports Madonsela's (2010) suggestion that pro procedures and mechanisms of corruption be accoutred to prevent corruption. According to Kroukamp (2006:208), underlying sources of corruption and ethical violations in South Africa are circumstantial, thereby making it more challenging to give a coherent narrative of its origins amid the skewed political atmosphere. In most cases, government corruption reigns supreme, making it impossible to maintain control since systems are used for personal advantage. South Africa is faced with poor control systems as far as combating corruption and other related concepts of ethical dilemmas and this is a great threat to constitution democracy and freedom.

According to Van de Merwe (2006:32), "successful anti-corruption policies should take into account

both the nature and root causes of public sector misconduct." This remark supports Madonsela's (2010) suggestion that anti-corruption mechanisms be implemented to prevent corruption. According to Kroukamp (2006:208), the causes of corruption and ethical violations in South Africa are contextual, thereby making it more challenging to provide a meaningful account of its causes given the skewed political landscape. In most cases, political corruption reigns supreme, making it impossible to maintain control since systems are used for personal advantage. South Africa has inadequate regulatory measures in place to prevent corruption and other ethical quandaries, which poses a significant threat to the country's constitution, democracy, and freedom.

## **5.2 Nepotism**

Nepotism is one of the ethical quandaries that have impacted South African public administration and political context. According to Hanekom (1995), nepotism is the hiring of friends or family to top posts in government despite regard for their qualifications. This is a problematic issue in public administration since it has resulted in party loyalists, relatives, and friends being recruited by their friends to crucial and strategic offices to administer public programs and report to them. This is often acknowledged as the underlying cause of subpar performance because those designated and elected politicians want to 'impress those who appointed them' commonly known as their masters; amidst the intentions to achieve such, they often result in the violation of the ethics guidelines and frequently blatantly ignore the predefined rules and guidelines that govern within the public sector. As a result, this paper concludes that nepotism in public administration might induce workplace unhappiness, which can lead to demotivated employees. Nepotism violates the idea of meritocracy as well as reasonableness by hiring candidates with no requisite skills and expertise individuals solely because they know the proper person. This is the type of strategy that disregards the merit system in public service, resulting in incompetent individuals at the forefront of government and administration, resulting in more examples of ethical quandaries with corruption at the centre.

Additionally, Nengwekhulu (2009:344) criticizes the manner in which individuals are promoted to higher levels of government because they are more likely to support the government's political and

philosophical agenda. Although there appears to be nothing amiss with recruiting a fellow cadre, their immoral practices lead to poor performance in the public service and in particular departments since they only respond to the appointing jurisdiction. This prodigy is widespread in both administration and the political sphere in South Africa, with the consequences being mediocre governance and accomplishment of mandate. Nepotism in public administration is an example of ethical dilemma that undermines the integrity of organisations in the public service, and, at times, discourages prospective stakeholders from conducting business with the government.

The present incarnation of the country's financial affairs, which shows a lack of foreign and domestic investment, is due to an ongoing spike of corruption in the country, which has yet to be resolved. Nepotism threatens the country's sovereignty and the feasibility of administration on the basis of meritocracy, raising many problems about the function of Chapter 9 institutions if public funds are exploited and section 195 of the Constitution is broken. Employing friends and family members, according to Kokemuller (2020:1), is a form of excessive nepotism that results in unproductive and wasteful use of public monies, resulting in poor service provision. Controversy and arguments in South African public administration frequently use the example of Black citizens promoting nepotism through affirmative action and the African National Congress' cadre deployment program. This study says that nepotism is at an all-time high in the public sector as a result of the development and use of affirmative action and cadre deployment policies as part of the economy's reconstruction and rehabilitation through a total encompassing strategy.

## **5.3 Lack of Transparency**

In order to ensure that sound ethical conduct in Public Administration and politics emanate, this requires both the elected and appointed officials to exercise transparency in the execution of public duties. Therefore, in order for every organisation to achieve its goal and objectives, it is imperative that such strategic goals and objectives be founded on the backbone of accountability and transparency. Document analysis found that top management in South African public administration is overwhelmed with high complexity, which impedes openness of how decisions are made. In light of this statement,

this paper will employ the case of the procurement processes of Personal Protective Equipment in two provinces being Limpopo and Free State.

News SA (2020a) revealed that the Department of Health in Limpopo Province regressed, showing signs of complacency with misappropriation of funds during the procurement of PPE. There was underachievement, and underperformers with high levels of violation faced no sanctions. Poor accountability was also observed in finance management, all of which had a negative impact on service delivery. Similarly, the Free State Department of Health deteriorated by not accounting for its PPE procurement procedure, demonstrating the lack of oversight tendencies. According to News SA (2022b) the two provinces are implicated in a corruption scandal of PPE accounting to more than R120 million combined and to date accountability has not manifested. Where are Chapter 9 institutions and which role did they play to ensure those involved are investigated and prosecution perpetuate? This is where this paper argues that the bone of transparency and accountability is on the fiction and non-fiction basis as far as Chapter 9 institutions are concerned.

#### 5.4 Corruption

Pauw *et al.* (2009:344) defined misconduct in South African Public Governance as "the egregious misuse of power or influence for self-benefit or the advantage of party comrades or associates. The state of corruption in South African Public Administration and politics is quite concerning as the country is currently failing to secure investors. Corruption is perpetuating within the political arena and Public Administration in South Africa in multi-diverse forms. According to Vorster (2012:133), corruption is a growing spectacle which is rampant in various facets of life, such as in trade and workplaces, among others. Public administration scholars argues that it is often difficult to control the landscape and act against those involved in corruption as it involves high ranking public officials in the powerful positions in politics and administration.

Therefore, this paper employs the Zondo commission report on Bosasa corruption scandal, which outlined the magnitude of state capture involving cabinet ministers as well as the former President Zuma to argue that indeed service delivery is being operated on the grounds of corruption. According to Mulenga and Mulenga (2018), the report by

Zondo commission revealed higher levels of corruption and unethical conduct involving the company Bosasa and as well as cabinet ministers and the former president. The third part of the report outlined all government officials involved in Bosasa corruption scandal and made recommendations. Although some deny the allegations of corruption, there was irrefutable proof of unethical interactions with government contracts (Daily Maverick, 2019). Fraud has expanded rapidly and entered South African public governance and the three spheres of government, resulting in increased public spending, encroachment of ethics and moral leadership, and diminishment in terms of accountability and transparency to safeguard the credibility and freedom of the Republic of South Africa's constitution, according to Du Plessis and Breed (2013:2).

According to Van der Westhuizen (2009:162), regions with peak level and skyrocketing corruption have suffered from mediocre public services. The looting and using of public funds for personal gain remains a critical subject to address in the public service as even Chapter 9 institutions are failing to protect those serving as witnesses providing information in cases of in cases under investigation. According to Mafunisa (2007:261), corruption of services is perceived or classified differently in South African public administration depending on the strategy or point of view considered. Corruption is all too common throughout most circumstances, even among ordinary folks and high-level administrative entities. The misuse of public office by elected leaders displays the extent of immoral behaviour that leads to public distrust in service delivery. According to Mawela, Ochara, and Twinomurinzi (2017), the technological advancements which saw the introduction of e-governance within South African administration and political atmosphere has remedied significant problems to public organizations regarding how they should combat bribery and unethical behaviour using technological advances. Tiihonen (2003:3) notices enormous pressure for civic participation in the country's governance, which drives public service authorities to minimize corruption because the public dictates public decisions. Kanyane (2016:10) asserts that, in addition to unethical behaviour, public trust in state institutions indicates various gaps in accountability that require attention in order to improve the functioning of public institutions in South Africa. The viability of public administration and politics is jeopardised by a lack of public accountability, openness,

and adherence to ethics. As a result, Madonsela's (2010) address blasted corruption in the broadest sense. Who is to blame as the country faces a boom in public-sector corruption and an increase in reported cases of tender corruption scandals with no prosecution or competent scrutiny by Chapter 9 institutions and protection of the constitution?

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Ethics serve as the guidelines and normative foundation within which Public Administration and politics operate on. In order to protect public resources, there is a need for public officials to be guided and abide by ethics and understand that public administration and politics is concerned with the public will. Therefore, there is a need to enforce ethics in administration and politics in order to organise the chaotic public will and prevent the emanation of ethical dilemmas. This paper has presented beyond reasonable doubt that public service in South Africa is in jeopardy due to lack of ethics in politics and administration. The paper also indicated that Chapter 9 institutions are at some point compromised and at the crossroads as to whether to side with the constitutional mandate as well as compliance to legislative framework or to protect their masters at the forefront of ethical dilemmas. As a result, in order to reverse the impacts of poor accountability, openness, and mishandling of public companies, the South African government must internalise principles and ethics, and Chapter 9 institutions must step in to preserve public resources. Sindane (1999:88) agrees that ethics and principles are essential for efficient public service delivery.

De Gruchy and Prozensky (1991:1) argue that South Africa has an extraordinarily rich and diverse culture of faith, information, and awareness that is essential in public leadership. If religious ethics are accepted in the government service, they can influence development. This, however, could be debatable. This paper employed the use of intuitive and empirical theory to argue that South African public officials being both the elected and appointed have failed to exercise ethical leadership. They also employed the Zondo commission report to argue that public officials who were supposed to protect resources are misusing public resources for personal interests and there is an issue of lack of transparency in executing public mandate by public officials. There is a need for ethics to be enforced in public institutions. Maintaining ethics in public administration

contributes to raising citizens' living conditions through effective service delivery. This study condemns unethical behaviour and concludes that it is a recipe for excellent governance in any organization. Cases of mismanagement, corruption, and abuse of funds occur when ethics are not followed, jeopardizing the integrity of public organisations.

Public officials have failed to exercise and practice ethics in politics and administration, and this has resulted in a skewed governance where investors fear to invest in South Africa. While chapter 9 institutions were expected to function as regulatory agencies for ethical quandaries such as public service corruption, the institutions have been unable to investigate and address disputes presented by current Chief Justice Raymond Zondo in the Bosasa case. Therefore, considering this statement, this paper concludes that Chapter 9 institutions in South Africa are at some slight point compromised and captured to favour a certain individual and investigate others. It is for this reason, that this paper recommends that ethics be incorporated as part of routine organisational training in the public service. Chapter 9 institutions investigation must be carried out or contracted out to third parties in order to ensure independence and impartiality in executing and discharging duties in order to protect the integrity and sovereignty of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

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# Conceptualising the Role of Universities in Transforming Society: Trends and Tools of Traits

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**Abstract:** The universities are a microcosm of the society and are required to contribute towards changing the material conditions of the communities. The concept of transformation of the society is a centrepiece for transformation and transformative leadership that intercept the structural resistance to change and unlock vestiges of development. This study is locating the role of the universities in transforming the society with a deliberate action in downplaying the notion of universities being "white elephants" and "conservative spaces" for the intellectuals. The study positions an argument whether the universities can provide the prerequisites capabilities that resonate with societal transformation agenda. It is a scholarly piece that remains conceptual literature review and analysis of the trends of the universities posture towards transforming the society. The reviews of articles, media releases and policy trajectory to uncover the impact of the posture of universities in transforming the society are foregrounded with the intention to deconstruct the interface of universities and society. The establishment of new pathways for universities to reshape the society with key recommendation being that the universities must create an academic and solution-based intervention to the immediate community for empowerment and for sustainable livelihood. In this regard, education is intended to be for public good.

**Keywords:** Universities, Transformation, Transformative, Policy and Development, Sustainable Development

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## 1. Introduction

The conceptualisation of societal transformation requires identification of social partners that have complementary role to play through a developmental agenda (Janus, Klingebiel & Paulo, 2015). Gyong (2012) argues that the notion of transformation is a fundamental step for ceasing continues ability for participatory economy and human comfort to thrive. The democratic government of South Africa has enacted legislative framework that are inspiring confidence to change the material conditions of the poor (Scholte & Söderbaum, 2017). It is worth noting that these legislative frameworks at their core address the issue of capacity to sustain the developmental agenda which universities are a centrepiece to deliver a sustainable capacity for democratic objectives to thrive. It is arguable that skills development address social attributes and industrial set of capabilities, and these are exactly the direct impact of turning the untenable in developing society (D'Alessandro & Zulu, 2017). In this context, capabilities assist in building transformative leadership at the cutting edge of delivering developmental agenda for sustainable development (Armah, 2013). The concept of transformative society forces one to concede that it invokes the existence of developmental local development. The

earlier is informed by the conceptual definition of developmental local government that is working with citizens to meet their developmental goals (Sebake & Mukonza, 2021). It is in this regard that the concept of sustainable development must start at the local government level given the context of its proximity to the citizens (Nkuna & Sebola, 2012).

It is in this regard that the study aims at enquiring whether the university can utilise its ability to contribute to the social context of the society through transformative pathways. Sebola (2014) suggests that the policy perspective of a developmental society is shaped through research that develops innovative pathways for crystalizing a thriving democratic society based on the will of citizens. This notion provides a compelling argument that universities are centres that must promote democratic participation and the aspiration of citizens. Sebola and Tsheola (2019) note that universities function as centres for addressing diversity and social justice, which is a fundamental backbone of societal transformation. The argument made earlier challenge the notion of inequalities that is experienced by the South African citizens that has now become the commonly known factor. It is in this context that the notion of validating the role of universities creates an important study that contributes to universities



and society as a common and automatic partner for speeding up transformation. This study remains relevant for trends and tools of traits to lift the fundamentals embedded in the relationship between the universities and developmental agenda of the society. The earlier assertion completes the argument by Schiuma and Carlucci (2018) who suggest that universities are an ecosystem of developmental agenda and transformation. It remains the crux of the study to uncover how universities contribute to build human conscious for sustainable transformation agenda in South Africa.

## **2. Conceptual Interlink**

The notion of universities being a microcosm of society establishes a narrative that one is the feeder to the other. Community function as a comfort space for development and growth of citizens, which universities are home for students from different social background and cultural orientation that must co-exist (Jagessar & Msibi, 2015). Additionally, society is dependent on universities to transform its social context for redress, and specialised skills to innovate the economy that is responsive for self-reliance (Xaba, 2017). It is in this context that the societies look upon universities as a social partner to lead variety of developmental agenda for the society through development of human and social capital (Crane & Hartwell, 2019). It is then in this context difficult to separate universities as intellectual hubs of societal development embedded in educational pedagogies as a means of addressing complex challenges confronting the society. Feola (2015) is convinced that societal transformation remains incomplete without education that translates to unlock vestiges of bondage to speed up self-participatory development through human empowerment. In this regard, universities and societal transformation are concepts that are not separable but are intertwined.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

Sebake (2020) argues that a scholarly study is expected to be embedded in theoretical context in order to utilise theory to reflect the epistemological underpinnings of the study in question. Theory provides substance to the body of knowledge through cultivating a focus dialogue with scholars who contributed extensively to a specific subject of investigation (Mudau, 2021). It is in this context that the universities and societal transformation

reflect institutions and organised citizens working together to achieve the objectives of greater development agenda, which the collective action theory is explored.

## **3.1 Collective Action Theory**

The notion of existence of the universities and societies are organised phenomenon that finds its common action being that of foregrounding transformation through skills development and human capabilities. DeMarrais and Earle (2017) suggest that transformation of complex societal challenges require collective action in purpose. On the other hand, collective action theory explains the strategic actions that emerge out of a collaborative effort to address common developmental agenda (Carballo & Feinman, 2016). It is worth noting how developmental agenda of transformation compels all role players to be formally organised to understand the trajectory of societal development. In this regard, the role of education offered by universities is by extent a strategic response to the systematic challenges that confront the society (Carballo & Feinman, 2016). Additionally, collective action theory is an integrated strategy of confronting challenges of the society through each partner identifying its area of contributing to resolving multiplicity of problem without creating new regime of systemic challenges (Percoco, 2016). The above arguments present an interesting interlinked phenomenon that universities and societies are agents of transformation and their actions are inseparable with the trajectory of transformation.

## **4. Literature Review**

### **4.1 Conceptualising Tools of Trait**

The thriving society depends on its ability to reflect on the necessary skills relevant for its growth path. Elyachar (2012) explains to us that the African continent with its slowly developing states paves an important and deliberate notion necessary for introspection for its trajectory of influential critical analyses of development. A thriving society is postured by its agency and institutional arrangements to cultivate capacity to meet the expectations laid down by the Sustainable Development Goals (Knutson, 2013). In this context, I argue that the concept of tools of traits is found on the ability to foreground capacity that is of the cutting edge for economic growth. Franks, Lessmann, Jakob, Steckel

and Edenhofer (2018) suggest that the first-class countries are characterised by its provision to provide education, health and necessities that restore public good. For instance, the Pan African Agenda 2063 provide basis to rethink education as a fundamental tool for changing the material substance of life of African citizens (Marginson & Yang, 2020). Additionally, education is an important asset and a game changer for embracing diversity and promoting social enterprise (Owens, 2017). It is in this context that tools of traits are characterised by the society that can analyse the needs of its economy and utilise universities to provide education that is community based. Benos and Zotou (2014) underscore that education is an instrument of human society that transform the community to the greater good. For instance, the South African context posits that the national plan on higher education, support and promote universities that are embedded in the socio-economic and social conditions of the society and intervene (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012). In this context, the social capital and skills capabilities are defined as tools of traits that are important centre-piece of building a thriving economy that change the material conditions of the society for greater and sustainable good.

## 4.2 Leadership and Transformative Society

It is often complex to define leadership beyond the personal value chain due to the nature of embedded political system of foregrounding self-service and the culture of patronage. Accordingly, Lumby (2012) notes that universities are required to cultivate a distinct leadership characterised by value systems that address issues of social justice. It is in this context that universities are centres of excellence that provide human capital that are transformative to lead the society to attain its ultimate objectives. From African perspective, leadership is a dominating feature of academic discourse due to its importance to shape the course of societal transformation (Fourie, Van der Merwe & Van der Merwe, 2017). In the same vein, leadership represents human culture of being an agent for transformation (Fourie *et al.*, 2017). It is in this regard that leadership and transformation are two concepts that are inseparable. Mahembe and Engelbrecht's (2013) study on assessing the seventh leadership in African context, suggest that the servant leaders are found to be the category of leaders that are truly committed to the aspiration of the constituencies than that of their own. The same study found that the scourges of governance pitfalls

that are man-made in public service are reflective of the massive failure of comprehending servant leadership as an embedded value system in Africa (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2013). Sustainable development is underpinned by the capacity of leadership to comprehend social catalytical change in society (Santamaría, 2014). One is content that nurturing a human character that understand that leadership is service to society and that is the conviction that is located within the shoulders of universities. In this regard, universities would then represent a context of being a microcosm of the society than a "white elephant".

## 4.3 Education and Human Needs

It is a common fact that undeveloped and developing countries are in the business of posturing a struggle for human development. Aulia and Elihami (2021) explain to us that education is an instrument to strive to the attainment of human needs. On the other hand, the understanding of the theory of needs is motivated that education presents necessary tools of traits to attain the Maslow theoretical orientation of conceptualising human needs (Hale, Ricotta, Freed, Smith & Huang, 2019). This notion notes the phenomenon of driving human capital relevant to drive the narrative of the society towards capable state in the context of reflecting on the role of universities and society (Ngumbela, 2021). In this context, universities offered a precious public asset that assists the societies to traverse the turbulent towards sustainable growth and development (Ngumbela, 2021). Additionally, Olayiwola (2012) notes that it is with conviction that education first liberate citizens to be agent for their self-reliance and self-organisation. On the other hand, I am convinced that education creates an opportunity to build human conscious that moves from a vintage point of selfless posture through its value systems, which universities note to be that of transforming society to realise its objectives. That is why Msuya, Ahmad, Kalunguizi, Busindi, Rwambali, Machinda, Krogh, Gjøtterud, Kifaró, Ndemaniho and Nziku (2014) posit that education and universities are instruments of bettering the conditions of the society for the greater good. In this regard, education is a role of universities and represents a mouth-piece of the success and thriving society to meet the expectations of human development (Agbedahin, 2019). It is therefore that education and attainment of human needs are that the latter is the result of the earlier and the two concepts are intertwined.

#### 4.4 Universities at Service to Society

Mbah (2019) argues that universities are a major contributor to sustainable development and at the centre of meeting the rapidly changing needs of the society at large. This provides an important call for universities to embed its services to address the needs of the community within their own locations. Several scholars agree that universities are mostly regarded as key assets in communities and are precious resources to support the function and thriving principle of democracy in advancing sustainable development goals (Cook & Nation, 2016). On the other hand, Harkavy, Hartley, Hodges and Weeks (2016) explain to us that universities are serving mostly a stricken poverty community as educational institutions; they must serve to improve the material needs of the communities through promotion of talent and human capital. All these arguments above are mainly due to universities function as centres of innovation that are at the cutting edge of transforming the society to the better through its educational pedagogies (Eversole, 2012). In the interest of expanding the argument, universities are resources position to serve as anchors and hubs for the regime and complex challenges of the communities that require integrated approach to improve the lives of the ordinary citizenry (Harkavy *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, universities are an ecosystem of enabling thriving communities that are self-organised to sustain their livelihoods through promotion of pathways for self-reliance (Kitamura & Hoshii, 2014). It is in this context that university are relevant partner that through the National Plan on Higher Education, they are required to be at the service to the society through impactful and sustainable social capital investment.

From the historic point of view, African continent emerged out of bondage of its horrific era and it requires to be strengthened for its sovereignty and universities are expected to be champions of social change (Mitchell & Soria, 2016). Brennan, Cochrane, Lebeau and Williams (2018) postulate that universities are a strategic centre that must address the moral fabric of the society to promote equality through inculcating education that reflect the trajectories of social justice at all material time. In this regard, equity and social justice establish the relevance of the universities to shape "tools of traits" to empower the most marginalised group in the society (Brennan *et al.*, 2018). The reviewed literature forces one to concede that universities

that analyse the developmental challenges of the society and strive to participate to ensure sustainable capacity to maintain sustainable development, those are universities that are in service to society.

#### 4.5 Innovation and Socio-Economic Transformation

Universities are centres that provide innovative and sustainable strategies to create viability for thriving economy. Deiacco, Hughes and McKelvey (2012) challenge us that from the outset, universities are an important role player in the knowledge economy. The significant activities of education and research have been proven to be playing significant role to transform pathways for the thriving economy (Deiacco *et al.*, 2012). For instance, the economic trajectory of China has been noted thriving well in the manufacturing industry, given the narrative of China for fronting relevant and global comparative skills regeneration (Zhou & Luo, 2018). In the same otiose, Zhou and Luo (2018) note that the investment in the sophisticated and advance technology by China remains an imaginative result of education and regenerated skills that are relevant to the economic growth. The notion of development does not represent a spontaneous process that happens naturally but happens through the investment in social capital in which education finds expression (Dudin, Lyasnikov, Kuznecov & Fedorova, 2013). It is therefore with conviction that universities are expected to be at the cutting edge of innovation to reimagine new pathways of reigniting social capital that cultivates socio-economic responses.

Alexander, Andersen, Cookson Jr, Edin, Fisher, Grusky, Mattingly and Varner (2017) argue that innovation crystallises the ability to comprehend the socio-economic opportunities that stems the notion of growing nature of poverty. On the other hand, substantial progress is noted with a clear understanding that poverty provides more gaps resulting in inequalities that are experience being exacerbated by lack of economic transformation for rural and township citizens (Benfica & Henderson, 2021). Universities are institutions that shape the course of action for cultivating a culture of rethinking human capital that are catalysts for transforming the landscape of the society towards meeting its developmental objective (Alexander *et al.*, 2017). It is in this regard that one is conceding that universities are for public good and have the responsibility to be responsive to the needs of the society and establish relevant "tools of traits".

## 4.6 Universities as Champions of Skills Development

The existence of the universities is a strategic intent to respond to the skills revolution that meets the expectations of the local economy for self-sustainability (Allais, 2012). It is in this context that social and vocational skills are fundamental to run the economic through innovative pathways represent an important tool for developmental agenda (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016). Additionally, South Africa is regarded as a country with growth in graduation rate, but with a high level of unemployment amongst youth (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). Oluwajodu, Greyling, Blaauw and Kleynhans (2015) note that this phenomenon questions whether universities are at the cutting edge of cultivating catalysts of social change for the society guided by innovation that create than cease opportunities for economic bubble. Universities are supposed to respond to the needs of citizens through education that is established to invoke soft skills that can provide sustainable means of social cohesion for the notion of nation building (Kruss, McGrath, Petersen & Gastrow, 2015). In context, one concedes that skills development requires two key priorities *inter alia*: firstly, relevant skills through programmes that address local economy, and secondly, common educational programmes that would serve multi-disciplinary for building human conscious. Universities that contain the above can impart education that is relevant to ensure "tools of trait" are foregrounded within educational intervention and that education then become of public good.

## 5. Research Methodology

### 5.1 Research Design

The notion of scientific research is expected to present research methodology that resonates with the literature review study (Snyder, 2019). In this regard, the study of complex literature review is an important strategic choice of a scientific study (Snyder, 2019). The context of research methodology remains a guiding principle that navigates to acquire data valid and reliable for any scientific study to establish its logical conclusion (Patel & Patel, 2019). A study is expected to make a strategic choice on the method and approach to follow. Qualitative method carried textual narrative to explain the shape and nature of the phenomenon understand without application of statistical analysis (Smith & Smith, 2018).

In this regard, the study utilised qualitative method for reviewing complex literature.

### 5.1.1 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection followed the review of 52 scholarly articles to articulate the role of the university in transforming the society to improve skills that improve the lives of ordinary citizens. The choice of utilising qualitative method for literature review analyses text to review the quality and impact of the study at hand (Peterson, 2019). On the other hand, qualitative analysis constitutes an important approach towards studying the trends that contribute to shape the nature of the study at hand (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2012). It is in this context that literature collected and analysed theorise an ideal role of the universities as it interfaces with the society and this constitutes theorising and shaping the existence of universities and societies.

## 6. Results and Discussions

In the review of literature to present finding through discussions, scholarly articles have been generally helpful. These scholarly articles are in the area of transformation and social cohesion; skills development, and entrepreneurship and innovation for socio-economic development. Jain-Ghai, Cameron, Al Maawali, Blaser, MacKay, Robinson and Raiman (2013) note that complexities of a phenomenon are expressed through the literature is a strategic choice of establishing new pathways in the body of knowledge. In this context, I concede to have reviewed twelve (12) articles out of the 52 overall literature to support the findings.

### 6.1 Universities' Role in Cultivating Social Consciousness

The moral fibre of the society is confronted by greed and social ills that contribute/d in undermining the course of a transformative society despite constitutional democracy that guide the kind of societies South Africa is supposed to be (Hickel, 2014). Pavlidis (2015) opines that the formation of human development is regarded as a self-journey of discovery towards the ability to resonate with material conditions of the society and seek to cultivate care and agency for social change. In this context, the role of the university is to build an intergeneration of active citizenry for foreseeable future. This is mainly because education that is routed in the social context of the society assists to generate graduates

that are not only for their families, but that of their own communities (Halman, Baker & Ng, 2017). In the interest of furthering the argument, the society that has social conscious, can adapt to the tune of social cohesion and transformation that is authentic to change the moral fibre of the society to the greater good (Klein, 2013). Additionally, education is therefore regarded as a tool of cultivating social capital for building a responsive and a caring society that value co-existence (Novy, Swiatek & Moulaert, 2012). It is in this context that the role of universities is amongst other be to lighten the moral campus and value system that inspire human capital ability to rapidly response to the societal transformation.

## **6.2 Educational and Skills Development**

The rapid growing challenges of the society need both skills development and regeneration to tackle political developments and socio-economic development. Allais (2012) notes that the South African trajectory is toughed by a lack of robust development and cohesion in the area of skills development, which has created stagnant to dismantle the existing inequalities. Despite the call for more market related education that can revitalise the economy, higher education sector still finds it problematic to respond to the market revolution with relevant skills (Modisaotsile, 2012). On the other hand, the shortage of market skills stifles inclusive growth that fundamentally juxtaposes the South African economy with the first countries (Akoojee, 2012). Additionally, skills discourse remains a serious concern due to the static economy and lack of innovation for alternative self-organisation to connect university education for transforming sectors of the economy for much greater response to the material needs of the citizens (Balwanz & Ngcwangu, 2016). The literature presents a complex mismatch in the education's response to the critical skills that respond to the economy and this remains a continuous and relevant area of future research to evaluate the impact of universities in skills development and regeneration.

## **6.3 Cultivate Thriving Economy Through Innovation**

Haltiwanger (2012) suggests that a thriving economy is self-organised through innovative strategies that support sustainable initiatives for entrepreneurship and job creation. Ciriaci, Moncada-Paternò-Castello and Voigt (2016) explain to us that innovation is compelling stands of communities to be at the

cutting edge of creating new pathways of developmental agenda for sustainable development. In this regard, thriving economy is dependent of creativity to transform and translate policy regime that unlock challenges of self-organisation for the greater society. The growing pressure mounted to universities to respond to the culture of knowledge economy and these made plethora of universities in South Africa to pronounce themselves as entrepreneurial universities (Malebana & Swanepoel, 2015). The earlier was a notion of admission that ethos of entrepreneurship are fundamental to self-organise and impact on the society moreover entrepreneurship is a multidisciplinary concept (Sánchez-Barrioluengo & Benneworth, 2019). This milestone had seen the growth in participation of university students who grow their enterprises while at universities and carry it on while back in society as an alternative for employment seeking. It is in this context that Elyachar (2012) notes that entrepreneurship education in South African universities contributed significantly to growth of Small Medium and Micro Enterprise spaces in South Africa like in developing countries. It is in this context that universities in this area has inspired confidence to the transformation of the society and lead through exemplary. Littlewood and Holt (2018) confirm that the earlier comfort the notion that entrepreneurship is a social phenomenon that demonstrates growth is easing bondages of economic viability for any developing nation as economy represents social tool for transformation.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study was presented as a complex literature review to investigate the universities' role in societal transformation. This study demonstrated to be fundamental as the question of universities as "conservative spaces" for academic monopoly with no consideration of the need to connect with the society was long weight as a discourse question. It was a necessary study to identify in which way the universities are assisting to cultivate a culture of transformative leadership and being of value to citizens' aspirations. It is conclusive that no society can achieve development agenda without identifying social partners that are of a cutting edge to create ecosystem of success. In this regard, universities have registered both successes of interlink and disconnect which for ease of reference, universities are presented to interlink with society in the area of social cohesion and human development. These areas were presented to be positive given that no

transformation of any nation without healing from social ills that collapse the moral fibre of the society. Additionally, the thriving enterprises that have generated solid ground from university postured a success in running viable business enterprises. Finally, the failure to deliver skills that are relevant to the persistently fragile market is a fundamental mismatch. This area is topical and requires introspection in relooking into the role of universities as a responsive institution that delivers relevance to the economic opportunities. It is in this context that unemployment amongst youth is challenges given this mismatch. This study is conclusively proven that collective action theory compels universities and society to act with common purpose to fashion societal transformation through sharpening tools of traits. The study recommends the below actions.

- Cultivate human conscious for embedding value of social justice and active citizenry. This must be investigated on how to accelerate impact for eradication social ills that undermine constitutional democracy to function.
- Investigation into how skills that response to the market can be envisaged to create a solid link between the university and society.

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# The Impact of Green Psychological Benefits and Awareness of Environmental Consequences on Green Product Repurchase Intentions

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**Abstract:** Globally, natural disasters are on the rise and research points out that human activity is largely to blame for this phenomenon. The problem is that unless there is significant behaviour change in how human beings interact with the environment, the world will continue counting losses in terms of human life, livestock, crops, and infrastructure due to environmental disasters. The study investigated whether awareness of environmental consequences predicts green product repurchase intentions and whether green psychological benefits mediate the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions. The study was quantitative in nature and primary data was gathered from a random sample of 153 respondents through the survey. Self-administered questionnaires were randomly distributed to 500 shoppers and 153 were returned with sufficient data to conduct data analysis. Simple linear regression and hierarchical regression analysis were performed to draw meanings from the data. The results indicate that awareness of environmental consequences predicts green product repurchase intentions and that green psychological benefits partially mediate the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions. Following the Signaling Theory, the findings of the study imply that marketers have an opportunity to work hand-in-hand with green customers towards protecting the ecosystem. The study recommends that marketers need to intensify their genuine environmental awareness campaigns and clearly communicate the benefits of green products (real and perceived), to ensure they trigger a positive attitude among customers to facilitate a widespread shift to eco-friendly products.

**Keywords:** Environmental awareness, Environmental consequences, Green product, Green purchase intentions, Green psychological benefits

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## 1. Introduction

Humans are increasingly becoming conscious about their interaction with the environment, resulting in behaviour change. Credit goes to environmental activists, marketers, and political figures who have contributed to the enactment of various eco-friendly legislations and seen to it that they are implemented for the purposes of protecting the environment. Information communication technology (ICT) advancements have also made sharing of environment knowledge across the globe through social media easier. Natural disasters ranging from droughts, tsunamis, cyclones, veld fires to snow and record-breaking high and low temperatures are published in real-time with the goal of raising the public's interest and efforts to protect the environment. More importantly, from a research perspective, ICT has played a critical part by enabling researchers to identify the likely causes of increased environmental challenges affecting the planet earth (Lange, Pohl & Santarius, 2020; Zhang & Wei, 2022).

KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province in South Africa has just experienced the worst floods in over six decades with at least 395 people reported dead and 27 reported missing (Nair, 2022). The question is to what extent are South Africans aware that environmental consequences like the one experienced in the KZN province are, to a certain degree, the result of human interaction with the environment? Although environmental catastrophes affecting South Africa cannot be solely blamed for the manner in which South Africans interact with their environment, the consensus is that interacting well with the environment has tremendous environmental benefits worldwide (Mahé *et al.*, 2013; Fang, Yu, Liu, Hu & Chapin, 2018).

One way of interacting with the environment in a favourable way may be the use of green products. Both consumers and suppliers of products, including the government at large, may have a key role to play in protecting the environment. From a consumer's perspective, increased consumption of green products may be a noble thing to do.

However, consumption of products may be determined by perceived psychological benefits and linked to awareness of environmental consequences of the continued use of products that poison and harm the environment, for example non-recyclables among others (Calkins, 2008). From a South African perspective, evidence is limited regarding green product consumption owing to their awareness of environmental consequences and green psychological benefits. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to this debate by linking the discussion to Signaling Theory. By so doing, it will shed light on how marketers can enhance consumer behaviour change, leading to widespread adoption of green products in the South African market.

## 2. Literature Review

This section is a review of the literature with the theoretical framework for the study being unpacked, followed by a brief explanation of the variables in question and then a review of empirical literature leading to the development of the study's hypotheses.

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study aimed to unpack the problem under investigation from a Signaling Theory perspective. The Signaling Theory focuses on the spread of information from one party (the sender) to the other (the receiver), with the goal of enhancing the consumer decision-making process (Connelly, Certo, Ireland & Reutzel, 2011). On the one hand, marketers may be viewed as signallers who possess valuable information, which consumers do not have, better known as information asymmetry (Stiglitz, 2000). On the other hand, consumers may be viewed as users of the information, which marketers possess. In the context of this study, marketers possess valuable information regarding the environmental friendliness of their products. However, to ensure that customers purchase and continue buying eco-friendly products, marketers may need to be strongly involved in spreading the message that says, 'use of non-eco-friendly products harms the environment leading to climate change and environmental disasters'. Such messages or signals are intended to appeal to all customers (receivers) who may to a certain degree care about protecting the environment and understand the environmental, psychological, and tangible benefits of consuming eco-friendly products. Therefore, the role of marketers is to influence

consumer behaviour, resulting in the purchase and repurchase of environmentally friendly products. Thus, signalling by marketers may lead to positive outcomes such as the intent of green customers to repurchase environmentally friendly products (Hussain, Melewar, Priporas, Foroudi & Dennis, 2020).

### 2.2 Awareness of Environmental Consequences

As the rate at which natural disasters are happening across the globe is perceived to be increasing, the awareness level of environmental consequences among individuals is also increasing and their willingness to do something about it is increasing. In other words, the number of people who are concerned about the environment is steadily increasing. This is evident in people's change of habits leading to the adoption of green products such as electric vehicles (EVs) that are believed will play a major role in the reduction of toxic emissions to the atmosphere. The transport sector contributes a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and the main polluting countries are China, the United States of America, the European Union, and India who each year emit around 28%, 14%, 10% and 7.45% of GHG to the atmosphere respectively (World Population Review, 2022). Research in India revealed that individuals are slowly shying away from automobiles propelled by internal combustion engines albeit the high costs of EVs (Khurana, Ravi Kumar & Sidhpuria, 2020). A recent study by Ali and Naushad (2022) observed that car manufacturers in India were ramping efforts to produce EVs at a large scale, an indication that there is a huge commitment from the Indian government, consumers, and the business sector to drastically reduce GHG.

Although South Africa is categorised as an emerging economy, it is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> on the list of top 20 GHG emitters, contributing approximately 421.7 metric tons annually (World Population Review, 2022). The question, therefore, is to what extent are South Africans aware of the environmental consequences of such actions, and do they intend to repurchase green products and mitigate environmental challenges the world is facing?

### 2.3 Green Psychological Benefits (GPB) Emanating from the Use of Green Products

The concept of psychological benefits is defined as the feeling of trust or the feeling of being comfortable with one another, leading to a greater peace of

mind (Sweeney & Webb, 2007). Research indicates that psychological benefits may also emanate from objects, and in the context of this study, eco-friendly products. Green psychological benefits stemming from the use of green products such as green roofs in urban set-ups are well documented in the literature. Dimensions such as nature experiences, warm glow, and self-expressive benefits are found in the empirical literature that seeks to measure green psychological benefits (Liao, Wu & Pham, 2020). In practice, the use of green roofs, as an example, is psychologically beneficial in the sense that they are believed to be very useful in retaining rainfall, and they reduce building energy biodiversity (Lundholm & Williams, 2015).

However, the main psychological benefit emanates from humanity's love of nature, such as parks, observing creatures of the wild, and plants in general. Therefore, just the mere thought of bringing nature into urban life for the benefit of humanity is associated with improved attention and mood. Research further points out that green spaces also result in improved individual mental and physical health (Hartig *et al.*, 2014), while research by Kuo (2003) found that the use of green spaces in urban centres leads to reduced crime and aggression levels. Research by Williams *et al.* (2018) found that the use of green products resulted in increased outcomes and better ways of accomplishing tasks and indicates that the use of green products plays a large role in individuals achieving personal goals. On the other hand, research further found that the use of green products also increased the level of kindness (warm glow) among individuals as data showed that people were more willing to assist others in various circumstances (Guéguen & Stefan, 2014).

#### **2.4 Green Product Repurchase Intentions**

The decision to buy products once more from the same provider is a subject that has been of interest to marketers for decades. This is because many factors are involved in making such a decision (Arifin, Yusof, Putit & Shah, 2016). Central to the repurchase decision is the customer's previous experience with the product, the firm, or the brand (Xu, Hua, Wang & Xu, 2020). Other key factors influencing product repurchase intentions include the quality of the product in question, customer loyalty, service quality, satisfaction, and price, among others (Lam, Lau & Cheung, 2016). In the context of this study, the leading factor influencing green consumers in

making green product repurchase decisions revolves around their environmental friendliness, that is, the benefits flowing in the direction of the consumer and the environment, which are real or perceived.

### **3. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

This section reviews empirical evidence leading to the formulation of the study's hypotheses.

#### **3.1 The Impact of Awareness of Environmental Consequences on Green Product Repurchase Intentions**

Research in India suggests that an individual's awareness of environmental consequences predicts intentions to purchase a green product, for example EVs (Ali & Nausard, 2022). An investigation of pioneer users of EVs revealed that they were motivated to adopt environmentally friendly automobiles because of their awareness of environmental consequences associated with the continued use of non-green products (Pierre, Jemelin & Louvet, 2011). Consumers who may be highly motivated to use eco-friendly products may likely continue using such products based on real or perceived benefits they derive from utilising such products. Empirical evidence exists supporting the notion that, with increased awareness of environmental consequences, the intention to buy more eco-friendly products by both current and future users is increasing significantly (Chen, 2010), and the majority of such customers may be willing to pay a premium (Makower, 2009). Based on this discussion, the study hypothesises that:

*H<sub>0</sub>: Awareness of environmental consequences does not predict green product repurchase intentions.*

*H<sub>1</sub>: Awareness of environmental consequences predicts green product repurchase intentions.*

#### **3.2 Green Psychological Benefits, Awareness of Environmental Consequences and Green Product Repurchase Intentions**

Collado, Staats, and Sorrel (2016) observed that factors such as knowledge, individual association with green products, and cultural views may play a pivotal role in determining how individuals perceive green psychological benefits. This may be critical, as it may eventually determine an individual's intentions to purchase and repurchase green products.

Psychological benefits refer to the feeling of trust or being comfortable with one another leading to greater peace of mind (Sweeney & Webb, 2007). Research further pointed out that psychological benefits may be derived from the use of eco-friendly products. Conversely, the Symbolic and Conspicuous Consumption Model and the Signaling theory highlight that individual psychological benefits emanate from self-expressive benefits (Aaker, 2002). Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2012) observed that the behaviour of green customers is highly influenced by self-expressive benefits. This is because consumers are willing to purchase environmentally friendly products that give them self-expressive benefits and self-satisfaction resulting in a positive emotional state. The presence of a positive emotional state creates a platform where consumers find it easier to help others in need (Van der Linden, 2018).

Following the Signaling Theory, the marketer may emphasize environmental challenges experienced globally, thereby raising the level of environmental concerns among the population. This is likely to trigger a strong response from consumers who may feel compelled to act or participate in making the world a better place. In other words, customers may respond by purchasing and repurchasing environmentally friendly products. Being in an environment dominated by green products enhances an individual's mental and physical health (Hwang & Choi, 2017). Consumers are increasingly becoming aware of how to live a disease-free life. In addition, their understanding of the role of nature towards better livelihoods has seen a dramatic shift in their preference shift from non-eco-friendly products to

eco-friendly products across the globe (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). Therefore, nature experience plays a critical role in enhancing individual mental and physical well-being and such awareness is critical in shaping consumer repurchase intentions concerning green products (Liao *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it follows that consumers who value their experience with nature are more likely to purchase and repurchase eco-friendly products with the belief that mental and physical health will improve. Based on this discussion, the study hypothesises that:

*H<sub>0</sub><sub>2</sub>: Green psychological benefits do not mediate the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions.*

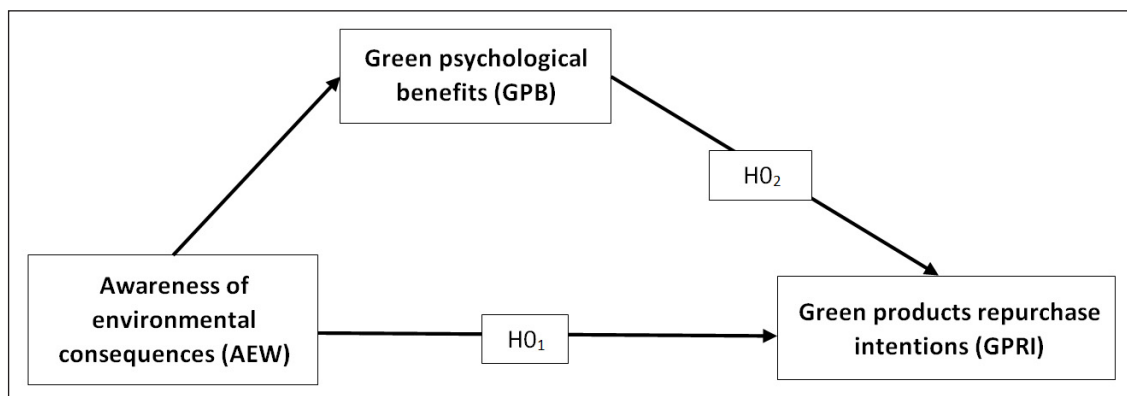
*H<sub>2</sub>: Green psychological benefits mediate the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions.*

The proposed variable relationships are shown in the study's proposed model, Figure 1.

#### 4. Research Methodology

Quantitative research was pursued with a survey carried out to gather primary data. A closed-ended self-administered questionnaire (printed) was used and the generated data was statistically analysed. A positivist research paradigm was adopted as the study formulated research hypotheses that remained unchanged upon conceptualisation throughout the conclusion of the research. The study adopted an explanatory research design where the impact of the independent variable (IV, awareness of environmental consequences) on the dependent variable

Figure 1: Research Model



Source: Author

(DV, green product repurchase intentions) was the subject of interest as well as the impact of the mediating variable (green psychological benefits) on the relationship between the IV and the DV was of interest. The primary data collection process was a once-off event; therefore, this study is cross-sectional.

#### **4.1 Data Collection and Sampling**

Consumers who visited shops that pride themselves in the sale of environmentally friendly products were the target population for this study. The shops that sold products such as solar panels, gas for cooking, and lighting products that consumed less energy, among others, were the point of contact with potential respondents. The researcher implemented the mall intercept technique and randomly distributed 500 self-administered questionnaires to consumers who visited shops that specialise in the sale of eco-friendly products. The overall population of individuals who purchase eco-friendly products is still unknown. After a 90-day period, 153 questionnaires were returned with complete information to proceed to the analysis stage. The study achieved a 31% response rate that resulted in a sample size of 153 which was deemed large enough to proceed with the research. Green shoppers returned completed questionnaires at the environmentally friendly shops and the researcher collected them from the shop owners/employees.

#### **4.2 Research Instrument, Measures, and Outcomes of Reliability Tests**

The questionnaire had four sections. The first section's design was meant to collect demographic information of green shoppers, for example gender, age, education level, monthly income, and marital status. The second section gathered data with respect to the study's independent variable, namely awareness of environment consequences. The awareness of environmental consequences scale contained four sub-scales, namely benefits of action, costs of action, benefits of inaction and costs of inaction.

The benefits of action subscale had six questionnaire items. An example of the questionnaire item reads, "Environmental protection benefits everyone". The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the subscale was derived as .898. The costs of action subscale had two questionnaire items and an example of the item reads, "Protecting the environment will threaten jobs for people like me". The Cronbach

alpha coefficient for the scale was derived and is equal to .859. The benefits of inaction subscale had three questionnaire items and an example reads, "Claims that current levels of pollution are changing earth's climate are exaggerated". The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the scale was derived and is equal to .89. The costs of inaction subscale had four questionnaire items. An example of the item reads, "The effects of pollution on public health are worse than we realize". The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the costs of inaction subscale was derived as .915.

The third section of the questionnaire gathered data with respect to the study's dependent variable, green repurchase intentions. The scale had three questionnaire items and an example of the item reads, "In the next month, I will continue to buy environmentally friendly products as they are less polluting". The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the scale was derived as .915.

The last section of the questionnaire gathered data on green psychological benefits, the study's mediating variable. The green psychological benefits scale had four subscales, namely utilitarian environmental benefits, warm glow, self-expressive benefits, and nature experiences. The utilitarian environmental benefits subscales had three questionnaire items. An example of the items reads, "Environmentally friendly brands in my view respect the environment". The subscale's Cronbach alpha coefficient score was derived as .876.

The warm glow subscale had three questionnaire items and an example of the items reads, "Clients of environmentally friendly brands can feel good because they help to protect the environment". The subscale's Cronbach alpha coefficient score was also derived and is equal to .876. The self-expressive benefits subscale had three questionnaire items and an example reads, "With environmentally friendly brands, I can express my environmental concerns". The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the subscale was derived as .874. The nature experiences subscale had three questionnaire items and an example reads, "Environmentally friendly brands make me feel close to nature". The subscale's Cronbach alpha coefficient was derived as .901.

#### **4.3 Data Analysis**

Simple linear regression and hierarchical regression analysis were performed to draw meanings from

the data with respect to  $H_{01}$  and  $H_{02}$  respectively. The first hypothesis stated that awareness of environmental consequences does not predict green product repurchase intentions and the second hypothesis stated that green psychological benefits do not mediate the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1 Awareness of Environmental Consequences as a Linear Predictor of Green Product Repurchase Intentions

As mentioned earlier, the study hypothesised that the awareness of environmental consequences does not predict green product repurchase intentions. Before the stated hypothesis was tested, data for both the independent variable (IV) and the dependent variable (DV) were investigated to verify whether they adhered to the assumptions of normality. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk test showed a  $p$ -value of less than .001. The result reveals that both the IV and the DV data violated the assumptions of normality. Based on this finding, a simple linear regression analysis was performed, and bootstrapped confidence intervals and their significance levels were requested, as they do not rely on assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity. The results revealed a very strong positive correlation between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions  $r = .867$ . The results further reveal that being aware of environmental consequences accounted for approximately 75% of the variance in green product repurchase intentions

among green customers  $R^2 = .752$ . This further informs us that approximately 25% of the variance in green product repurchase intentions is not accounted for by awareness of environmental consequences. To investigate the fitness of the model, the  $F$ -ratio was observed and the results reveal an  $F = 458.960$ , significant at  $p = .000$ . This result reveals that the model is better at predicting green product repurchase intentions (see Table 1).

The parameter estimates for the predictor of green product repurchase intentions output revealed that  $b_0 = .039$  and  $b_1 = 1.034$ . This implied that when awareness of environmental consequences increases by one unit, there would be a correspondence positive increase in the intent to repurchase green products equivalent to 1.034 units among green products buyers. This positive increase in the intent to repurchase green products is significant given  $p = .000$  (see Table 2). Given this finding, the study rejects the hypothesis stating that awareness of environmental consequences does not predict green product repurchase intentions, as there is sufficient evidence at the 95% confidence interval.

### 5.2 Green Psychological Benefits, Awareness of Environmental Consequences and Green Product Repurchase Intentions

Hierarchical regression analysis was performed making use of the Hayes Process Macro. The first model reveals the impact of awareness of environmental consequences on green psychological benefits where awareness of environmental concerns accounts for approximately 81% of the variance in green psychological benefits  $R^2 = .8097$ .

**Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Model Fit and Summary for Awareness of Environmental Consequences on Green Product Repurchase Intentions**

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Pr > F	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Estimated Standard Error
Model summary	-	-	-	-	-	.867	.752	.751	.44650
Regression	1	91.501	91.501	458.960	0.000*	-	-	-	-
Residual	151	30.104	.199	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	152	121.605	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Predictors: Awareness of environmental consequences. Outcome variable: green product repurchase intentions; \*, significant at  $p < 0.05$

Source: Author

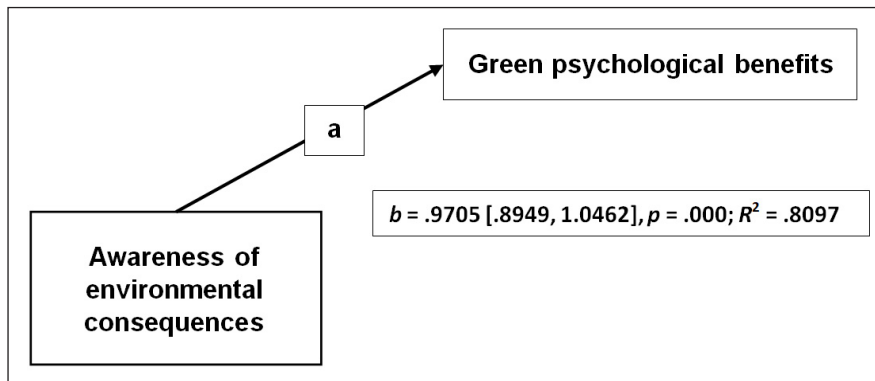
**Table 2: Parameter Estimates for Awareness of Environmental Consequences on Green Product Repurchase Intentions**

Parameter	Unstandardised Co-efficient			95.0%CI for B:LB &UB
	B	Standard error	Significance	
Constant	.039	.170	.819	[-0.175 - 0.300]
*AEC	1.034	.048	.000*	[0.946 - 1.107]

Note: Predictors: \*AEC (Awareness of environmental consequences). Outcome variable: green product repurchase intentions. LB = lower bound, UP = Upper bound; \*, significant at  $p < 0.05$

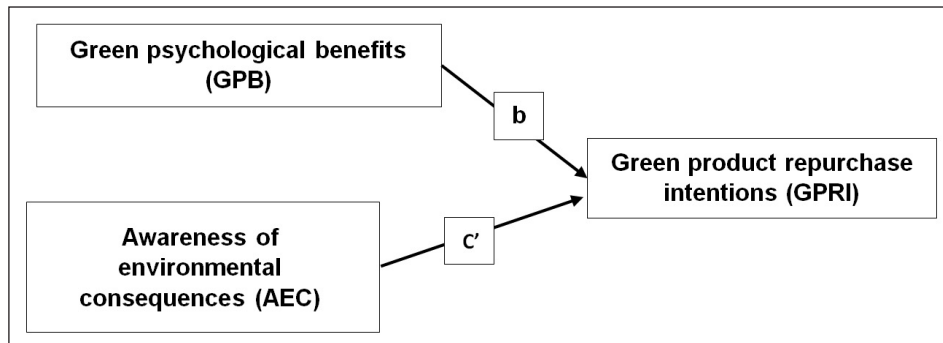
Source: Author

**Figure 2: Impact of Awareness of Environmental Consequences on Green Psychological Benefits**



Source: Author

**Figure 3: Direct Effect (c') of the IV on the DV in the Presence of the Mediator**



Source: Author

The results further reveal that awareness of environmental consequences significantly predicts green psychological benefits (path denoted by letter "a" in Figure 2), where  $b = .9705$  [.8949, 1.0462],  $p = .000$ .

The mediation results further reveal the impact of awareness of environmental consequences on green product repurchase intentions in the presence of the mediator (green psychological benefits),

that is the direct effect denoted by  $c'$ , as illustrated in Figure 3. This impact is significant where,  $b = .4628$  [.2689, .6567],  $t = 4.7159$ ,  $p = .000$ . The results further reveal that both the IV and the mediator account for approximately 81% change in the outcome variable,  $R^2 = .8064$ . In addition, the impact of green psychological benefit on green product repurchase intentions (path b) is significant given  $b = .5882$  [.4084, .7680],  $t = 6.4649$ ,  $p = .000$ .

Given the above findings, the total effect is therefore the product of path a, and path b plus the direct effect (c'), that is,  $(.9705 * .5882) + .4628 = 1.033$ . Therefore, to answer the question of whether green psychological benefits do not mediate the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions, the results reveal a significant indirect effect of awareness of environmental consequences on green product repurchase intentions through green psychological benefits,  $b = .5709$ ,  $[\text{.3739}, \text{.7634}]$ ,  $t = 5.7319$ . Given this result, there is sufficient evidence to reject the hypothesis stating that green psychological benefits do not mediate the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions. In addition, the direct effect of awareness of environment consequences on green product repurchase intentions is also significant,  $b = .4628$   $[\text{.2689}, \text{.6567}]$ ,  $t = 4.7159$ ,  $p = .000$ . Given this finding, the study concludes that green psychological benefits partially mediate the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions. Table 3 summarises the results discussed.

## 6. Discussion

At least three issues can be discussed further which emanate from the study's findings. The first issue is that the findings have pointed to awareness of environmental consequences accounting for approximately 75% of the variance in green product repurchase intentions ( $R^2 = .752$ ). More importantly, a 1 unit positive change in the awareness of environmental consequence levels among customers results in a corresponding significant positive change in green product repurchase intentions equivalent to 1.034 units. This finding shows that marketers can play a significant role in ensuring that the general

population who cares about the environment can take part in mitigating environmental challenges that the environment is facing. On one hand, marketers can produce eco-friendly products, and then signal to the consumers who care about the environment through promotional packages. The critical aspect however is that for the marketer's efforts to yield the intended outcomes, the promotional strategies should emphasize human behaviour as a contributor to the environmental challenges that we are facing. That in turn may compel consumers who care about the environment to purchase and continue buying eco-friendly products. This finding is in line with that of Kao and Du (2020) who found that when advertising is about the environment, individuals who are strongly attached to the environment are more likely to respond positively and take part in protecting the environment, such as repurchasing eco-friendly products.

The second issue is that of green psychological benefits as measured by utilitarian environmental benefits, warm glow, self-expressive benefits and nature experience. The study's findings indicate that green psychological benefits partially mediate the relationship between the awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions. In other words, when marketers successfully identify the real or perceived benefits of adopting eco-friendly products, that could serve as a positive intervention mechanism, which can be used to enhance positive attitudes towards green products, which could result in consumers repurchasing such products and possibly mitigating environmental challenges. The study's findings are in line with research that indicates that people who understand the benefits derived from adopting green products are more likely to contribute more towards improving the environment and

**Table 3: Mediation Analysis Summary**

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t-Statistics	Conclusion
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
*AEC > **GPB > ***GPRI	1.033 (.000)	.4628 (.000)	.5709	.3739	.7634	5.7319	Partial mediation

\*AEC = Awareness of environmental consequences; \*\*GPB = Green psychological benefits;  
\*\*\*GPRI = Green product repurchase intentions

Source: Author



this could be through repurchasing green products (Hartmann & Apaolaza-Ibáñez, 2012).

### 6.1 Implications to Theory

The study provided evidence from a South African perspective. South Africa is an emerging economy and it can contribute significantly towards mitigating the effects of climate change owing to human interaction with the environment. To do so, marketers can apply the Signaling Theory in designing intervention mechanisms and raising awareness of environmental consequences. Their signals should emphasize how the continued use of non-eco-friendly products could prove fatal in the present day and in the long run. The signals must also emphasize real and perceived psychological benefits of utilising green products to trigger a positive attitude towards eco-friendly products among non-green consumers and possibly sustain a positive attitude towards green products among green consumers.

### 6.2 Implications to Practice

The study developed a model which can be relied upon by both managers and marketing practitioners to develop marketing strategies that are earmarked for changing consumers' negative attitudes toward green products and also sustaining the positive attitude of green consumers toward green products. In addition, the model can be used to increase awareness of environmental consequences to ensure that those who are attached to the environment continue to do more to protect the environment.

### 6.3 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

Although efforts were made to solicit responses from a large group of respondents, and a reasonable time (90 days) was given to respondents to complete and return the questionnaires, only 153 out of 500 individuals did respond. Therefore, the reader must exercise caution when generalising the research findings to the entire South African population of green consumers. Multi-country research can be undertaken with the goal of exploring the behaviour of green consumers in light of increased environmental challenges across the globe.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

In light of the research findings, three conclusions are drawn. The study provided evidence from an

emerging economy perspective that awareness of environmental consequences drives green consumers to continue buying eco-friendly products with the belief that their efforts will help mitigate environmental challenges that are being experienced globally. This finding is in line with empirical evidence that suggests that people who care about the environment will continue to contribute to the well-being of the environment through the continued adoption of eco-friendly products. Lastly, the study concludes that green psychological benefits partially mediate the relationship between awareness of environmental consequences and green product repurchase intentions. Thus, there is evidence that being aware of environmental consequences directly impacts green product repurchase intentions. However, to a certain degree, that impact has a significant effect on a green consumer who is aware of the real or perceived psychological benefits of adopting eco-friendly products.

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# The Experiences of Engineering Students About the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Development: A Case in Gauteng Province

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**Abstract:** The Fourth Industrial Revolution has become the subject of much debate by scholars, different stakeholders, and politicians. The 4IR is an era where people are using smart, connected, and converged cyber, physical, and biological systems and smart business models to define and reshape the social, economic, and political spheres. South African educational institutions have difficulties, such as low levels of reading and writing proficiency, weak levels of logic and reasoning, and insufficient utilisation of technological resources. Due to the lack of an adequate supply of advanced engineering talent, South Africans would have to wait a long time before they can reap the benefits of innovation-led development. Beyond that, the skills need to be developed by people in regular jobs to deal with the disruptive effects of new technologies in their work environments. The 4IR requires certain skills that are not the same as the skills that were required in the 3IR. Thus, the 4IR continues to be desired by the majority of South Africans, especially engineering students, but this revolution is still challenging. In order to find a solution to the professional skills gap caused by the apparent disequilibrium and insufficiency of the South African educational system's skills, the aim of this paper is to investigate the experiences of engineering students about the Fourth Industrial Revolution and development. In order to determine if engineering education would continue to be offered at South African institutions of higher education in the 4IR age, this paper employs qualitative methods to identify an interpretive paradigm.

**Keywords:** Development, Engineering, Experiences, 4IR, Students, Universities

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## 1. Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is described as 'the fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres' (Schwab, 2019). The 4IR, as summarised by Schulze (2019), describes how technological advancements like artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, and the internet of things are influencing how people live their physical lives. The term "4IR" is credited to Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum (WEF) (Schwab, 2019). The 4IR is anticipated to have a significant impact on all facets of our everyday lives, including how people interact with technology and how we work, live, and do our jobs (Moloi & Marwala, 2020). From one country to the next, the 4IR's effects are different, and culture plays a pivotal role in this regard. Around 1760, the steam engine, a significant breakthrough, led to the First Industrial Revolution in Britain (Moloi & Marwala, 2020). At the conclusion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Second Industrial Revolution began. Massive inventions in the fields of semiconductors, personal computers, and the internet were

made during the Third Industrial Revolution (3IR) (Marwala, 2020). The 4IR is different from the 3IR because the digital, physical, and biological worlds are shrinking to an extent that it is practically difficult to differentiate between these worlds, and the rate at which technology is changing is faster than ever (Schulze, 2019).

The 4IR century has transformed teaching and learning in the universities that is rebranded by rapid technological advancements. Virtual reality and augmented reality and the internet of Things are 4IR technologies the study is focussing on. The use of ICT need to be used when teaching engineering students. There are massive use of zero-rated applications and educational websites, social media, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, internet Websites, YouTube, Microsoft Teams, Skype, and Zoom that are used. The tools above are new technologies that are being discovered in the 4IR, but other tools were discovered in the 3IR, but now they are beginning to find new purposes due to the rapid convergence of advance technologies across the biological, physical, and digital worlds. Information,

knowledge, and innovation drive the engineering field, necessitating the development of both technical and soft skills (Forbes, Bielefeldt & Sullivan, 2015). Kayembe and Nel (2019) emphasise the reinvention of education systems and strategic approaches to increase creativity and innovation. Additionally, McKinsey (2015) indicates that for South Africa to become a hub for global competition, the sector had to improve its capacity for innovation. In contrast, Rodny-Gumede (2019) contends that South Africa's educational system has not promoted innovative and creative thinking. Once more, in order to provide new interdisciplinary science programmes, institutions must be restructured in response to 4IR in education (Penprase, 2018). According to the 4IR, educational institutions must promote collaboration with other stakeholders including the government and private companies. Moreover, the investment by governments and higher education institutions in research and new university curricula is important to obtain the best results from new technological advancements.

Additionally, the 4IR demands brand-new skill sets. In a similar spirit, Fick (2019) notes that people in South Africa suffer from skills deficits that are much more fundamental than the ones people are being urged to address ahead of the 4IR. Some of the skills needed for 4IR are foundational skills such as Workforce Readiness, Soft Skills, Technical Skills, and Entrepreneurial skills (Gray, 2016). Despite the fact that engineering education begins in higher education, the seeds for creating a skilled engineering professional must be planted in fundamental engineering classes with both technical and soft skills (Fomunyam, 2019). Butler-Adam (2018) argues that appropriate skills for implementing, managing, and collaborating with new technologies are necessary for the 4IR to be implemented successfully in education. The technical skills that 4IR requires are the hardest to find in South Africa, according to Greyling (2019). According to Gray (2016), 35% of the skills that are crucial in today's workforce can change. Similarly, PwC (2017) claims that 4IR technologies and their applications frequently call for specialised skills above and beyond basic digital literacy. Universities have the mandate to help in the development of these skills because being excluded from universities also means being excluded from learning these specialised skills. They conducted workshops, seminars et cetera. Ramukumba (2019) reveals that the South African school curriculum does not equip students with the right skills and

computer science skills for the 4IR. In contrast, Wanab (2020) stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic various learning institutions stopped face to face classes towards online learning. Dube (2020) posits that students adjusted to online learning, using various learning management systems and low-tech applications. Fomunyam (2020) indicates that a paradigm shift in curriculum revision with soft skills inclusion will add value to the engineering profession and its workforce.

Again, Mourtos (2015) makes the case that for older engineering educators, the requirement to give engineering students better professional skills together with emerging core skill prerequisites may seem terrifying. If this pattern of inadequate skill predictions is not properly addressed and becomes a national priority agenda, it may get worse in the future. According to Schwab (2016), the 4IR has the potential to cause social disruptions, but it is within the people's capacity to address them and implement the changes and policies required to adapt and thrive in our rapidly changing world. This study aims to investigate the experiences of engineering students about the 4IR and development in Gauteng Province. With the use of this study, engineering students will be able to explore new skills, new possibilities, opportunities, new creations, and new inventions for the 4IR.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 What is the 4IR?

The (4IR) is the period in which nations all over the world are embracing technologies that are changing the game, such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things (IoT) (Schwab, 2016). The 4IR is a combination of our physical and biological worlds with these powerful technological technologies. Think ubiquitous computers, interconnected digital devices, intelligent robots, autonomous vehicles, gene editing, the printing of organic matter, and even brain enhancements (Gleason, 2018). The previous three industrial revolutions can be used to understand the 4IR.

### 2.2 The Experiences of Engineering Students About the 4IR and Development

Engineering and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines are involved in the continuous process of modernisation and revolution (Carnevale, Smith & Melton, 2011). Engineers

are expected to possess soft skills in addition to the technical skills acquired. This will help engineers understand project objectives and be able to carry them out with the resources at hand (Litchfield, Javernick-Will & Maul, 2016). To meet the demands of the 4IR, engineering programmes are challenged to create innovative techniques to teach classes so that graduate students are prepared to take on the challenges in this present era. The engineering field requires a wide range of practical soft skills in addition to highly developed technical skills (Shvetsova & Kuzmina, 2018). Despite such needs in the engineering labour force, the academic engineering curriculum is developed to focus on technical skills, neglecting important 4IR soft skills.

The 4IR will require schools to properly prepare learners with the right tools to come up with new and innovative solutions to today's and tomorrow's problems facing society. If the right skills are not taught to every learner, this revolution can lead to greater inequality. With the right skills, all learners will succeed either in the job market or as entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship in the 4IR will open up new opportunities that don't yet exist; the education that learners receive must equip them with the necessary skills to succeed as entrepreneurs (Ramukumba, 2019). Creativity, problem-solving, critical analysis, independent thinking, and analytical skills are some of the skills needed to exploit opportunities presented by the 4IR (Ramukumba, 2019). Educators must acquire the skills and tools necessary to prepare learners for opportunities in the 4IR.

### **2.3 Universities and the 4IR**

According to Kehdinga and Fomunyam (2019), education is evolving in the twenty-first century exactly like it did throughout the previous three revolutions. The social and industrial changes happening in the 4IR, according to Kehdinga and Fomunyam (2019), explain and present new tendencies in the development of contemporary engineering education. Engineering schools encourage interdisciplinary research and the development of entrepreneurial engineers. The most in-demand 4IR disciplines with the best employment prospects are science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. Data science and geoinformatics, according to Carrim (2022), are in high demand as new technologies and digital platforms generate massive volumes of data and alter how knowledge is created, accessed, and used.

Kehdinga and Fomunyam (2019) emphasised educational collaboration and industrial cooperation once more as crucial qualities to make trust for engineers' future employability. Delivering education in conjunction with society, business, employers, and the government is necessary for success in the 4IR. According to Oke and Fernandes (2020), the education industry is not yet fully prepared for the 4IR, particularly in Africa. On the other hand, according to Kayembe and Nel (2019), funding for education is insufficient for educational institutions to operate to their full potential. To succeed at educational institutions, the 4IR need significant financial support. Education is greatly gaining from the increased use of new technologies, particularly from artificial intelligence, which is causing computers to become faster, more intelligent, and smarter. Other new technologies that are benefiting education include robotics, 3D printing, the internet of things, cloud computing, and advanced wireless technologies. Even digital technologies that were discovered in the 3IR are being given completely new roles as a result of the availability of fast and dependable internet like 5G. As a result, these technologies are being rediscovered to the point that they now come within the category of new technologies. For instance, students are taking virtual lessons on their laptops and cell phones because of the fast internet.

### **2.4 The Skills Required for the 4IR**

The 4IR has different skills requirements than the 3IR, which was primarily driven by information technology (Suganya, 2017). These skills are critical thinking, people management, emotional intelligence, judgement, negotiation, cognitive flexibility, as well as knowledge production and management (Suganya, 2017). Soft skills are important to an employee's career growth within an organisation. In their 2013 article, Knobbs, Gerryts, and Roodt highlight the lack of soft skills training for engineering graduates entering the mining business. According to Knobbs *et al.* (2013), while graduates are skilled in technical areas, they lack the soft skills needed to handle interpersonal challenges in the job.

### **2.5 The Change Brought by the 4IR in Higher Education**

Reaves (2019) argues that online learning is the way of the future of education. Massive changes in industries will be brought about by technologies like artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, robotics,

and additive manufacturing, which will put pressure on education. According to Waghid, Waghid and Waghid (2019), the 4IR is fundamentally altering how universities run, particularly in terms of teaching and learning. Waghid *et al.* (2019) went on to argue that the 4IR can transform the way humans interact emanating from the evolution of technology from various fields such as: 'artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the internet of things (IoT), autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing.' The cosmopolitan human condition, which is the amplified merger of technologies across the physical, digital, and biological worlds, is also argued to be a priority by Waghid *et al.* (2019) in their argument that universities in South Africa should prioritise it.

Reaves (2019) asserts that education needs to be restructured in order to teach 21st-century skills like "flexibility, adaptability, observation, empathy, creativity, innovation, and learning how to learn" in degrees and across disciplines. Reaves (2019) went on to state that even online learning needs restructuring so that 21st-century skills are taught and be able to be practised. The 4IR fosters circumstances that have a big impact on what we teach, what we study, and how we contribute to the economy, the workforce, and society as a whole at our universities. According to Kupe (2019) and Carrim (2022), the 4IR necessitates that universities be repositioned in order to maximise our contribution to the reconstruction of South Africa's future and the ensuing development and employment. Prisecaru (2016) adds that social media platforms are used by 30% of the world's population. Online search platforms like Google Scholar and YouTube have become new vehicles for teaching and learning.

### 3. Theoretical Frameworks

Due to the rapid changes in the political, cultural, social, economic, and technical environments, 21st-century society expects a lot of its citizens. It is now increasingly difficult to function without personal computers, social networks and platforms, and cell phones, which were formerly thought to be frivolous, have had a significant impact on society (Magout, 2020). Nearly every aspect of our everyday life is impacted by these technologies, including business operations and teaching and learning. The society must adjust its knowledge and abilities in all spheres of life to keep up with these shifting

circumstances (Magout, 2020). Youth must receive their education at a variety of institutions in order to provide them with the knowledge and abilities needed for the 4IR.

Unprecedented demand is placed on educational institutions to keep up with the needs and expectations of a society that are always changing. According to Reaves (2019), students today need different skills than they did 20 years ago in order to be equipped for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Employers are currently looking for young individuals with modern skills including teamwork, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills. The importance of life-long learning and its role in creating a knowledge society are top priorities (Moon & Seol, 2017). When the government is preparing students to live, work, and flourish in the twenty-first century, it is imperative to come up with fresh teaching and learning strategies. According to the shift in social attitudes toward education and how it is delivered, educators believe that technology has the potential to solve a variety of issues (Magout, 2020). As resources increasingly grow scarcer and demand for access to higher education of higher quality skyrockets, it is critical to reconsider traditional teaching and learning approaches as new educational technology become available. It is necessary to look into the impact of the technology revolution on skill development as well as the sector's general readiness. Many theories attempt to explain the problem of innovations in the education sector from various angles. The two theories that were taken into consideration for this study were Connectivism and Engagement.

#### 3.1 The Connectivism Theory of Learning

The use of technology makes people interact with one another. The impact of technology on how we learn, live, and communicate is explained by connectivism (Downes, 2007). The connectivism theory combines relevant components of numerous learning theories, social structures, and technology to produce a potent theoretical framework for the digital age. According to Siemens (2006), all learning theories were created before technology had an impact on education. The proliferation of technology has made it impossible for learning to control the learner, and many tasks that were formerly performed by humans, such information storage and retrieval, are now handled by technology (Kop & Hill, 2008). The difficulty facing educators today

is creating training that works for both humans and technology (Downes, 2007). According to Siemens (2006), learning should be organised around the flow of knowledge across networks rather than simply being the general acquisition of knowledge. Learning is a process of linking specialised nodes or information sources, learning may dwell in non-human appliances, and ability to know more is more important than what is now understood, among other connectivism-related notions, which are presented by Siemens (2006) and Downes (2014). This theory establishes a link between human and technological knowledge.

### **3.2 Engagement Theory**

According to Clarà and Barberà (2013), student engagement should be at the centre of learning activities where students connect with one another most frequently. Dickey (2005) asserts that social interactions and collaborations are significant so that learners become involved in a community of practice. All students are engaged in activities that include active cognitive processes like creating, problem-solving, reasoning, decision making, and evaluation (Magout, 2020). Further, engagement creates intrinsic motivation in students to learn due to the nature of the environment created and its activities (Magout, 2020). Magout (2020) asserts that technology helps to facilitate all aspects of engagement which are difficult to attain without technology. Online conversations, conferences, emails, chat, and video conferencing are all used by engagement theory to facilitate easy interaction among all participants. The positive impact that technology can have on human interaction and evolution is emphasised by engagement theory (Reaves, 2019). This theory connects to contextual learning, constructivism, and experimental learning because they emphasise project-based learning and collaborative efforts that produce authentic, creative work (Magout, 2020).

## **4. Methodology**

For this study, interpretivism was chosen as the guiding paradigm. The qualitative approach was chosen by the researcher because it enables dialogue with the participants in authentic contexts where they can share their opinions, ideas, or beliefs about their actual experiences with the 4IR in their institutions. The interviews gave the researcher the chance to gather sensitive data that was rich in descriptions of university engineering students. All

engineering students from the universities in South Africa's Gauteng Province made up the population of this study. The researcher chose the Gauteng Province based on the accessibility of the research sample and its proximity to the area.

The researcher used a case study research approach in this study to examine the experiences of engineering students about the 4IR and development in the Gauteng Province. The study was only conducted at five particular universities in South Africa's Gauteng Province. In this study, engineering students who are enrolled in their last courses at the five institutions in the Gauteng Province were chosen using a purposive sample technique. Cohen, Morrison, and Manion (2011) contend that a qualitative research study's sampling population must be relatively small in order to yield the intended results. The study's thirty-one (31) participants were chosen. In Tshwane, semi-structured individual interviews with fifteen participants were held. There were two focus groups set up. Sixteen people participated in the focus group discussions, which were held in Johannesburg. This was done in order to provide the researcher with engineering students' experiences about the 4IR and development in the Gauteng Province. The results may not be generalised but the focus is on the in-depth information and data provided by the participants. Participants made informed independent decisions about whether or not to take part in the study.

## **5. Data Collection**

This study employed focus groups and semi-structured individual interviews. Thirteen participants from the universities in Tshwane participated in semi-structured individual interviews, and sixteen students from the universities in Johannesburg participated in focus groups. It was determined that the semi-structured individual interview was appropriate for this study since it gave participants the chance to share their opinions on the 4IR and development in the Gauteng Province. To learn more about the experiences of engineering students about the 4IR and development in the Gauteng Province, focus groups were also used as a data collection method. With the participants' consent, the researcher used an audio recorder to capture the interviews. The researcher was able to compare the several interviews that were utilised in the study and discover and develop the themes that emerged from the paper.

## 6. Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis was employed in this study. Due to its adaptability, thematic analysis is a frequently used qualitative analytical technique. This paper used an inductive method to data analysis. Braun and Clarke (2013) advise transcription of audio data, which entails playing a tape in extremely brief bursts and typing out what the researchers hear, as a pre-requisite to analysing the recorded data. Following the interviews, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were attentively and carefully read, then read again to become familiar with their content. To discover significant themes that arose from the research, the transcripts were reviewed numerous times, and notes were taken, categorised, and organised in accordance with the study's objectives. A system for major theme clarification was established using this initial reading as a foundation. Codes were applied for ethical reasons as well as to safeguard the participants' and their universities' identities. The researcher looked for both little and large bits of data that would address the study's research issue before coding it. In order to identify recurring themes, the data were coded and categorised. By double-checking the coded data and ensuring that the data were utilised, the researcher reviewed themes. The report was written by the researcher, who had to select transcribed cases to highlight various topics. A notion was more likely to be regarded as the study's theme if it appeared in the text more frequently.

## 7. Results and Discussion

### 7.1 Theme 1: Lack of Appropriate Skills for the 4IR

Individual interviews revealed that engineering students lacked the necessary abilities for the 4IR. Once more, the results of focus group discussions showed that students lack the necessary skills for the 4IR. Interviews revealed that the 4IR was introduced hastily when students lacked the necessary competencies. The majority of participants agreed that South Africa lacks the necessary technical, soft, entrepreneurial, and workforce skills. To support the aforementioned claim, participants noted:

*FEJA (Focus Group A): "The 4IR requires the appropriate skills." FEJB (Focus Group B): "Skills challenges are real." ES1 (Engineering Student 1): "Students do not have appropriate skills for*

*the 4IR." ES2: "We implore the government to give students the training they need for the 4IR." ES3: "Engineers must have soft skills in addition to their technical training." ES4: "Students should be ready to develop the necessary skills for the 4IR." ES5: "To improve collaboration and employability in the future workforce, educators and students should be encouraged to participate in skill development training." ES6: "South Africa has sadly struggled to generate a highly skilled workforce, which the 4IR demands." ES7: "Engineering students lack soft skills."*

The above narratives indicate that engineering students have inadequate skills for the 4IR. Reaves (2019) makes the argument that students today need different kinds of abilities than they did twenty years ago in order to be equipped for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to Magout (2020), society must adapt its knowledge and abilities in all spheres of life in order to stay up with the changing circumstances. The technical skills that 4IR requires are the hardest to find in South Africa, according to Greyling (2019). Similar to this, PwC (2017) claims that 4IR technologies and their implementations frequently call for specialised skills above and beyond basic digital literacy. In the same vein, Suganya (2017) contends that key skills necessary for the 4IR differ from those needed for the 3IR. It could be argued that universities struggle to prepare engineering students for the needs of the 4IR. Knobbs *et al.* (2013) also highlight the lack of soft skills training for engineering graduates joining the mining industry.

### 7.2 Theme 2: Redesigning the Curriculum to Satisfy 4IR Requirements

Individual interviews revealed that institutions should update their curricula to comply with the 4IR. Findings from individual interviews with engineering teachers revealed that they should possess in-depth knowledge of the engineering field as well as enough support for the growth of their professional abilities through access to top-notch learning opportunities. The results of focus group groups showed that teachers should be knowledgeable about the engineering field in order to prepare future engineering graduates to successfully complete their study and enter the workforce. Most participants agreed that curriculum should be changed to better match the requirements of society and the 4IR. The following remarks serve as proof for the answers given above:



*ES1: "Our education cannot make us to find employment." FEJB: "Educational institutions' curricula should be reviewed for development, and they should also be in line with societal demands and take the 4IR into consideration." FEJA: "The 4IR should be considered in university curricula." ES2: "Curriculum should continuously change to match the needs of the period and environment". ES3: "Universities should redesign their courses to accommodate the demands of the 4IR." ES4: "Engineers with advanced degrees and a variety of skills explain problems and enhance the curriculum."*

The aforementioned enlightenments indicate that curriculum revision should be pertinent to societal and 4IR needs. According to Kupe (2019) and Carrim (2022), the 4IR necessitates that universities be repositioned in order to maximise our contribution to the reconstruction of South Africa's future and the ensuing development and employment landscape. Oke and Fernandes (2020) contend that the African continent's educational system is still not completely ready for the 4IR. The engineering profession and its workforce will benefit from a paradigm change in curriculum modification that includes the incorporation of soft skills, according to Fomunyam (2020). On the other hand, Kehdinga and Fomunyan (2019) stress the significance of industrial and educational collaboration. It might be argued that the Connectivism idea links human and technological knowledge. According to Magout (2020), technology makes all aspects of involvement easier to achieve than they would be without it. The 4IR seems to be ignored by educational institutions' curricula, and what engineering students are taught must be related to the 4IR's requirements. The active cognitive processes of creation, problem-solving, reasoning, decision-making, and evaluation are being used by all students.

### 7.3 Theme 3: Increasing Creativity and Innovation

Individual interview data put a strong emphasis on creativity for the 4IR. Once more, the study showed that the 4IR requires the creation of novel products and business models. The results of focus group groups suggested that universities should foster a culture of creativity and innovation. The following statements captured the opinions of the participants:

*FEJA: "More funding for research and development is required." ES3: "Research and development have a crucial role in driving innovation in the 4IR." FEJB: "Innovation is significant in South Africa."*

Participants' quotes and comments in the aforementioned responses provide evidence that South Africa is innovative. Ramukumba (2019) argues that creativity, problem-solving, critical analysis, independent thinking, and analytical skills are some of the skills needed to exploit opportunities promoted by the 4IR. According to Mckinsey (2015), for South Africa to become a centre for global competition, the sector had to improve its capacity for innovation. The importance of reimagining educational systems and adopting tactical techniques is stressed by Kayembe and Nel (2019). According to Forbes, Bielefeldt, and Sullivan (2015), the engineering field is driven by information, knowledge, and innovation, all of which call for the development of technical and soft skills. In contrast, Rodny-Gumede (2019) contends that South Africa's educational system has not promoted innovative and creative thinking.

## 8. Limitations of the Study

A potential barrier to the generalisation of results was the study's confinement to just five universities in the Gauteng Province. It will be necessary to do additional research with numerous universities from every province in South Africa. The information provided by the participants may potentially be prejudiced, poorly reconstructed, or provide false descriptions of the circumstances at hand. Data was collected using focus groups and semi-structured individual interviews to prevent such occurrences from skewing the study's conclusions. Using the qualitative method as the research strategy could limit the investigation.

## 9. Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications

This paper set out to investigate the experiences of engineering students about the 4IR and development in Gauteng Province. In order to gather information from the engineering students enrolled in the universities in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, an interpretive qualitative study with a case study was used, as well as data collection methods such as semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions. The two theories that were taken into consideration for this study to investigate the problem around the experiences of engineering students about the 4IR and development in Gauteng Province were Connectivism and Engagement. By incorporating new skills abilities from the 4IR platforms, the skill gaps should be

filled, preparing engineering students for greater performance in the workplace. Refocusing on the quality and advancement of engineering education is necessary. Additionally, the expansion of insightful engineering programmes should be centred on planning and labour market assessment the extension of experiences engineering programs should be focused on planning and labour market analysis in the 4IR period. In order to spend more in engineering education, technical and soft skills instructional training should be made available, and the curriculum should be changed to reflect the 4IR age. The 4IR should demand the proper expertise.

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# Analysis of the Implementation of SDGs as Part of Community Engagement Activities at South African Universities: An Exploratory Study

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**Abstract:** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) developed and adopted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in September 2015 have created a new understanding of social responsibilities. The SDGs are a framework for building or creating a more sustainable future for all by 2030. Decision-makers in numerous industries have regarded the SDGs' implementation as a challenging undertaking. University community engagement initiatives undertaken by universities is one of the ways that can fast track the implementation of the SDGs. Universities are in a position to train and prepare the next generation with the skills required in the implementation of SDGs by involving students in their community engagement endeavors. Therefore, research on how universities are conducting their community engagement initiatives to incorporate SDGs is necessary. The objective of this study was to explore how the South African universities have incorporated the SDGs in their community engagement initiatives and what their SDGs priorities are. The focus of this study was on the eighteen traditional universities in South Africa. Universities' annual reports were examined using a qualitative exploratory approach and a content analysis research method was used to review the universities' involvement with SDGs. ATLAS.ti was used as a data analysis tool for this study. The findings indicate most South African universities incorporate SDGs in their community engagement initiatives. The universities' community engagement initiatives are directed towards achieving SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 17, which centres around partnerships to achieve the goals, and SDG 5 (gender equality). Universities are working cooperatively and have already begun referencing and integrating SDGs in their reporting. However, the incorporation of SDGs into the universities' community engagement reporting is not sufficient as some universities are not yet mentioning SDGs in their annual reports.

**Keywords:** Community engagements, SDGs, Universities, Higher education

## 1. Introduction

The United Nations (UN) adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 (UNDP, 2015). The 17 SDGs serve as a roadmap for building a better and more sustainable future for all people as they address issues like poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, justice, as well as other global problems. Achieving the SDGs will undoubtedly require stakeholders from various sectors, such as government, the private sector and universities learning to work together towards this common goal. Many organisations have started to incorporate these SDGs as part of their operations being socially responsible and are further striving to meet them (PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), 2019). According to a survey conducted by KPMG (2020), approximately 72 percent of the G250 (the largest companies in the world by revenue as defined in the Fortune 500 ranking of 2019), have already

begun incorporating these SDGs into their strategies. However, SDG reporting is still unbalanced and disconnected (KPMG, 2020).

As a response to the framework offered by the SDGs, universities are revisiting their teaching, research and community engagement programmes (Fia, Ghasemzadeh & Paletta, 2022). However, there are still massive challenges in implementing and achieving the SDGs (Scheyvens, Banks & Hughes, 2016). Knowledge deficit and lack of collaboration have been identified as some of the challenges in implementing and achieving the SDGs (Agusdinata, 2022; Tandon, 2017). Universities can assist in overcoming this challenge through incorporating the SDGs in their research, teaching and learning, and community engagement activities. Universities are crucial contributors to reaching SDGs as they are the main centres for the creation of new knowledge through research and the transmission of knowledge through teaching (Junior, Fine & Horne, 2019; Mawonde &

Togo, 2019; European University on Responsible Consumption and Production, 2022). Universities have a long tradition of conducting in-depth research and engaging with various communities through their research and community engagement initiatives. Furthermore, universities are essential in bringing diverse stakeholders together to act and have an influence in achieving the SDGs (Leal Filho, Shiel, Paço, Mifsud, Ávila, Brandli, Molthan-Hill, Pace, Azeiteiro, Vargas & Caeiro, 2019).

With their ability to collaborate, form partnerships, and engage with external parties (Trencher, Rosenberg Daneri, McCormick, Terada, Peterson, Yarime & Kiss, 2016), universities can contribute their intellectual expertise to address complex societal and environmental challenges. Universities, as large entities, can establish sustainability divisions in order to launch community-based initiatives like recycling waste into usable materials, collaborating with industry and other important groups to promote efficient, clean technologies, and ultimately, sustainable campuses and universities. In this way, such initiatives can inspire students and wider communities to change their own behaviours to achieve the SDGs. Such initiatives are expected to be included in the universities' community engagement reporting in their annual reports. Therefore, research on how universities are conducting their community engagement initiatives to incorporate SDGs is necessary. The objective of this study was to explore how the South African universities have incorporated the SDGs in their community engagement initiatives and what their SDGs priorities are. Furthermore, the study made a comparison of the findings with the priorities of other universities from developed countries. The next section will firstly introduce the theoretical framework that underpins the study, then it will highlight the link between SDGs and decoloniality in an African context. Further, it will also introduce the literature that explains the SDGs, and it will provide an explanation of the universities' perspectives regarding the SDGs and how universities globally are implementing these SDGs.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The Theoretical Frameworks

There were two theories considered for this study, which include stewardship theory and legitimacy theory:

#### 2.1.1 Stewardship Theory

According to the stewardship theory, people are innately motivated by their concern for the success of their organisations to achieve the responsibilities that they have been tasked with. As part of stewardship theory, there are several key features, including a strong sense of purpose, long-term focus, sustainability as well as strong and mutually beneficial relationships (between employees, stakeholders, and community members) (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2021). From this view, people tend to be mutually understanding and in support of the organisational objectives instead of having personal selfish goals. As a result, through community engagement initiatives, stewardship theory allows universities to address the UN's social-ecological sustainability challenges from the local community level (Menyah, 2013).

#### 2.1.2 Legitimacy Theory

As a fundamental tenet of legitimacy theory, entities should continue to exist only if their moral principles and rules of conduct reflect the values of the society in which they function (Samkin & Deegan, 2012). It is imperative for entities seeking legitimacy to make rational and informed choices that will lead to their success and legitimacy in society (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000; Thompson, 2017). Despite South Africa being the second largest economy on the African continent, the country is afflicted by the triple threats of inequality, high unemployment and poverty (Masikane, Hewitt & Toendepi, 2020).

In light of these challenges, higher education institutions are faced with a balancing act. As a part of the solution to these challenges, these institutions cannot solely rely on producing university graduates and creating research outputs. Accordingly, higher education institutions are equally obligated to seek legitimacy by contributing to solving the challenges that affect society and at the same time achieve the SDGs. It follows, therefore, that the goals of teaching and learning, generating research outputs, and addressing societal challenges can happen and can be achieved simultaneously, and their community engagement initiatives should incorporate efforts towards achieving the SDGs.

### 2.2 SDG Overview

The SDGs have emerged as one of the main umbrella frameworks for addressing issues of inequality and societal concerns, with the goal of ensuring a more

sustainable future for all by the year 2030 (UNDP, 2015). The SDGs comprises of 17 goals which were adopted by 193 countries and South Africa was one of them. The list of the 17 SDGs is presented in Figure 1.

The objective of the SDGs is to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee that people live in peace and prosperity. The SDGs goals replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which came to an end in 2015. The MDGs only had eight objectives, which were centred on reducing poverty, preserving the environment, enhancing education, battling diseases, and enhancing the livelihoods of women and children. The SDGs have expanded the MDG's objectives to include climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace, and justice (UNDP, 2015). The SDGs model a systems-based approach to analysing both global and local issues (International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), 2020).

Since the adoption of the SDGs, organisations globally have started to incorporate them into their

strategies and have begun reporting on them (KPMG, 2020). Although South Africa in particular has made progress toward reaching the SDGs, there are still many obstacles to overcome (United Nations, 2019). Among other challenges, implementing the SDGs will require collaboration and integration across many stakeholders, as well as clear instructions on how to do it (Agusdinata, 2022). Furthermore, it has been stated that organisations are still selective of the SDGs that they focus on, which is slowing down the progress in meeting these SDGs (Bockstette, Pfitzer, Smith, Bhavaraju, Priestley & Bhatt, 2015).

Achieving the SDGs calls for a combination of administrative, political, technological, scientific, and administrative contributions and will require a collaborative strategy (Nhamo & Mjiba, 2020). Universities are better placed to facilitate this strategy by facilitating the involvement of different stakeholders given their role in society, which includes creation of knowledge through research and teaching. Thus, universities can play a big role in meeting the SDGs.

Figure 1: The UN Vision 2030 SDGs



Source: (UNDP, 2015)

### 2.3 Universities' Perspective

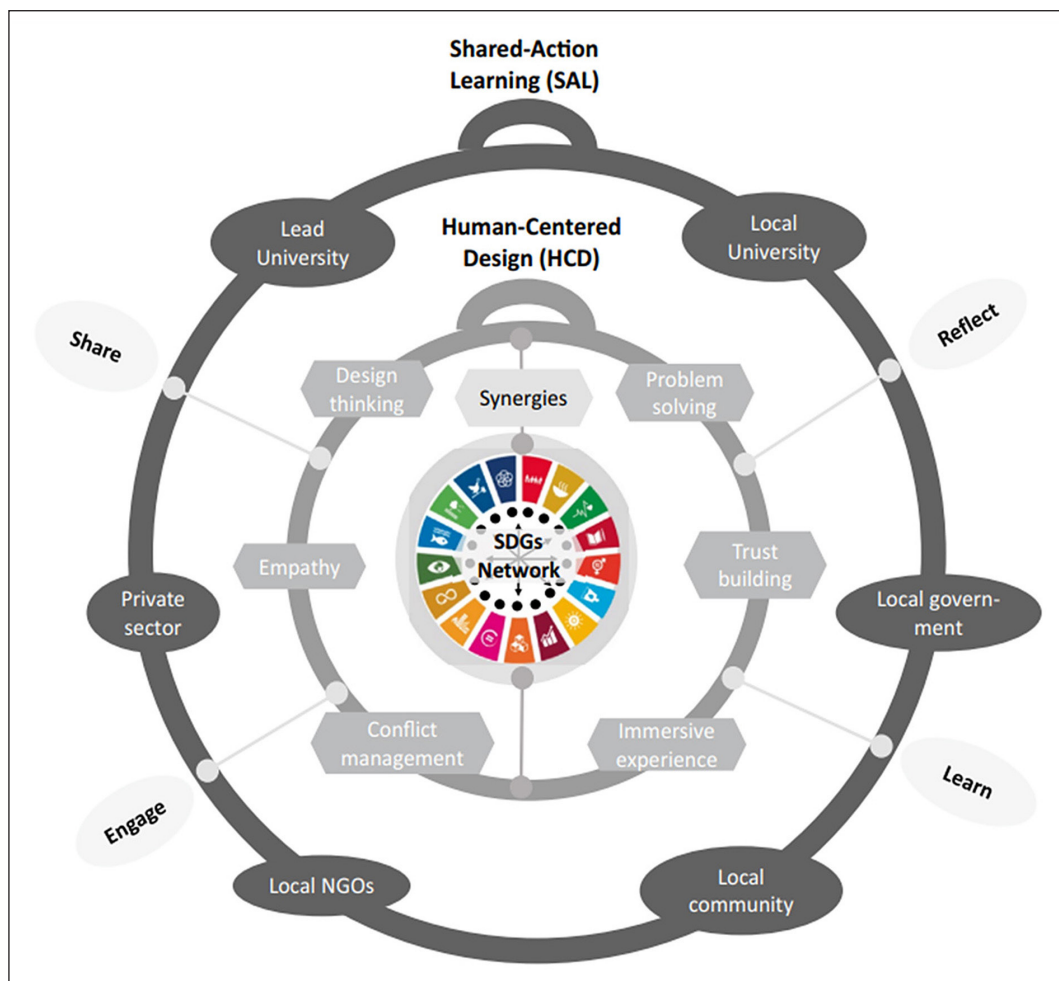
One of the important aspects that the SDGs incorporated, which was not present in the MDGs, is the inclusion of the higher education sector in the global sustainable development agenda (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021). This was done by adding SDG 4, which is quality education. Universities are by definition fully aligned with the goals and objectives of SDG 4, which calls for inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education (European University on Responsible Consumption and Production, 2022). Although SDG 4 speaks specifically to ensuring access to quality education for all, universities can play an important role in accelerating the achievement of all 17 goals by their contribution to the creation of knowledge, creativity, and human development (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021).

Universities offer research, teaching and innovative ideas that aligns with SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). Universities are also a crucial component of civil society, which is dealt with as part of SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and they can play an effective role in advocating for both local and international partnerships, which is SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

According to Agusdinata (2022), there are possible synergies across all the SDGs so entities should not pick which SDGs to focus on. Thus, SDG initiatives should focus on co-benefits. Agusdinata (2022) developed a model that should inform SDG initiatives at universities, as shown in Figure 2.

The main focus of this model is on the fact that there are synergies between the 17 SDGs. When

**Figure 2: A model That Should Inform SDG Initiatives at Universities**



Source: Agusdinata (2022)

developing SDG strategies, universities need to identify these synergies and maximise them. Another important factor in this model is the emphasis on partnerships and collaborations to meet the SDGs. It is imperative for universities to engage the local community and other stakeholders when developing their SDG strategies.

It is important to note that universities are under no obligation to meet all the SDGs, however, many universities have opted to do so (IISD, 2020), as they seek to be regarded by the perspective of society as a whole rather than just as a means of preparing people for work and life (Tandon, 2017). This is consistent with the legitimacy theory, which contends that organizations constantly strive to seem to be operating within the constraints and social norms of society and to uphold the social contract, a system of standards, definitions, and values that is created by society (Suchman, 1995; Donohoe, 2017). The legitimacy in the context of this study, for the universities, can be achieved through adopting the SDGs as the social contract and incorporate them in research, teaching and learning, and community engagement.

Research, teaching and learning, and community engagement are the core functions of universities (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2013). All of these core functions can be utilised to achieve the SDGs. The following sections detail how the three core functions can be utilised to meet the SDGs.

### 3. Research

Research on SDGs has been highlighted as one of the urgent research areas (Leal Filho *et al.*, 2019). One of the most significant ways that universities can support the SDGs is through research (IISD, 2020). Implementing and achieving the SDGs by 2030 will require strong partnerships and collaborations between universities and other stakeholders in sustainability research (Körffgen, Förster, Glatz, Maier, Becsi, Meyer, Kromp-Kolb & Stötter, 2018). This means that universities need to have research initiatives that mainly focus on the 17 SDGs and solve real-world problems. Universities can conduct research that focusses on providing solutions to sustainable development challenges such as poverty, quality education, unemployment and climate change, among others (Junior *et al.*, 2019). This SDG research can also be utilised to inform political

actions from governments in various countries. For example in South Africa, the research can be considered when revising the National Developmental Plan (NDP), which provides a thorough plan for South Africa's attempts to meet the SDGs (Haywood, Funke, Audouin, Musvoto & Nahman, 2018). Universities should also form collaborations and partnerships among themselves to implement sustainability research as part of their research activities. The same approach can also be implemented in teaching and learning.

### 4. Teaching and Learning

There are various ways in which universities can integrate SDGs into the teaching and learning environment. As an example, they can achieve this through the introduction of new courses, pedagogies, and curriculum modifications (Tandon, 2017). The universities should move towards a sustainability related pedagogy. According to Hong (2022), the SDGs are still to make it into the classroom and the curriculum. Embedding the goals within the curriculum promotes a relevant work-ready educative offering that addresses the industry's need for a workforce whose education is more appropriate for a sustainable context (UNESCO, 2017). As a result, certain disciplines may have a greater impact on certain goals, for example, water and sanitation, SDG 6, may align more closely with environmental science; similarly, healthy lives and well-being, SDG 3, may have a greater influence on Health Sciences. Incorporating the SDGs into the curriculum will require commitment from university management, staff and buy-in from students. Therefore, the first step would be to establish interest from these stakeholders. Apart from research as well as teaching and learning, universities can act as a facilitator for delivering services to communities (Owens, 2017).

### 5. Community Engagements at Universities

Community engagement is a process by which the affiliation with the community is prioritised (Driscoll & Sandmann, 2016). As a result, it refers to the engagement procedures and practices where a variety of people collaborate to accomplish a common objective while adhering to a shared set of values, principles, and criteria (Bhagwan, 2020). Community engagement is defined in the context of this study as actions carried out by universities and its larger community that are primarily intended to elevate



or help society and/or people in need of support (Mawonde & Togo, 2019).

Community engagement is regarded as a "stepchild" of higher education (Johnson, 2020), which means it is not getting enough attention, despite the fact that it has been part of the higher education landscape for decades (Times Higher Education, 2021). This is also evident in the fact that there is still no broadly accepted structure for the application of community engagement in universities in South Africa (Johnson, 2020). This challenge can be addressed by engaging extensively with the constant shifting meaning of community engagement, with the recent one being the SDGs' context, as the SDGs are considered part of the social contract between entities and the society within which they operate (UNDP, 2017). Community engagement is the way in which universities can interact with the needs of local communities and these needs are well captured by the SDGs (that is, the social contract).

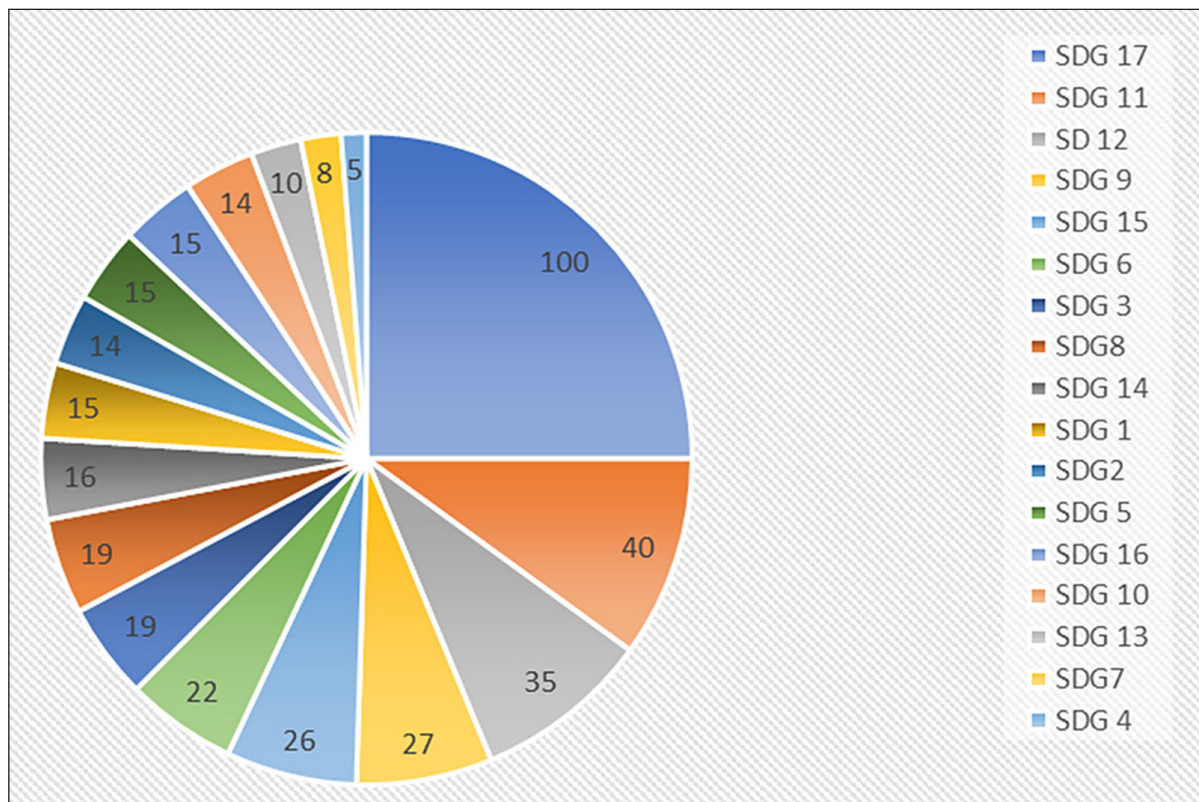
Globally, universities have committed to achieving the SDGs. Times Higher Education (THE) releases

annual impact ratings detailing how universities are achieving SDGs. The rankings are intended to recognize the efforts made by universities that are committed to addressing challenges that affect society at large, such as gender inequality, access to high-quality education, climate change, world peace, and economic prosperity. The latest impact ratings report was released in 2022 which included 1,406 universities from 106 regions (Times Higher Education, 2022).

The THE Impact Rankings are international rankings which rate the universities according to their performance in regard to the SDGs. They employed measures providing a thorough and fair comparison across four main categories: research, stewardship, outreach, and teaching. The ratings also showed that the top ten universities focussed on SDG 17, which is partnerships for goals. Figure 3 shows the SDG focus of the top 100 universities according to THE Impact Rankings.

All the top 100 universities had SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) in the ratings as one of their focus

**Figure 3: SDG Focus of the Top 100 Universities According to THE Impact Rankings**



Source: Adapted from THE Impact Rankings (2022)

areas. Out of the 100 universities, 40 universities had SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) as their focus area, 35 universities had SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production), and 27 universities prioritised SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure). The top 100 universities are prioritising partnerships in the SDGs endeavors. Apart from THE, there are other organisations that are committed to holding higher education institutions accountable when it comes to the SDG agenda, such as Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) and Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI).

### 5.1 SDGs and Decoloniality as an Epistemological Movement in Africa

Decoloniality has become a focus point and a popular epistemological concept, especially in an African context. Decoloniality is a political and epistemological movement which is essential for the future of Africa as it encourages research to address social issues such as unemployment, poverty and inequality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Krauss, Jiménez Cisneros and Requena-i-Mora (2022) have linked sustainable development and decoloniality in that focusing on the SDGs, which pertains to safeguarding people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships, can accelerate decoloniality (Krauss *et al.*, 2022). The authors emphasised the importance of decolonising the curriculum in the higher education in an effort to meet SDG 4 (quality education). Because of their standing in the society, universities can contribute towards decoloniality by prioritising SDGs in their teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

In light of the importance of universities in achieving the SDGs, the alignment between the SDGs' objectives with community engagement, decoloniality and development issues in Africa, the study reviewed how the South African universities are incorporating the SDGs into their community engagement and what their priorities are. Furthermore, a comparison of these priorities with global universities, specifically the top 100 universities, which are mainly from developed countries, is also necessary in order to improve the efforts towards achieving the SDGs in sub-Saharan Africa. Although SDGs can be achieved through research, teaching and learning, and community engagement initiatives, this study will focus on community engagement as the core area that is neglected. This study aims to investigate how

universities challenge the status quo and advance the 2030 SDGs through its community engagement initiatives. The following section will discuss the research methodology applied in this study.

## 6. Methodology

This study is a qualitative exploratory study in the form of content analysis. The focus was on reviewing the annual reports of the 18 traditional and comprehensive universities in South Africa. This method is appropriate for this study as the information is available in the public domain. The study scrutinised the community engagement section in the annual reports of these universities to explore how they have incorporated the SDGs in their community engagement initiatives and what their SDGs priorities are. The selected period per university was based on the latest report available, ranging from 2018 to 2021 as some universities last issued reports in 2018.

Content analysis was used as a data analysis tool for this study. For this study, annual reports from the universities were used as secondary data, which was subsequently examined using ATLAS.ti 22, to provide a reliable and organised data analysis and interpretation (Woods, Macklin & Lewis, 2016). The tool was chosen due to its benefits, which included adaptability, usability, a reliable support system, and affordability.

The process started with the creation of codes that were deduced from the 17 SDGs as listed on the UN Agenda 2030. This study mainly followed deductive coding because the codes were deduced from an existing phenomenon, which are the SDGs (Cho & Lee, 2014). The codes were then used to label all the statements that addressed the SDGs' objectives from the universities' annual reports under the community engagement section. The coding of the annual reports was done electronically using ATLAS.ti 22 by dragging and dropping the codes from the codebook to link with the relevant community engagement initiatives as explained in the reports. The researchers then used the ATLAS.ti 22 reports that included the number of occurrences of the codes to meet the objective of the study.

### 6.1 Limitations of the Study

The focus was on the 18 traditional and comprehensive institutions as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: List of 18 Traditional and Comprehensive Universities in South Africa**

Institution	Location(s)
University of Cape Town	Cape Town
University of Fort Hare	Alice, East London, Bhisho
University of the Free State	Bloemfontein, QwaQwa
University of Johannesburg	Johannesburg
University of KwaZulu-Natal	Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Pinetown, Westville
University of Limpopo	Polokwane, Turfloop
Nelson Mandela University	Port Elizabeth, George
North-West University	Mafikeng, Mankwe, Potchefstroom, Vanderbijlpark
University of Pretoria	Pretoria
Rhodes University	Grahamstown
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University	Ga-Rankuwa, Pretoria
University of South Africa (Unisa)	Distance education, headquartered in Pretoria, campuses and regional offices nationwide
University of Stellenbosch	Stellenbosch, Saldanha Bay, Bellville, Tygerberg
Walter Sisulu University	East London, Butterworth, Mthatha, Queenstown
University of the Western Cape	Bellville (Cape Town)
University of the Witwatersrand	Johannesburg

Source: DHET (2022)

## 7. Results and Discussion

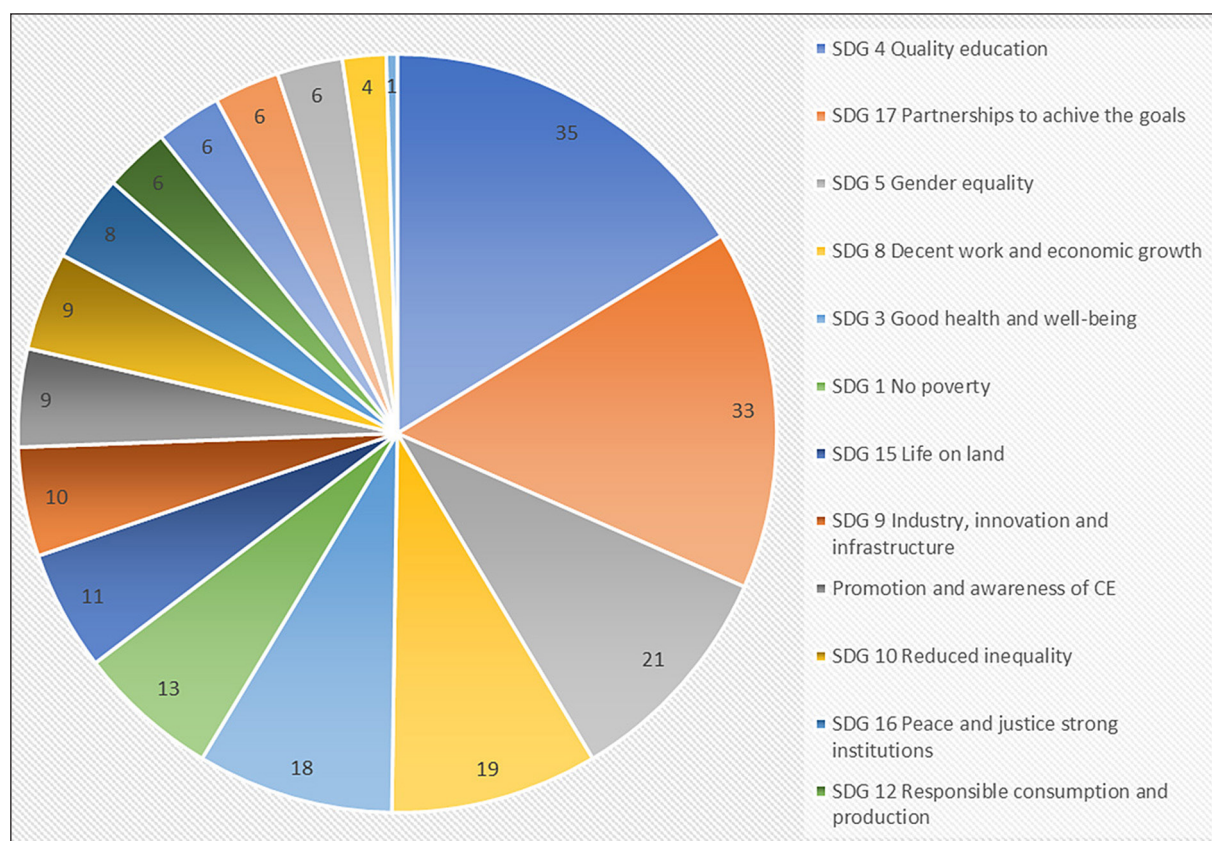
We performed a document review of the universities' annual reports to understand how universities are integrating SDGs into their community engagement activities as detailed in their annual reports. We took into account the goals of each SDG and examined the yearly reports in light of their objectives. The results that follow paint a picture of how the South African universities' community engagement initiatives are contributing towards achieving the SDGs. These results are regarded as an impression rather than the complete picture as some universities report on community engagement separately on their websites, and not in their annual report. Figure 4 provides details of the results of the analysis.

The numbers in Figure 4 represent the number of initiatives that speak to different SDGs in the community engagement section of the universities' annual reports. The results show that some South African universities are incorporating SDGs in their community engagement initiatives. Figure 4 shows that most of the universities' community engagement initiatives are directed towards achieving SDG 4

(quality education), with 35 initiatives. The universities are providing bursaries, assisting schools with information, hosting career expos, providing training to teachers and providing tutoring services to schools. This finding is expected because one of the universities' primary functions is to focus on education (European University on Responsible Consumption and Production, 2022). However, compared to the global universities, there seems to be a disparity. Out of the top 100 universities, only one university prioritised SDG 4 (see Figure 4).

The South African universities also focussed on SDG 17, which centres around partnerships to achieve the goals, with 33 initiatives. The universities built strong partnerships and collaborated with government organisations, community-based organisations, civil organisations, local radio stations, international humanitarian organisations, other local and international universities, among others, to meet the needs of society. This finding agrees with the legitimacy theory.

Universities are maximising their ability to build strong partnerships to meet the SDGs as suggested in Agusdinata's (2022) model. The model

**Figure 4: South African Universities' SDG Priorities**

Source: Researchers' own contribution

emphasised strong partnerships and collaborations to achieve the SDGs. This finding agrees with the priorities of the top 100 universities as all these universities prioritised SDG 17 partnerships for the goals (Figure 4), which indicates that the community engagement activities of South African universities are focussed on building and strengthening partnerships between the universities and the communities in line with the global trend.

Another SDG that came through from the universities' community engagement initiatives is SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth). The universities undertook a lot of initiatives to support women and the girl child, such as hosting workshops focussing on women leadership, girls' mentorship programmes, women leadership development programmes, webinars focussing on women in the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), among others. The universities also had many initiatives that addressed SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth). This shows that the universities are committed to decoloniality and

to solving issues such as unemployment, inequality as well as contributing towards economic growth.

However, there are some SDGs that are still not getting enough attention, such as SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 14 (life below water). Universities can utilise all the SDGs to reconfigure their community engagement and use all 17 SDGs as a framework for reporting their initiatives. According to Agusdinata (2022), there are possible synergies across all the SDGs so entities should not pick which SDGs to focus on.

Although our findings demonstrate that universities are working cooperatively and have already begun referencing and integrating SDGs in their reporting, it seems like the incorporation of SDGs into the universities' community engagement reporting still requires attention as some universities are not yet mentioning SDGs in these reports. Out of the

18 universities' annual reports that we reviewed, five universities did not even mention SDGs in their annual reports. This is concerning given the role of universities in achieving SDGs through their core functions. This can have an impact on the progress towards achieving the SDGs.

South African universities are, however, prioritising SDGs that speak to their core functions and environments, such as SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth). These SDGs also link to the issues around decoloniality and social development issues in South Africa, such as low economic growth and unemployment. At the moment, South Africa's unemployment rate is 33.9% (Stats SA, 2022) and economic growth is projected at 4.9% in 2023 (RSA National Treasury, 2022), which makes addressing unemployment and contributing towards economic growth priorities for South Africa challenging. On the other hand, global universities are focussing mainly on SDG 17 (partnerships) and SDG 9 (industrial innovation and infrastructure). This is expected given that different regions have different priorities.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

South African universities are putting a lot of effort to incorporate the SDGs into their community engagement reporting. Even though their SDG priorities do not align with the global universities' priorities, they are aligned with the social issues that are specific to the country. However, there is still a need for community engagement reporting in the annual reports to be more aligned with the SDGs. However, there is a suggestion in literature that community engagement initiatives should be rigorously embedded into teaching and learning and research (Bender, 2008; Bhagwan, 2020; THE, 2021). The community engagement section should still be part of the universities' annual reporting as a separate section. This is because community engagement is a core function on its own for universities. The SDGs can assist universities to structure the community engagement section of the annual reports as they provide clear objectives and present a structure of the social contract.

We recommend that universities review their community engagement planning and reporting to ensure that it is aligned with the SDGs in the annual reports. Both the SDGs and community engagement seek to achieve a common goal, which is to prioritise

the needs of the society and address broader societal challenges. Future research can explore how universities incorporate the SDGs into their other core functions, namely, research, teaching and learning. Further research can also focus on mapping the requirements of community engagement which is one of the pillars or core function of the universities, with the objectives of SDGs, in order to develop a framework for community engagement reporting in universities.

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# A Critical Policy Review of the South African Fire Services White Paper

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**Abstract:** The fire services are a salient contestation which is often overlooked by the Social Science scholars. The Department of Cooperative Governance has ultimately promulgated a White Paper on fire services in May 2020. This study therefore aims to review and examine the legislation with a purpose of traversing the intricacies entrenched. This explicit dimension of the chosen study methodology serves to reconnoitre the variables prudently. The review and analysis of policies have the power to analyse the realities and the misnomer which are a perfect platform to create dialogue. They serve as powerful tools that bring important topics to the table in a captivating way that also spark conversation due to their in-depth and resourceful information. The theoretical framework which forms part of the discussion has a potential to attribute meaning of study perspectives to practicality and simplicity to avoid a complex situation. The gaps identified in the White Paper are uncovered and fully discussed. The content was studied, contextualised, and synthesised intellectually to derive meaning on all the aspects. It is the contention of this paper to attribute meaning to policy improvement in the fire services with a consequential contribution to the world of science for sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Cartel, Discrimination, Fire, Manipulation, Exploitation

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## 1. Introduction

Research published in public policy management journals about Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) performance is limited. Scholars like Andrews and Brewer (2010), Wankhade (2011), Heath and Radcliffe (2010) and Cochran (2005) are some who found an interest in this theme. This research was stimulated by the fragmentary nature of this sector in the South African context. The disjointed approach causes barriers to entry for most of the people who wanted to specialise in the industry. The downcast syndrome exercised within the fire protection industrial sectors as explicated by the South African Fire Development Association (2015) and Engelbrecht (2014) that fire services is a devastating landscape which has wreaked havoc towards service providers; particularly those that are just entering the sector. This condition is caused by cartels that have been within the sector for some time, who know the strengths and weaknesses of processes, shortcuts, advantages, and consequences of various actions. The barriers caused to the service providers are because of many factors which will be revealed in this paper. Some of the barriers to entry are the state tendering procedures which favour the cartel base, as the major dominant players in the sector. The cartels were taking advantage of a

lack of legislation in the fire services sector wherein a lot of things were not regulated, this then ended up in a self-regulating terrain as a result.

The above research problem gave an upsurge to the aim of this paper which is to provide substance towards the Fire Service White Paper published in 2020 on the important aspects omitted. This Fire Brigade Services Act (FBSA), 1987 (Act No. 99 of 1987) (FBSA) is the primary piece of legislation regulating fire services and provides for the establishment, maintenance, employment, co-ordination, and standardisation of fire brigade services (White Paper, 2020). In terms of the FBSA, local authorities can establish and maintain a fire brigade service for the purpose of preventing the outbreak or spread of a fire; fighting or extinguishing a fire; the protection of life or property against a fire or other threatening danger; and the rescue of life or property from a fire or other danger.

This paper assesses two perspectives (objectives) in this study to deliberate on the problem statement explicated above, the first being *to uncover salient issues in the fire services sector which are of critical importance*. The presence of a white paper is indeed playing a pivotal role with the guidelines it provides for institutionalising bodies with the



necessary vested powers to control and coordinate the fire services within the sector. The White paper also provides guidelines on skills development procedures and processes, research context, funding requirements and standards. *The second perspective assesses the policy gaps within the White Paper.*

## 2. The Situational Analysis of the Fire Services Sector in South Africa

According to the White Paper on Fire services (2020), fire is regarded as a serious environmental, human and infrastructure hazard causing loss of many lives and sustained injuries. While the White Paper (2020) views fire as a devastating problem, however, the state still took a long time in finalising the regulatory environment in the fire sector. The White Paper has been in a draft stage from 2016 and was only finalised in 2020. The problems highlighted above which are caused by the fire disaster, are confirmed by the statistics derived from Statistics South Africa, Causes of Death Survey (2018) where it is reported that 2 662 deaths are attributable to smoke, fire and flames in 2018 alone which is 7.2% of the South African population. The fire outbursts cost the economy over 2 billion Rands as postulated by (Fire Protection Association of Southern Africa, 2013). Largely, this is a proven factor that the pervasiveness and significance of a country's economy is compromised.

Conversely, with a delayed and skewed implementation of the White Paper and legal frameworks in this aspect, these problems will continue to affect the citizens due to the improper functioning of the fire services in terms of detection, prevention, and protection. While noting the concerns raised in the above paragraphs, it should be emphasised that it is not only the responsibility of government, but the partnership become indispensable in ensuring success. An obligation on transposing the fire services from response-oriented fire services towards a fire risk reduction-based approach should be underscored in the strategy on the fire sector (White Paper on Fire Services, 2020). Effectively, as a point of emphasis, the White Paper on Fire Services (2020:10) calls for synergies with partners and stakeholders including those in the private sector involved in the provision of fire services.

Inevitably, there is also a need for a comprehensive review of the Fire Brigade Services Act, 1987 (Act No. 99 of 1987) (FBSA) which was propagated in 1987 as one of the old-order legislations. Inherently, a

Discussion Paper on the review of fire services legislation was published for public comments in March 2013 which aimed to align and harmonise the FBSA with other applicable legislation. It is discouraging to note that it took seven years to produce a White Paper for the fire services reform justifying that the government does not see the urgency in which the fire services deserve. Essentially, the delay could be due to the changing of political heads as it is noted that the department had more than three ministers since that time to now.

This White Paper on Fire Services (2020:10) explicates that the White Paper has been designed to outline key policy proposals that the proposed fire services legislation must address going forward. While the White Paper seeks to prioritise fire risk reduction as a core element of the proposed fire brigade services legislation, this article argues that there are still important aspects which were left out. The White Paper clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of national and provincial governments in the execution of fire services across the country (White Paper, 2020).

Naturally the legislation is necessary and of priority as it has provided lucidity in several areas such as the oversight role to be played in the local, provincial, and national spheres of government. This article reiterates the importance and urgency of the implementation of the aspects within the legislation to underscore the promotion of building safer and sustainable communities. Intrinsically, a robust fire protection service is instrumental in the economic upliftment of any country in the manner that, before investors make an undertaking for an investment, they look at significant factors which could have a bearing on the investment initiatives.

The following Acts are some that have unswerving commitment on the efficient provision of service within the fire protection sector. A summary of the various pieces of legislation which address specific provisions is presented below.

## 3. Exploration of the Current Legal Framework

There are at least nine government departments directly involved in fire fighting and fire safety. Their major responsibility being to manage fire fighting under their own legislative structures, details of each Act will however not be discussed.

### 3.1 Legislative Framework for Emergency Management Services (EMS) with Specific Reference to Fire Brigade Services

This study is under pretext that the above institutions are governed by the various policies which are described below within the context of this study. The Fire Brigades Services Act 99 of 1987 (as amended), is the overarching national fire legislation which governs the fire brigade management under the department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA).

*The National Veld and Forest Fire Act 1998* (Act no. 101 of 1998): seeks to prevent and combat veld forest and mountain fires throughout the country.

*Disaster Management Act 2002* (Act no. 57 of 2002): focuses on the prevention and reduction of risks of disasters, fire protection service being one of them.

*Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1997* (Act no. 75 of 1997): provides labour practices referred to in section 23 (1) of the Constitution by making provision for the regulations of basic conditions of employment which impacts on fire protection services as an essentially shift based service.

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 1993* (Act no. 85 of 1993): is about the health and safety of employees and the public.

*The National Environmental Management Act 1998* (Act no. 107 of 1998) section 30: deals with the control of emergency incidents and define incidents as sudden occurrences of emission, fire or explosion leading to danger to the public and environment.

*Safety of Sports, Recreation Act, 2010* (Act no. 2 of 2010): provides for safety of persons, sports, equipment, property and makes provisions for fire safety as well.

*National Health Act, 2003* (Act no. 61 of 2003): makes provision for fixed emergency medical services in the country.

*Criminal Procedures Act 1977* (Act no. 51 of 1977): makes provision for contravention of offences, penalties on by-laws or other regulations.

*National Building Regulations and building Standards Act, 1977* (Act no. 103 of 1977): provides standards on erection of buildings.

*National Water Act 1998* (Act no. 36 of 1999) section 20: deals with the control of emergency incidents fire being one of them.

*Systems Act, 2000* (Act no. 32 of 2000): outlines the mechanisms for the provision of services including fire services in municipalities.

*Municipal Structure's Act, 1998* (Act no. 117 of 1998) outlines the functions and powers of the municipality in relation to fire fighting services pertaining to planning, coordination, and regulation of fire protection services.

## 4. The Social Context of the Fire Environment

It is found important to embark on the fire quandary in a social context. According to Mock, Peden, Heder, Butchart & Krug (2008), there are over 300 000 fire-related deaths per year with over 95% of all burn deaths occurring in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) globally. The most vulnerable groups are children aged 5 years and those aged 70 (Mock *et al.*, 2008). The injuries sustained from burns innately result in hospitalisation, disability, deformity and most of all resulting in humiliation, low self-esteem and rebuf. LMIC's (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2012) report that globally, about 11 million people sustained severe burns in 2004 alone. Developing countries are mostly affected by the fire catastrophe because of the low-income levels caused by poverty, unemployment, poor housing (overcrowded slums and shacks,) and abandonment by their family. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that fires contribute seven percent to the injury mortality in the country. The consequences because of these are dehumanising posing post-traumatic stress, withdrawal from society, anxiety, and depression. Most importantly, some even face loss of jobs, confusion, suicidal attempts necessitating psychological counseling. The Integrated Strategic Framework for the Prevention of Injury and Violence in South Africa Department of Health (2012) reports that the fire related burn death rate in South Africa alone is 8,5 per 100 000 which is greater than both the world average, which is five per 100 000, and six for Africa respectively. Relentlessly, the statistics on financial losses incurred from fires in 2011 and 2013 per sector (residential, institutional, Public Assembly, commercial, storage, industry, transport, and others) were reported to be at R2 158 223 582 (Department of Health, 2012).

## **5. Definition of Concepts**

It is important to first put the concepts in context within this discussion by defining them. It is evident that the fire services sector is surrounded by acts of harassment, exploitation, and discrimination as alluded in the problem statement. Harassment is viewed by Cochran (2016), as exercises which carry within themselves spill over effects into general negative reaction. The concept of harassment is theoretically and logically sound and provides a thought-provoking normative understanding on the wrongs that characterise progressive capitalist economies. Cochran (2016) refers to manipulation as the act of systematic, continued, unwanted and annoying actions of one party or a group, including threats and demands (Cochran, 2016). Equally, he further states that purposes may vary, including racial prejudice, personal malice, and an attempt to force someone to quit a job or grant sexual favours or merely sadistic pleasure from making someone fearful or anxious.

Manipulation, according to Abrantes-Metz, Rauterberg and Verstein (2013:16), is a vague term used in a wide and inclusive manner, possessing varying shades of meaning, and almost always conveying the idea of blameworthiness, justified of depreciation. In its most common use, it has reference to a speculator, or to a group of speculators who buy or sell produce, in such a way as to give outsiders the impression that such buying or selling is the result of natural forces. Monopoly is referred to by Chamberlain (1986) in simpler terms as "control over supply". Discrimination according to Cochran (2016) is an unequal treatment of persons, for a reason which has nothing to do with legal rights or ability. These are linked to the partial reinforcement theory by Braiker (2004) who maintains that psychological manipulation as a type of social influence aims to change the perception or behaviour of others through underhanded, deceptive, or even abusive tactics. At the very least, manipulation is forced influence used to gain control, benefits, and/or privileges at the expense of the others. Vilfredo Pareto's Theory of Elitism is also key to this notion of cartels that are manipulative and exploitive towards others due to the power they possess.

## **6. The Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework is based on the situational context which has been coexisting in the

fire service which was dominated by the manipulative cartels. The partial reinforcement theory is the one selected for this part of the discussion. Braiker (2004) refers to psychological manipulation as a type of social influence that aims to change the perception or behaviour of others through underhanded, deceptive, or even abusive tactics. Brennan (2020) posits that advancing the interests of the manipulator, often at another's expense, such methods could be considered exploitative, abusive, devious, and deceptive. Social influence is not necessarily negative.

Social influence is generally perceived to be harmless when it respects the right of the influenced to accept or reject and is not unduly coercive. Manipulation or emotional manipulation is the use of means to exploit, control, or otherwise influence others to one's advantage. In the extreme, it is a stratagem of tricksters, swindlers, and impostors who disrespect moral principles, deceive, and take advantage of others' frailty and gullibility. At the very least, manipulation is forced influence used to gain control, benefits, and/or privileges at the expense of the others.

Manipulation differs from general influence and persuasion. Influence is generally perceived to be harmless as it respects the right of the influenced to accept or reject it and is not unduly coercive. Persuasion is the ability to move a person or persons to a desired action, usually within the context of a specific goal. Influence and persuasion are neither positive nor negative. The manipulative and exploitive theories can be related to Vilfredo Pareto's elite theory which explicate that in any society, there is and must be a minority of the population which makes the major decisions in the society and rules the majority. This minority is called the "governing elite" or "political class" – they have their influence on government decisions and policymaking. A good example in this instance can be that of the Guptas in the South African context.

The minority gains dominance due to influence through certain social, financial, religious, heredity or personal qualifications/achievements and this is beyond the concept of ordinary elections. Elitism has three main characteristics and are the factors why it thrives: "group cohesion, consciousness, and conspiracy which implies that elite rule only exists when elites are united". Power gives access to more power to obtain other social goods, economic

status, influence on social status, educational advantages and so on. This helps the elites maintain their domination over others for subsequent generations thereafter. The elite doctrine believes that the dominant minority cannot be controlled by the majority regardless of the democratic mechanism used. Pareto and Mosca described the phenomenon of 'circulation of elites' (Mustafa, 2018).

The reasoning behind the choice of these theories is related to the cartels that are manipulative and acting as elites in the fire sector making it a self-governing sector. It has been going on for a long time; cases were reported previously but to no benefit and support. Manipulation, harassment, discrimination acts were evident which left a lot of people discouraged, frustrated, to an extent of leaving the sector while some of those remaining formed opposition groups against the cartels. The main cartels were still dominant and were the ones being listened to as they have been in those positions for long. The South African Fire Development Association (SAFDA, 2015) has also observed a perplexing phenomenon in South Africa regarding the fire protection industry. This situation has allowed unqualified and untrained people to operate in the market with very little fear of prosecution or any other action against them.

## 7. Contextualising the Fire Services White Paper

The point of departure in this study is that the inclusivity, growth, and development path within the industry are valid and noble requirements for all citizens in this country seeking to be within the government's agenda. Unquestionably, this is also suitable for the fire industry which seeks to claim its participation to be within the government's priorities. The National Development Plan (NDP), as one of the key strategic policies within the South African government, sets to address the critical challenges faced by the country in terms of growth and development. It is elucidated in the National Planning Commission (2013) that "South Africa belongs to its entire people and the future of this country is the people's collective future and most importantly, making it work, is a collective responsibility for everyone".

All South Africans seek a better future for themselves and their children. Within this arena of action, it is critical to understand the attributions of the

NDP that it is a countrywide plan for the elimination of poverty and reduction of inequality by 2030. Of importance, to this conception of a capable state, is that the government will not achieve its plans alone as "a capable state alone is not sufficient" (National Planning Commission, 2012). This means that there should be joint efforts in all the plans for successful execution.

In the interest of improving the country, the government must be involved in keeping its citizens safe. With the presence of a white paper, guidelines to institutionalise bodies with necessary vested powers to control the means of production within the fire sector will be actualised. Fundamentally the White Paper (2020) also provides guidelines on skills development procedures and processes, research context, funding requirements and standards.

## 8. The Research Framework

This paper takes a nuts-and-bolts approach for policy analysis. Document analysis, according to Corbin & Strauss (2008), is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents. Document analysis has a potential to elicit information, gain an understanding and be developed into an empirical knowledge (Rapley, 2007). Atkinson and Coffey (1997:47) refer to documents as 'social facts', which are produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways. Researchers typically review prior literature as part of their studies and incorporate that information in their reports. In this case, the documents were read and studied prior to the White Paper being released where it was found that there were numerous challenges experienced by the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) in the sector.

That was what motivated the researcher to carry out this study. This supports the view which says that prior literature has played a role in persuading this research from taking place. Bearing witness to past events, the documents consulted had provided background information as well as historical insight that helped with the understanding of the sociocultural, political, and economic context in which the fire services was operating. Documents supplied leads towards asking additional, probing questions. Information contained in documents also suggested events or situations that needed to be observed one of them being to review and analyse the White Paper. The analysis of documents was instrumental in refining ideas, identifying conceptual boundaries,

and pinpointing the fit and relevance of categories (Charmaz, 2003).

Five constructs were derived from the documents consulted which were investigated to fulfil the research objective which is: to uncover salient issues in the fire services sector. The second perspective assesses the policy gaps within the White Paper.

The other method employed in this study was the policy review. This paper explores the fire service sector from the point of view of the White Paper of 2020. It is noticed that the White Paper could help with identifying the risks brought by the fire hazard as well as stimulating the fire services industry. It may be stated that without specifics of the White Paper, a country would not be able to solve the acute problems like reducing death, destroying housing, and losing millions of rands. A gap analysis is packaged with the policy review process focusing on the challenges posed by existing policies and the opportunities for policy innovation to promote fire services more effectively. Glenn (2009) posits that those policies are ambiguous and complex and require rhetoric gap analysis and policy debates. Strosberg, Gefenas and Famenka (2014), postulate that the purpose of a policy analysis is to identify gaps which need to be corrected. A gap analysis is forward-looking, sets a direction, and involves planning.

Denyer and Tranfield (2009) postulate that systematic review should not be regarded as a literature review in the traditional sense, but as a self-contained research project that explores a clearly specified question, usually derived from a policy or practice problem, using existing studies. The results of the review combine theoretical understanding and empirical evidence and focus on explaining the relationship between the context in which the intervention is applied, the mechanisms by which it works and the outcomes which are produced (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). The aim is to enable decision-makers to reach a deeper understanding of the intervention and how it can be made to work most effectively. This paper considers an innovative use of the method to advance and refine academic knowledge and illustrates this through a small-scale study of the literature on the fire service.

The data collection process involved searching of Policy Documents which was followed by screening and selection. Preliminary conclusions on the

policy review process exhibited shortcomings and uncertainties in the White Paper.

## **9. Population and Sample**

During the search of policies, 14 policies related to the fire prevention and protection were perused and discussed briefly. The policies are highlighted in the discussion below. Within those policies, the dimensions selected from the population are listed on Table 1 as well as the research variables and policy gap variables.

Table 1 has displayed the associated legislation for the fire services which in this case are regarded as a study population. The legislation is dispersed in the departments which are dealing with fire vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the second column has displayed the aspects which are included in the White Paper for Fire Services. The third column has listed the research variables identified from the previous documents consulted forming part of the first perspective of the study. The last column has identified and listed the variables which were omitted in the entire White Paper which are a bone of contention in this paper forming part of the study perspective. While the variables which are fundamental for putting the discussion in context are highlighted, there has been weaknesses identified in the prior literature reviewed which also form the backbone of the discussion as highlighted in the introduction and the research framework. The findings of the research which are discussed are aligned to the first study perspectives originating from the prior literature on the following dimensions and variables as marked in the Table:

- Compliance to the legal framework.
- Supply Chain Management.
- Skills Development and Training.
- Sustainable Job creation.
- Technical exclusion.
- Risk management.

Whereas the identified policy gaps are the following:

- Critical Infrastructure.
- Designated groups.
- Rural Development.
- Research/ Academia.
- Timelines.
- Mining and Agriculture.
- SME's.
- Supply Chain Management.

**Table 1: Population, Policy Dimensions and Policy Gaps**

Legislative Framework	Policy Dimensions	Research Variables	Policy Gap
The Fire Brigades Services Act 99 of 1987 (as amended)	Socio-economic constructs	Compliance to the legal framework ✓	Critical Infrastructure ✓
The National Veld and Forest Fire Act 1998 (Act no. 101 of 1998)	Climate change	Supply Chain management ✓	Designated Groups ✓
Disaster Management Act 2002 (Act no. 57 of 2002)	Fire risk	Skills Development and Training ✓	Rural Development ✓
Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1997 (Act no. 75 of 1997)	Governance	Sustainable Job creation ✓	Research/ Academia ✓
Occupational Health and Safety Act 1993 (Act no. 85 of 1993).	Fire safety	Technical exclusion ✓	Timelines ✓
The National Environmental Management Act 1998 (Act no. 107 of 1998) section 30	Housing	Risk management	Mining and Agriculture ✓
Safety of Sports, Recreation Act, 2010 (Act no. 2 of 2010)	Fire prevention		SMEs ✓
National Health Act, 2003 (Act no. 61 of 2003)	Community Programmes		Supply Chain Management ✓
Criminal Procedures Act 1977 (Act no. 51 of 1977)	Fire protection		
National Building Regulations and building Standards Act, 1977 (Act no. 103 of 1977)	Education		
National Water Act 1998 (Act no. 36 of 1999) section 20	Water reticulation systems		
Systems Act, 2000 (Act no. 32 of 2000)	Fire risk assessment		
Municipal Structure's Act, 1998 (Act no. 117 of 1998)	Partnership		
The Fire Brigades Services Act 99 of 1987 (as amended) Affairs (COGTA).	Research		
	Funding		
	Training		
	Institutional arrangements		
White Paper on Fire Services, 2020			

Source: Author

## 10. Discussion of Results

The Fire Services White paper 2020 is a comprehensive document which managed to cover a wide array of aspects and within an arena of events, it managed to navigate the Socio-economic area, climate change, fire risks, governance structures, fire safety, housing, fire prevention, community Programmes, fire protection, education, water reticulation systems, fire risk assessment, partnership, research, funding, training, and institutional arrangements.

Considering the way, the fire services has been operating before the White Paper on how the cartels have been functioning within the space, the paper had orbited the sector through the lens to identify anomalies which coexisted. Compliance with the standards was identified as a weakness which is believed to be resolved by the White Paper. Other areas of weaknesses which are discussed below were unregulated skills development and training, supply chain management, technical exclusion, sustainable job creation, and risk management.

## **11. Perspective 1: Uncover Salient Issues in the Fire Services Sector Which Are of Critical Importance**

### **11.1 Compliance with the Standards**

The frustrations levelled against the SMEs by the heroes in the fire sector are highlighted. Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority of 2001 (Act no. 2001) (PSIRA) governs all organisations that are involved in the installation of alarm systems in South Africa. The alarms for fire detection and related systems should be installed according to the South African National Standards (SANS) for complying with the standards and quality. The national institution for the promotion and maintenance of standardisation and quality in connection with commodities and services is the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS).

### **11.2 Supply Chain Management**

The supply chain management was also flawed which is another feature of corruption (Engelbrecht, 2014:16). This approach has led to numerous price wars overtime between various installation companies and equipment suppliers. The cost of looking at the industry from only a technical approach, has robbed it of being in sync with country' priorities and being at the forefront of job and skill creation

### **11.3 Skills Development and Training**

Before the White Paper could be promulgated, the fire services sector had multiple challenges associated with lack of regulations which turned the sector into a self-governing entity in most cases. Some of the barriers were on accessing certain opportunities within the fire sector by the SME. It was a downcast condition which left SMEs to suffer. The barrier was caused by the proffered heroes who were dominating the industry and performing multiple roles in the industry and in turn manipulating the sector. The challenges identified in training were surrounded by factors such as operating in a space where the cartels are self-regulated. Equally, the self-regulated cartels, who are offering training to fire operators, did not have the South African accreditation status from organisations such as Sector Skills Education and Training (SETA), South African Communications Framework (SAQA). It is a positive attribute currently as the matter has been made explicit in the White Paper and it is believed that there will be a relief on

that aspect which allow everyone a space to operate without hindrances.

### **11.4 Sustainable Job Creation**

The fire industry according to SAFDA (2015:18) has a potential of creating more than 1.5 million direct and indirect jobs in 10 years. Existing jobs can be retained and sustained particularly with SAQA accredited National training. The poor institutional arrangements which were eminent previously did not provide fair opportunities within the industrial axis. Marginalisation based on gender, youth, and race was evident where nepotism, favouritism, were practiced due to lack of clear governance and reporting guidelines meaning that the Employment Equity Act, (Act no. 55 of 1998) was not observed.

### **11.5 Technical Exclusion**

The exclusion of people with technical expertise has been a major problem in the sector. Employment was based on favouritism and nepotism due to unethical practices. The fire protection industry, according to Cochran (2016) seems to be suffering from a crisis of ethics or lack of ethical integrity. Some leaders have expressed a concern that this problem of integrity, or ethics, is partly the result of a fire service culture so burnished with the moniker of "hero", related to the theory of "elitism" by Pareto and Mosca. The formulation of strategies to reduce the problems experienced in the fire service is indispensable. The state laws such as Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act no. 55 of 1998); Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1997 (Act no. 75 of 1997); Public Service regulations 2001; and Public Service Management Act 2014 (Act no. 11, 2014) prohibit discrimination in employment, rates of pay, right to promotion, educational opportunity, civil rights, and use of facilities based on race, nationality, creed, colour, age, sex, or sexual orientation. An implication for fire protection service leadership is to establish a clear policy prohibiting harassment and discrimination.

### **11.6 Risk Management**

Fire risks were not well managed previously but a more of a reactive approach was practiced. Prevention is therefore eminent than being reactive only after the fire disaster. This notion has been emphasised more than once in the Fire Services White Paper. Taking cognisance that fire is a major risk in everyday lives and globally, with additional effects on climate change, it

is imperative that it be enforced in all departments so that there can be clear policies on how to deal with the safety of its employees. Intrinsicly, fire risk is dynamic and context specific. Fire safety and prevention are the core elements to save the loss of lives, injuries, property damages, infrastructure, and environment for global warming. The risk of fires is influenced by a variety of socio-economic factors as alluded in the White Paper (2020).

The risk of fire is caused by factors resulting from combustion of fire, which is influenced by several factors such as smoking, cooking in areas without electricity and in those areas where electricity is expensive and people using gas stoves particularly those living in squatter camps. The materials used in the erection of shacks also elicit risks in catching fire. The cutting of electric wires by electric thieves (Izinyoka) poses the fire risks.

According to the first perspective which is to uncover salient issues in the fire services sector, while reflecting on certain attributes of cartels on the harassment and exploitation of SMEs, it seems that these practices are an illustration of the abuse of power. Evidence on the above is provided by Engelbrecht (2014:12), who is regarded as one of the champions within the industry when he says, "there are literally hundreds of small businesses that are unable to do business in the fire protection industry due to the draconian activities of a few who have some form of a foothold in the market". These problems used to exist before the sector was regulated through the White Paper because of monopolies and cartels who seemed to dominate the market. The sector was dominated by consultants who were self-regulated for self-enrichment, applying favouritism and nepotism.

This paper has managed to identify the salient and intricate issues within the fire services which the White Paper has also managed to unravel the complexities which are also strong attributes. The previous challenges affecting this sector were presented in this part of the discussion while the forthcoming section illuminates the current gaps in the White Paper which should be considered in the Fire Services Act as a way of fulfilling the second perspective.

## **12. Perspective 2: Assessment of the Policy Gaps Within the White Paper**

This section of the study relates to the second objective which is the main essential ingredient for

the study which is on policy gaps within the White Paper. It has been discovered that the White Paper has excluded certain matters of importance and interest.

### **12.1 Critical Infrastructure**

The caring of critical infrastructure is the first gap which is identified. The White Paper was supposed to outline what measures were necessary for protecting the critical infrastructure to avoid incidences such as the December 2021 burning down of parliament. Fundamentally, there are also several incidences of this nature where the critical infrastructure is affected, and the policy is supposed to outrightly tap on such issues for detection, prevention, and protection.

### **12.2 Designated Groups**

It is of critical importance for the White Paper to include the special designated groups as the critical points of transformation for balancing the injustices of the past. Gender inclusivity was an aspect which was omitted in the White Paper on the socio-economic considerations which should focus on including women. Duncan (2018) expounds that the feminist theories and the feminist movements have vehemently demonstrated that knowledge cannot be considered neutral or objective.

Traditionally, researchers have engendered knowledge based on the dominant perspective and behaviour in society, which was the male one (androcentrism) (Duncan, 2018). Consequently, knowledge has been blind to the specific historical, political, social, and personal conditions on which it was reported, making invisible gender differences on gender mainstreaming and racial balance.

Feminist epistemologies have claimed that knowledge is dynamic, relative, and variable and that it cannot be considered an aim, but a process. The youth and people living with disabilities are also excluded from the White Paper. It is a well-known fact that physical activity can help support daily living activities and independence. Any amount of physical activity that gets your heart beating faster can improve your health therefore meaning that the people living with disabilities are not supposed to be excluded from the mainstream fabric of the society. Social protection plays a key role in realising the rights of persons with disabilities of all ages:



providing them with an adequate standard of living, a basic level of income security; thus, reducing levels of poverty and vulnerability.

### **12.3 Rural Development**

The White Paper articulated on the importance of the prevention approaches for rural development through awareness creation. It emphasised on the involvement of traditional leaders and Municipal Councillors as vehicles through which the community structures can be reached for participation. These will ensure that the re-thinking of the machinery for fire services is pervasive to a certain extent. The roles of the traditional leaders and other stakeholders within the communities were not clearly articulated. The awareness should be reinforced by training of community members on self-care, prevention, self-protection, and rescuing of children, and rescuing one another. The first point of entry for the awareness campaigns should be in schools.

### **12.4 Research/Academia**

Profoundly, a scientific research is one other critical area of consideration in the fire sector. Very little scientific research on fire service thematic areas exists as mentioned in the opening statement under the introduction. The decisions and policies taken are not based on the scientifically robust foundations. Naturally the research helps with the determination of the adequacy of current methodologies utilised by fire services in the execution of its mandate. Practically, the research will be able to provide statistics to make the fire sector to be statistically based with a database on fire statistics.

The statistics will be useful in terms of compliance with national and world statistics. It is acknowledged that the White Paper did include the aspect of a research unit but excluded the academicians in the discussion. The partnership between academic institutions and the Fire sector, CogTA is necessary to be able to actualise the research aspirations as highlighted in the White Paper and strengthen the research agenda.

### **12.5 Timelines**

One other aspect which was omitted in the financial model and plan is the timelines on when the funds should be made. Funding within the sector is another salient area which requires to be regulated.

National government funds for capital projects in fire services are authorised by CogTA (White Paper, 2020). Municipalities use its revenues to fund fire protection services.

### **12.6 Agriculture and Mining**

The other essential sectors such as the mining and agriculture which are at the centre of a multi-layered approach towards economic development are not mentioned in the White Paper. Most importantly the White Paper has defined clear delineation of roles between the national, provincial, and local spheres of governments which is another area posing challenges in a few sectors. Development is also an essential ingredient within the sector where the mining and agriculture being the pillars of sustainable development were omitted knowingly with mining being a fire risk factor. The loss of yield on the agricultural produce, small stock and large stock can be destructive due to fire risk. It is crucial for the agricultural sector to play a detective, safety, preventative, and protective role. Learning from best international practices should be considered as an advantage.

### **12.7 Small and Medium Enterprises**

The long over-due lack of the national fire legislation has resulted in the monopolisation and manipulation of the system by dominating organisations which cause a painful discrimination and exploitation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to enter the market for trading in that occupation. The barrier to entry bears long term negative effects on national priority areas such as employment creation, poverty, and generally, an inclusive economy. Whilst there is a great amount of uncertainty and unconstitutional issues in the fire protection industrial axis environment, the issues of corruption, collusion and exclusion of SME's are laid squarely at the floor due to the absence of legislation to regulate the business environment (Engelbrecht, 2014). The current White Paper is still silent on the role expected to be played by the SMEs in the fire services sector.

### **12.8 Supply Chain Management**

In view of the narrative on the funding model, and the advanced hi-tech equipment recommended for an improvement within the fire services, the supply chain system was not highlighted. It is of

critical importance to lay a base through which the functionaries could be able to operationalise the deliverables in a plan. It is imperative that the registration and database of companies in the fire services sector are included in the Central Supplier's Database (CSD) to give everyone a fair chance to do business in the fire services industry.

An insight and understanding of the White Paper were provided albeit the limitation of the in-depth discussion due to paper limit. While the White Paper itself presents the governance structure for the fire sector, the paper embellishes that instituting a commission on fire services like any other sector such as the Water Research Commission, Land Commission, and others, is a matter for consideration. These will ensure that the fire service ethical foundations are gnarled.

### 13. Conclusions and Recommendations

The article addressed the contextual aspects of the fire services sector, its challenges, and opportunities. The legal framework has been reviewed extensively and explored. The perspectives were broadly discussed, lessons learnt, and recommendations made along the way. There is value in diversity of thought, and the fire services sector's ethical approach should support this basic concept of stakeholder relationships and fairness for an inclusive economy. There are ample opportunities to reverse the institutional technical capacity to ensure that governmental institutions regain their proficiency in the regulatory management and leadership of the industry. The White Paper (2020) has effectively incorporated important factors on training with the training academy being of essence. The national training academy will suffice since it would be expected to provide a comprehensive training on fire prevention, safety, protection, detection, and all aspects related to the fire industry. Additionally, the accredited colleges should be able to offer various levels of the course to the trainees from introduction to advanced level for allowing the sector to have qualified professionals to avoid hindrances to entry and to qualify as reputable fire operators.

The two research objectives referred to as the research perspectives which were to uncover salient issues in the fire services sector which are of critical importance and the assessment of the policy gaps within the white paper were clearly addressed

towards the commitment to address the challenges faced by fire services. The discussions are expected to be executed towards building safer and sustainable communities. The results of the study were discussed according to the study perspectives. The industry will not be successful without the necessary political guidance. Fire is as much a threat to life and limb and the loss of property as would be a civil war. Broadly speaking and commendably, the contents of the White Paper are in order, addressing most concerns amid few omissions which were highlighted in the paper. What is crucial currently is implementation. The road is still uncertain currently but for it to be linear, straight forward, implementation can have a potential to make changes to the current situation. The study contributes to policy improvement in the fire services with a consequential contribution to the world of science within sustainable development and public administration.

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# Transformation in Institutions of Higher Education in South Africa: An Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Perspective

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**Abstract:** Transformation in Higher Education can be shown in several ways ranging from transforming strategies on executive management, academic offerings, and services to support staff and impactful deliveries to students. Creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem is seen as one of the instruments of transformation. An entrepreneurial ecosystem needs a community of practice that displays the character of creativity and innovation, risk-taking, an initiator, a strategist, and an active participant in identifying opportunities and making decisions among others in the business. The paper seeks to review transformation in Higher Education through the entrepreneurship ecosystem using a thematic document analysis methodology. It is based on a thematic review of relevant literature and establishes various themes that are essential for the development of an entrepreneurial university. The themes are categorized as: an entrepreneurial University, entrepreneurship in academia, and student entrepreneurship activities. Through the entrepreneurship ecosystem, universities are expected to play a crucial role in building their structures to be economically active; addressing graduate unemployment; providing recovery strategies to reboot businesses in communities, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic; and positioning themselves as entrepreneurial universities. The findings of this study lead to the recommendation that universities should initiate a change process from their traditional orientation to become entrepreneurial universities. It is recommended that government and other stakeholder support should be accelerated for the realization of the envisaged transformation to entrepreneurial ecosystems.

**Keywords:** Academia, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship ecosystem, Entrepreneurial Transformation, University

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## 1. Introduction

Transformation of the institutions of higher education has become a necessity, particularly in South Africa owing to high rates of graduate unemployment and general joblessness (Lose & Kapondoro, 2020). There is a general impression that these institutions should do more to increase the value of graduates in terms of employability and the creation of employment. In South Africa, these institutions of Higher Education are engaged in a process of transformation by improving curriculums in the programs they offered or structural changes. The transformation is essential given the findings in Jwara and Hoque's (2020) study, which found no relationship between the entrepreneurial intentions of students and the quality of their university life. In other words, the university life of the students was found to lack the inspirational attributes for them to engage in entrepreneurship. This is a critical finding when the problems of graduate unemployment are considered. The intention is to ensure that

graduates from higher education systems are able to either find or create employment.

The transformation process can be shown in several ways, from transforming strategies on executive management, academic offerings, and services to support staff and impactful deliveries to students through an entrepreneurship ecosystem (Hayter, 2016; Clauss, Moussa, & Kesting, 2018). Creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem is seen as one of the instruments of transformation (Sanyal & Hisam, 2018; Cavallo, Ghezzi & Balocco, 2019). An entrepreneurial ecosystem needs a community of practice that displays the character of creativity and innovation, risk-taking, an initiator, a strategist, and an active participant in identifying opportunities and making decisions among others in the organization (Clauss *et al.*, 2018).

For a successful transformation through the entrepreneurship ecosystem, institutions of Higher Education should consider executive roles at different levels.

Organizations that build sustainability into their core strategies are outperforming those that don't, especially looking at environmental factors and climate change (Bradley, Parry & O'Regan, 2020). This assists in creating an entrepreneurial institution (Klofsten, Fayolle, Guerrero, Mian, Urbano & Wright, 2019). The executive role in the entrepreneurial ecosystem entails developing team skills and capabilities and empowering leadership. Leaders need to set simple, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound goals. The set goals should reflect the triad of people, environment, and profit, and focus on creating sustainable impact and implementing sustainable practices. There should be a differentiation between short, mid, and long-term goals that refer to teaching and learning, research, and community engagement as the core business of institutions in Higher Education (Centobelli, Cerchione & Esposito, 2019). Institutions must prioritize their implementation goals and focus on the most important ones. If necessary, plans to achieve goals can be changed but there should be stability in the set goals.

Institutions of Higher education are challenged by several factors that range from producing unemployable graduates to accessing digital platforms and producing research that is not innovative and not impactful to society, among several things (Coral & Bernuy, 2022). On the other hand, these institutions need to be transformed to cater for the needs of the people and reach communities with high-quality programs (National Development Plans Vision 2030, 2022). Institutions in South Africa differ in approaches to adopting an entrepreneurship system. However, with the support of initiatives in the project Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education, institutions are developing though are at different levels (EDHE, 2022). Hence, this paper contributes to literature gaps and explores how South African Institutions of Higher Education can transform by adopting an entrepreneurship ecosystem to become entrepreneurial institutions. Institutions of Higher Education should find sustainable solutions where they strive to attain entrepreneurship skills such as changing societal problems into sustainable opportunities, saving resources, overcoming barriers, and producing research that talks to societal and environmental needs, to name a few.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

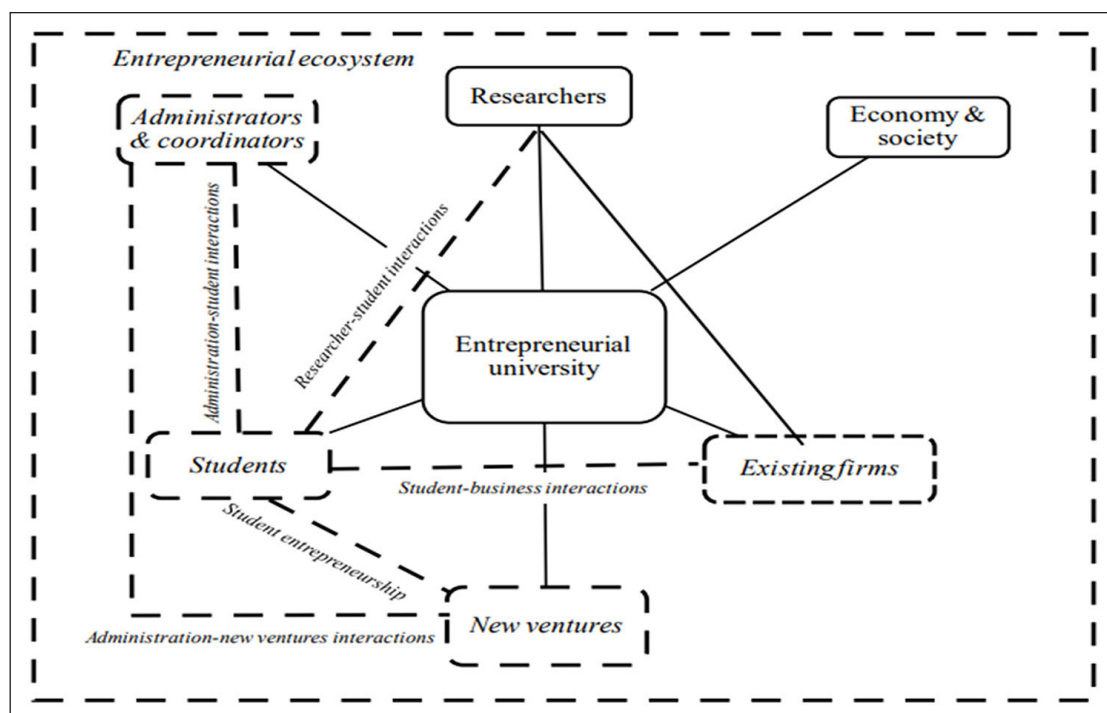
The paper aims to review the transformation process of institutions of Higher Education through an

entrepreneurship ecosystem. The social network theory, knowledge spillover theory of entrepreneurship, and theory of change are adopted collectively to explore this process. In other words, these three theories can be effective lenses through which the transformation problem as well as the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems can be viewed. The social network theory entails that for a successful entrepreneurship ecosystem institution of Higher Education should connect with businesses (Clauss *et al.*, 2018; Fuster, Padilla-Meléndez, Lockett & del-Águila-Obra, 2019). It is based on the assertion that universities are not alone and cannot achieve notable societal change without businesses and other stakeholders. This could benefit the institutions in that the knowledge production can be disseminated to relevant businesses and contribute to informed social change. This implies the view that knowledge generated by universities makes relevant in the industry and the practical innovations that happen in industry influence universities.

In addition to the connectivity of the social network theory, the knowledge spillover theory of entrepreneurship confirms that there can be spillover effects from institutions to firms (Fuster *et al.*, 2019). This spillover reinforces that what happens in the industry can go over to influence what happens in universities. The opposite is also to be considered true whereby knowledge spillover from universities to the industry is considered important. This theory entails that the context of where the institution exists should be taken into consideration. The context includes the location of the institution, strategic entrepreneurship, and how institutions relate to others. Institutions that adopt an entrepreneurship ecosystem have a purpose to stimulate economic activities by sharing their knowledge production with firms that need so. Therefore, the two theories applied together can contribute to innovation and development and create an entrepreneurial ecosystem that connects institutions to firms. These ecosystems bring an asocial culture that creates benefits (Spigel & Harrison, 2018).

Clauss *et al.* (2018) suggest a schematic diagram of the entrepreneurship ecosystem for the entrepreneurial university (see Figure 1). The schematic diagram depicts some of the notable linkages and relationships between various components of the university entrepreneurship ecosystem. The paper has alluded that the entrepreneurial university ecosystem comprises researchers, students, firms and

Figure 1: An Entrepreneurial University Ecosystem



Source: Clauss, Moussa & Kesting (2018)

new ventures, society, and administrators. These stakeholders of the ecosystem are coordinated in a way that there are interactions among them to build an entrepreneurship culture. For successful coordination, it is not always a direct interaction between the administrators and firms, but connections can take place wherever there are commercial activities in the ecosystem. This can improve the university's transformation process, especially if it considers the diversity of the ecosystem (Eagle, Macym & Claxton, 2010). Figure 1 displays an integrated entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Figure 1 demonstrates that the entrepreneurial university is composed of entrepreneurial activities by students, researchers, the economy, and society as well as existing firms. This implies that the entrepreneurial university cannot stand alone if it is unsupported by the researchers, the economy, and society as well as existing firms. This implies the creation of a full ecosystem that entirely involves various important stakeholders.

Theory of change refers to how and why an initiative works, and therefore find a link between inputs, activities, outcomes, and the context of the initiative (Meoli, Paleari & Vismara, 2019; Matschoss, Repo &

Lukkarinen, 2020; Coombs & Meijer, 2021). It is relevant in South African universities as they are in the transformation phase, especially in the entrepreneurship space. The theory of change can sharpen the planning and implementation of entrepreneurship through initiatives ranging from university start-ups, and university-community-based business ventures to the commercialization of research. The theory of change involves that the entrepreneurship process begins with an entrepreneur stating the intended outcomes and putting them into context (Coombs & Meijer, 2021). For instance, in this case, the intended outcome is for universities to produce impactful research for communities that have economic value through curriculum corporate governance of structures in the ecosystem. An important economic factor may be the policy environment, where universities provide legislation on funding models of the research project at the stages of an entrepreneurship process (Matschoss *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, another contextual fact may refer to social networks such as how communities can accept the project or how intergroup relations are addressed. The theory of change needs to be plausible in that implemented activities should lead to desired outcomes. There should be economic, institutional, and human resources for the change

to be successful. The entrepreneurial outcomes in the ecosystem should have measurable records of accomplishment under conditions that enhance continuous improvement (Meoli *et al.*, 2019).

### 3. Methodology

The study is aligned with the qualitative paradigm, which asserts the existence of multiple realities, which can be found through interaction with many respondents (Krauss, 2005). As found in the literature there are many views with respect to the transformation of higher education and the creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem (Meoli *et al.*, 2019; Coombs & Meijer, 2021). A thematic review methodology is employed. As a result, the search for relevant themes across various articles was deemed appropriate for the study. Thematic analysis is based on the identification and analysis of critical patterns in data that are of interest to a study (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Themes are patterns that provide a way of understanding a study. They are essential in providing general data patterns, which can offer to mean to required concepts related to the study. The thematic analysis, therefore, was essential in this study as it provided important information that was essential for providing meaning. Such information can also be significant as they were drawn from various literature sources.

Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) provide that thematic analysis is a process of pattern recognition that seeks to capture key trends in data to address a certain phenomenon. It is a process of recognizing some important aspects of data and coding the aspect. As such, it encompasses a data reduction process in a manner that effectively captures what is essential for a study. A thematic literature review was deemed suitable for this study as it allows for the summarization of a mature field of study such as higher educational transformation.

Braun and Clarke (2006) posit that there are two types of themes, namely: (1) inductive themes and (2) deductive themes. These themes are based on how they originated. Inductive themes emerge from the collected data while deductive themes are rooted in the literature and are applied to aid data interpretation. Data analysis for this study was based on applying inductive themes to the reviewed articles and establishing how the themes are reflected in the articles. Thematic analysis for this study was important to achieve effective data

reduction and achieve the aim of the study. The articles that were reviewed in this study were purposively sampled from major databases and reviewed. The purposive sampling technique of relevant articles was deemed appropriate given that inductive themes were used. As such, articles that contained elements of the inductive themes were chosen for further analysis. The analysis took note of how the themes were explained and how they were linked. Purposive sampling tends to be an important technique in thematic analysis as it allows a study to focus only on the relevant items linked to the study.

### 4. An Entrepreneurial University

The theme 'entrepreneurial university' emerged from significant sections of the literature and was sought from the articles reviewed. It was established that there are wide lessons to be learned from other countries on how to build an entrepreneurship ecosystem in institutions of Higher Education. For instance, in Malaysia, Ahmad, Halim, Ramayah, Popa and Papa (2018) shared that there are guidelines and policies that should be formulated to build a strong entrepreneurial university; otherwise, existing activities are not formally coordinated. In addition, in the Finnish university, research and education have been found to promote academic tasks for technology innovation and the transfer of knowledge (Lahikainen, Kolhinen, Ruskovaara & Pihkala, 2019). Therefore, an entrepreneurial university provides solutions to the environment that has unpredictable effects in its own context. The theme 'entrepreneurial university' as reviewed above has an international dimension and tends to be meaningful when comparatively analysed with other countries. Furthermore, solutions should focus on alleviating employment of the graduates in society (Ncanywa, 2019).

An entrepreneurial university transforms from traditional ways and has key structural reform. The organisational structure creates posts that focus on entrepreneurship, teaching methods that are entrepreneurial, have a clear incentive system forms strong partnerships with external stakeholders, and have incubators with technology transfer officers (Lahkainen *et al.*, 2019). The above arguments demonstrate that the entrepreneurial university embraces various other essential sub-themes. There are significant observations that an entrepreneurial university can contribute to the enhancement of an entrepreneurial mindset to ease the pain of



academics on approaches adopted to introduce the entrepreneurship ecosystem (Matschoss *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, an appropriate entrepreneurial university ecosystem can be expected to include policies on patents, intellectual property rights, and licensing of products or services produced by academics. Concisely, academics should be able to change ideas from problems to business opportunities for personal and institutional gains (Klofsten *et al.*, 2019). This adds value to the ecosystem not to be a profit-making organisation but create a valuable system for society while enjoying some economic gains.

In an entrepreneurial university, academics should vision themselves as academics that have a role of an entrepreneur. Being an entrepreneur should not be seen as a separate responsibility from the core function of the institution (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019). Instead, it should be seen as an expansion of core responsibilities where for instance outcomes of research can be commercialized. The university should provide entrepreneurship centers or clinics for venture creation where there is a balance between teaching, research, and entrepreneurship (de Araujo Ruiz, Martens & da Costa, 2020). Additionally, the review conducted demonstrated that the concept of an entrepreneurial university is new in the South African context and there are various lessons that South Africa may have to learn from other countries for the effective development of an entrepreneurial university.

Based on the entrepreneurial university ecosystem displayed in Figure 1, the pillar of research informs that an entrepreneurial university develops entrepreneurship education courses (Clauss *et al.*, 2018). These form bases of the commercialization process where areas of innovation and research develop new products or services. Researchers are encouraged to be engaged in research that addresses the sustainable development plans and the challenges of the country such as issues of quality education, poverty, unemployment, and others (Sanyal & Hisam, 2018). Research produced should inform policy and there should be an authentic review of the produced research and elements that talk to society. Consistency with the spillover theory is essential to ensure a strong symbiotic relationship between elements of the entrepreneurial university and those of the industry. Research also informs administration where metrics are used to evaluate outcomes of the research in a virtual cycle as alluded to in the theory of change (Clauss *et al.*, 2018).

The university admin pillar in Figure 1 further acknowledges that the university administration allocates resources that can be used to build an entrepreneurial culture. In addition, the university administration constructs structures and provides an incentive system in terms of intellectual property rights, licenses, and patents. There should be a public policy on economic activities and how the entrepreneurial university contributes to the economic development policies of the country. This coordination between public policy and universities can assist the government to provide relevant resources for developing the state.

## **5. Entrepreneurship in Academia**

Academics provide entrepreneurship courses to students and communities as a community engagement activity. For instance, Muscio and Ramaciotti (2019) attest that the provision of entrepreneurship education can influence students' intentions to start a business. This provides an alternative plan for students in case they become unemployed when they complete their studies. Academics who provide entrepreneurship skills to students encourage them to be able to shape their entrepreneurship decisions (Rahim *et al.*, 2015). There should be training to empower academics to be able to provide entrepreneurship education.

While it is true that academia should offer entrepreneurship education, it is also important for academia to be practicing entrepreneurs so that they teach reality and the courses that they offer are a mirror of what they really do (Gubbins, Harrington & Hines, 2020). The argument that it is important for academics who teach entrepreneurship to be practicing entrepreneurs links to the spillover theory in that it is essential for entrepreneurs in the industry to be part-time academics. Having practicing entrepreneurs, as part-time academics, tends to foster the spillover of knowledge and skills from industry to the university (Lose & Kapondoro, 2020). Such an arrangement is also important as it creates a unique relationship between industry and universities. Educational initiatives can take the entrepreneurship dimension if academia takes an entrepreneurial approach to instruction.

Entrepreneurship education should be provided by academics who are trained in the mode of delivery of entrepreneurship (Mandel & Noyes, 2016; Gubbins *et al.*, 2020). For instance, entrepreneurship

can be taught in a practical way, where students "learn by doing". The practical approach exposes students to developing problem-solving and creativity skills. The most common assessment method is when students at end of the course can write a business plan essential for funding and marketing the business (Gubbins *et al.*, 2020). The best way to realize this is for academics to be entrepreneurs so that they teach what they do practice. This creates an important motivation whereby the learners are motivated to do what the lecturers do (Ncanywa, 2019).

A good entrepreneurship course should show students how to formulate a business plan that provides best practices to empower students on the best marketing strategies (McKenzie, 2017; STEP, 2022). It should also be strong in demonstrating the fundamentals for economic academics including the soft skills required in real entrepreneurial activity. For the full realization of the entrepreneurial university, it appears essential for learners and academics to have a greater passion for entrepreneurship. Examples of marketing strategies are when business owners capitalize on a product/service that is unique, high quality, low-priced, satisfies other needs of your target audience, or a combination of these (STEP, 2022). The marketed product needs to be tested before the business starts and compared with the competitors to identify a competitive advantage (Gubbins *et al.*, 2020). This would assist in showing that delivery will be on time and how you would overcome problems.

A good business plan comprises advertisement plans, promotion activities, and how to reach target groups (McKenzie, 2017). These include digital and new technologies, brochures, flyers, and particularly word-of-mouth. There should be a written plan on how to create and maintain relationships to retain customers, and this can be documented in a people's book (STEP, 2022). Customer satisfaction through positive word of mouth can reduce the cost-of-service delivery. Trained entrepreneurs apologize when in the wrong, build trust, and are polite, courteous, and respectful (McKenzie, 2017; Gubbins *et al.*, 2020; STEP, 2022).

## 6. Student Entrepreneurship Activities

One of the student entrepreneurship activities involves the provision of entrepreneurship education to students to enhance their creativity and

critical thinking (Hussain & Norashidah, 2015). The entrepreneurial university should be operationalized by real entrepreneurial activities among academics. In other words, entrepreneurial education should translate to real entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship education would imply the inculcation of entrepreneurial habits and ideology among university students. This can be expected to finally lead to real entrepreneurial practice, which is centered on job creation (Ncanywa, 2019).

Creativity entails the ability to identify ideas from problems and find solutions that can be seen as business opportunities (Lose & Kapondoro, 2020). An entrepreneurship ecosystem delivers an environment that balances the needs of society with the knowledge capabilities of the university (Muscio & Ramaciotti, 2019). In this ecosystem, entrepreneurial education empowers students on issues of attracting start-up capital and setting goals with plans on how to have a sustainable business. Entrepreneurship education is useful to all fields of study provided by the university.

Students should be given platforms where they produce entrepreneurship during the time they are still students (Muscio & Ramaciotti, 2019). That can motivate them to become entrepreneurs after graduation. This offers them time to engage in entrepreneurship under the guidance of their universities thereby setting the stage for further entrepreneurial activities (Ncanywa, 2019). There can be new ventures where students form associations and communities of practice and learn about entrepreneurship activities in their own spaces (Walter & Block, 2016). For example, the number of students who participate in entrepreneurship competitions and use the prizes to increase their revenues is one of the milestones that can be recorded in the entrepreneurship ecosystem. The ability of students to write business plans and use them for acquiring funding is one of the measures to show a successful entrepreneurship ecosystem through student entrepreneurship activities (Muscio & Ramaciotti, 2019).

It has been documented in the literature that entrepreneurship education can play a big role in the entrepreneurship activities that students engage in (Siegel & Wright, 2015; Guerrero, Liñán & Cáceres-Carrasco, 2021; Bergman & McMullen, 2021). Some of these activities can start informally, but when students receive entrepreneurship education, they

formalize their businesses and can register their businesses. Through entrepreneurship education, students learn in a systematic way how to change ideas into actions by demonstrating skills such as leadership, goal setting, planning and implantation, financial management, overcoming barriers, and market strategies to name a few (Siegel & Wright, 2015). When the activities are more formal and advanced, students engage in activities like the commercialization of research and licensing issues. The acquisition of entrepreneurship education does not necessarily mean all students who have undergone entrepreneurship education are going to participate in the start-up but can use entrepreneurship skills as an alternative plan to employment.

The Technology Transfer Office (TTO) needs to be established in universities. The TTO is key to commercialization; enhances students with an entrepreneurial mindset (Guerrero *et al.*, 2021). TTOs are better informed about entrepreneurship activities and can link students and staff with markets to promote university economic activities. There is a need for universities to institutionalize TTO structures in the university to position the integrated entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Teaching methodologies focussing on entrepreneurship education are realized as variables that influence students' entrepreneurial intention to start their own businesses (Arasti, Falavarjani, & Imanipour, 2012; Kalyoncuoglu, Aydintan & Goksel, 2017). It is anticipated students who register for entrepreneurial education and training as a formal qualification will likely get the knowledge and skills to participate in entrepreneurial activities (Ncanywa, 2019). Some of the key characteristics of entrepreneurs such as taking risks and challenges associated with setting up their own businesses can be explored when students learn entrepreneurship education (Kalyoncuoglu *et al.*, 2017).

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to review transformation in Higher Education through the entrepreneurship ecosystem using a thematic document analysis methodology. The themes are categorized as an entrepreneurial university, entrepreneurship in academia, and student entrepreneurship activities. Through the entrepreneurship ecosystem, universities are expected to play a crucial role in building their structures to be economically active; addressing

graduate unemployment; providing recovery strategies to reboot businesses in communities, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic; and positioning themselves as entrepreneurial universities.

It can be concluded that the entrepreneurial university has become an essential progression given the many problems being encountered by graduates in the job market. This study has established the need for an ecosystem where the entrepreneurial university is composed of entrepreneurship in academia as well as entrepreneurship activities by the students. These findings call for government support in the form of resources to ensure the effective development and growth of the entrepreneurial university phenomenon. If the universities' ecosystems can provide an enabling environment for boosting entrepreneurship development, the unemployed graduates can venture into business and improve their standards of living. This can enhance the socio-economic development of society through an entrepreneurship ecosystem in institutions of Higher Education.

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# Online Student Engagement of At-Risk Students During a Pandemic: A Reflective Essay

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**Abstract:** The importance of reflection in teaching has been advocated to address complex decisions that teachers make. This has been heightened by many complexities of the environment within which academics navigate and was highlighted more in the recent Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. There is a dearth of publications that address the reflections of academic staff members and the support programmes for students at risk within the accounting field in higher education. This is coupled with a lack of focus on academic support interventions. The objective of this reflective essay is to describe the decisions of higher education academics in an accounting department in their quest to provide a multi-pronged academic support programme (ASP) to undergraduate students identified as at risk during a pandemic. The essay reflects on three components of the actions of the teachers: academic support, peer mentorship, soft skills and work readiness workshops. The essay uses an integrated reflective cycle model by considering the experience of planning and delivery of the ASP and Schon's reflective approach by outlining reflection-in-action and reflections-on-action and recommendations for preparation for future ASPs. This essay contributes to the much-needed reflection of higher education's response to the lockdown relating to teaching and learning and adds to the body of knowledge on approaches to support interventions for students identified to be at risk in the accounting field and the need for accounting academics to reflect on their pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Students success, Remote teaching, Reflective practice, Students at risk

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## 1. Introduction

The higher education sector has previously been marred by various challenges from inequality brought on by increased access post the apartheid era, protests on fees, the decolonisation debate (Motala & Menon, 2020), and most recently the complexity of sustainability during a pandemic (Toquero, 2020). The importance of higher education graduation rates and the factors that influence them are widely researched (Talbert, 2012; Cabrera, 2014; Clarke, 2020). However, universities are still grappling with low progression rates. To address this, the university has been exploring models to implement interventions that would improve the success rates. This, in turn, could increase graduation rates (Mizikaci, 2006). The formulation of interventions often includes the identification of students who may be at risk of failing a module, giving extra classes, and additional formative assessments. It is usually a fragmented approach that does not consider the full qualification that the student is enrolled for nor other facets relating to personal growth and socialisation within the higher

education environment. Anecdotal evidence noted low student motivation and engagement during the semester and the authors developed a support programme that would not only address academic interventions but also peer mentorship, soft skills and work readiness skills.

The enforcement of the lockdown meant that the academic programme needed to be delivered remotely as higher education institutions contained on-campus risk (Motala & Menon, 2020). The pandemic posed a drastic risk not only to the academic year but also introduced an additional challenge to interventions that would support module performance. This essay presents a reflection of two authors who are academics (senior lecturers) in a university in Johannesburg, South Africa. They were part of the management team in an academic accountancy department offering an undergraduate diploma programme. They were involved in implementing the Academic Support Program (ASP) programme for students in the second and third years of study. As coordinators, co-problem solvers and co-implementers provided an opportunity to

reflect on the programme implementation strategy during COVID-19 drawing from the lived experience of actions taken and plans that were developed for the successful delivery of a programme during a national disaster (Motala & Menon, 2020). This was the first year that a ASP, focused solely on academic support and student's academic success and progression for all registered modules and not bursaries, was offered in the department.

The paper aims to detail the reflections on the experience in a remote learning environment during a pandemic by academics in the accounting field. It describes how the challenges experienced on implementation were managed, including student engagement, administration, communication and the use of technology applications for the programme's rollout. The essay also presents successes and opportunities that were evident at the time of implementation.

This paper contributes to the much-needed reflection by academics in higher education and a response to the lockdown relating to teaching and learning (T&L) remotely (Williamson, Eynon & Potter, 2020) and adds to the body of knowledge on approaches to support interventions for accounting students identified to be at risk. The objective of the paper is to reflect on the experience of two academics in an accounting department on the delivery of ASP during the pandemic. The sub-objectives are:

- To reflect on the decisions and actions taken in the programmes' implementation process (reflection in action) and a reflection post the completion of the programme (reflection on action).
- To describe the ASP's multiple-pronged interventions that were developed as an approach to improve student learning and the academic's facilitation of the learning process.

The structure of the essay is as follows: Section 2 outlines the literature on academic success and the theoretical framework; Section 3 presents the methodology applied in the reflection process; Section 4 discusses the co-authors' experience of reflection-in-action during the ASP's planning and implementation; Section 5 presents reflections-on-action post the ASP's implementation; Section 6 concludes with recommendations for areas of future research.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Student Success and Challenges in Higher Education

Obtaining a higher education qualification is viewed as an opportunity to enhance socioeconomic mobility and reduce inequality (Reinders, Dekker & Falisse, 2020). It is no longer enough to increase access and enrolment into higher education, but interventions have become important to ensure that enrolled students eventually graduate (Bettinger & Long, 2004; Castleman & Long, 2013). Additionally, first-generation Black students face a variety of difficulties that impede their social and economic success. This is consequently one aspect that contributes to universities' poor success rates (Ramos, 2019). The programme sort to provide support to disadvantaged students defined as students whose demographic description includes low-income, non-white, working-class, or first-generation college students. These students are often faced with barriers in higher education, including financial barriers, lack of academic preparation, lack of information and behavioural barriers (Herbaut & Geven, 2019). COVID-19 introduced a new barrier that had not been anticipated.

Illeris (2006) suggests a student's ability to learn and perform is an intricate process that is impacted by cognitive, socio, emotional factors and prior experience. Identifying at-risk students promptly as well as personalisation and adaptation of the learning process is important to improve a student's performance (Siemens & Long, 2011). Seminal work by Astin (1984) and Tinto (1975) argue that various factors affect a student's academic success. Characteristics that contribute to academic performance can help identify students who need further support and assistance to create programmes that address their issues (Carpenter & Roos, 2020). Astin's Input-Environmental-Outcome (I-E-O) allows researchers to examine the impact that environmental inputs have on outcomes taking into consideration background characteristics. Understanding these environmental factors requires consideration of the institutional environment to assist students in transitioning into higher education and facilitating social and academic assimilation (Carpenter & Roos, 2020). Tinto (1975) highlighted the student's attributes and how academic development is influenced by their involvement in university life. The student's success can also be affected by their satisfaction with student-faculty interactions (Zhou & Cole, 2017).

## 2.2 Interventions

Multiple interventions have been explored to support students in higher education to improve engagement and increase student success rates. To aid reflection a review of literature relating to academic interventions, mentorship, skills and work readiness was conducted and is discussed below.

### 2.2.1 Academic Interventions

Winkelmes, Bernacki, Butler, Zochowski, Golanics, and Weavil (2016) developed an uncomplicated yet replicable academic intervention focused on first-generation, low-income and under-represented students. First-generation students are 51% less likely to graduate in 4 years (Ishitani, 2006). Universities have tried to implement interventions to increase student success for at-risk and previously disadvantaged students. However, few studies show what faculties can do to jointly address the success of underserved and at-risk students (Winkelmes *et al.*, 2016). The authors found a direct relationship between increasing a student's academic confidence and sense of belonging and student success, especially for underserved students. Furthermore, it was found that the above led to diminished racial success gaps, insecurity and increased student confidence and increased the likelihood of being in the top 25% (Walton & Cohen, 2011). This was done by creating transparently designed, problem-centred take-home assignments because they were replicable, and improved academic confidence, sense of belonging and awareness thus increasing student success (Winkelmes *et al.*, 2016). This led to increased student engagement in lectures, more timely completion of assignments and few mark disputes (Winkelmes *et al.*, 2016).

### 2.2.2 Mentorship

Mentorship is a progressive relationship that fosters learning, socialization, guidance and career development for individuals who are cultivating a knowledge base. It is an intervention that can, directly and indirectly, improve academic outcomes and persistence in higher education (Lunsford, Crisp, Dolan & Wuetherick, 2017). Mentors can build connections that mould a student's personal and professional growth and can inspire their mentees to follow their goals and assist with fostering resilience in tertiary education. Regular communication between the mentor and mentee has favorable effects, such as giving mentees the impression that they matter and can succeed in their academic endeavors (Ramos, 2019).

Mentorship programmes often have three categories: undergraduate research, peer mentoring or comprehensive mentorship (Lunsford *et al.*, 2017). Peer mentorship was used for the programme. It focuses on enhancing the students' sense of belonging, academic persistence, and success (Jacobi, 1991; Hill & Reddy, 2007). This was a framing intervention that focused on challenges that students may face by helping them to be more adaptable (Harackiewicz & Priniski, 2018) facilitated by their peers.

### 2.2.3 Soft-Skills Training

Kermis & Kermis (2010) stated that soft skills incorporate written, verbal, presentation and interpersonal competencies. Accounting students are required to attain technical competence, harness social and emotional intelligence and soft skills in the form of communication, critical thinking and ethics (Golemon, Boyatzis & McKee, 2004; Rebele & St Pierre, 2019). The International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) requires the application of principles as opposed to compliance with rules. This requires accountants to poses dominant soft skills (Kermis & Kermis, 2010). However, Leone (2008) asserts that grasping soft skills such as critical thinking, judgement, integrity and analysis is one of the more challenging factors over and above technical training. Bay and McKeage (2006) posit that there may be deliberate academic interventions to heighten students' emotional intelligence.

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework Underpinning Reflection

Reflection is a conscience examination of past experiences, focusing on thoughts and ways of doing things to learn about oneself and a situation to inform the present and the future. It can therefore inform decisions, actions, attitudes, beliefs and understanding (Edinburg University, n.d.). Reflection is used in various educational and professional settings, especially in teacher education, psychology and science-related fields such as nursing. It forms part of pedagogical action research to improve student learning through systematically investigating one's T&L as a student and as a facilitator of learning to inform modifications to practice and inform theory (Norton, 2009). Considering the factors that affect student outcomes, the importance of academics reflecting on their practice and contributions to student success is heightened under the environment of remote teaching that took place in higher education. The importance of reflection

is highlighted in educational literature as well as practitioners' and researchers' development (Johns & Freshwater, 1998; Mayes, 2001; Trelfa, 2005).

Mortari (2015) presents four perspectives on reflection: the pragmatic view, the critical perspective, hermeneutic perspective and the phenomenological perspective. The co-authors specifically adopted Schon's (1983) approach to a reflection which distinguishes between "reflection-in-action" and reflection-on-action". The stages of reflection-in-action require reflection as something is happening; consideration of the situation, the decision on how to act and acting immediately. The stages of reflection-on-action require reflection after something has happened; reconsidering the situation, thinking about what needs to change in the future.

The coordinators used the theory of pragmatic reflection because it not only frames reflection as an intellectual exercise but also as being action orientated to problem-solve for the advancement of life (Mortari, 2015). The authors reflected on their experience of implementing the programme to increase the effectiveness of future programmes geared towards the academic support of students at risk (Dewey, 1923; Mortari, 2015). This perspective was fitting as the uncertainty of the impact of the pandemic on education fits the assumption that "thinking occurs when things are uncertain or doubtful or problematic" (Dewey, 1916:83).

Concepts of reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983) are presented where decisions about action were being made during implementation and due to the unforeseen event of having to implement the programme remotely rather than in a face-to-face environment. This method is ideal in instances where there are no standard procedures or answers to deal with problematic situations (Mortari, 2015). The other concept of reflection-on-action (recollective reflection) allows for thinking on what has already been done, to consider our actions and how they contributed to the solution of the problem (Schon, 1987). The authors will reflect on the actions taken at the time of delivery of the programme and whether the support provided considered the factors as identified by literature to improve academic success.

### 3. Method and Process of Reflection

An integrative reflection model was used for the reflection that is inspired by a range of models

including Gibbs reflective cycle and Schons approach to reflection. This is a qualitative approach to research that focuses on reflection on the experience of implementing programme (Edinburg University, n.d.). The essay was written from the academics' experiences at the time of remote T&L during a pandemic. They have been involved in FtF support programmes, pre-pandemic and blended learning. Thus, this offers a snapshot of how they navigated uncharted terrain not only to save the academic year but to save the programme as well. In applying the integrative model, the authors' views are subjective based on their experience and perspective on the programme. The tools used to aid the reflection were the review of meetings held throughout the programme, notebooks used to document challenges and decisions taken, memory recollection and review of student feedback through emails and mentor reports to identify themes.

A limitation is the authors could not fully capture their experiences of the implementation of the programme remotely. Albeit their reflections represent a cognitive activity, they would not be able to recall the full object of their thoughts at the time, but only what their reflection has been able to retain. For them to have a complete awareness of their thoughts and selves, they would have had to observe themselves outside of themselves, which is impossible (Mortari, 2015).

## 4. Reflection-in-Action

### 4.1 Context and Consideration of the Situation

Lockdowns forced the university to institute remote learning in all T&L activities (Motala & Menon, 2020). This prompted a rethink of the original strategy of an FtF ASP being delivered remotely not as a conscious decision but rather propelled by extenuating circumstances. The coordinators adopted a strategy that had been implemented for interventions on a previous year's bursary programme for academically strong students. This programme encompassed academic support, mentorship, soft-skills and work-readiness workshops. The bursary programme demonstrated that a student's academic performance improves if a student has adequate academic and non-academic support. Therefore the coordinators adopted the same approach for this ASP.

The 162 students who participated were identified through self-selection through an open recruitment



process that was announced on the learning management system (LMS) as it was accessible and convenient. A pre-requisite was that the students on the programme be South African citizens and preference was given to African black and coloured students and students with disabilities where possible to address transformation. The programme was opened to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> students identified as being at risk. These were students who were repeating the prior year's modules and needed additional assistance to obtain their qualifications. First-year students were excluded because there was no historical information about their higher education academic performance. 63% of the students were in their final year of study. 99% of the students were African Black and 64% were female. 64% of the students originated from urban areas; Gauteng (58%), Limpopo (15%) and Mpumalanga (10%) (see Figure 1).

85% of the students' fees were funded by the National Student Funding Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Despite students being funded by NSFAS, there is still a need to provide them with academic and non-academic support because of their socio-economic and historical background to ensure the educational playing field is leveled.

#### 4.2 Academic Interventions

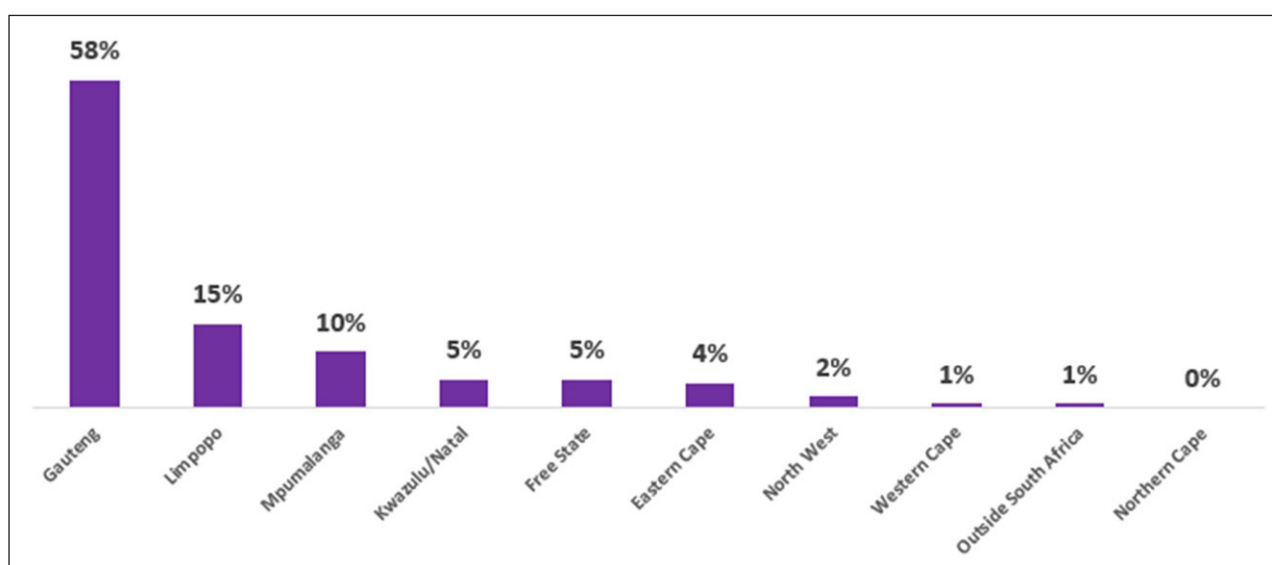
The academic part of the programme was a course-specific, task-value intervention that focused

on academic content (Harackiewicz & Priniski, 2018). The coordinators wanted to create a safe, confidence-building and enabling learning environment for the students because students experiencing academic challenges might have low self-esteem and may become reclusive if the programme did not cater to their needs (Winkelmes *et al.*, 2016). The coordinators considered the students' input regarding academic needs, timetables and preferred lecturers to encourage attendance and participation. Two additional weekly lectures were scheduled, per year-group during the semester and revision lectures towards the end of the semester. The frequency of these lectures ensured students engaged with the content continuously. Students received a question a week before the lecture to attempt on their own and submitted on the LMS. The purpose of the additional lectures was not to reteach the material taught but to determine a student's understanding of the principles taught in an application-type question.

#### 4.3 Mentorship

The coordinators, through their experience, knew some students struggle academically not because they lack the knowledge required for the module but rather due to non-academic problems. Peer mentors would have experienced these challenges themselves (Lunsford *et al.*, 2017). There was an application process for potential mentors.

Figure 1: Origin of Students per Province



Source: Authors

Preference was given to applicants who were alumni, or studied an accounting qualification. This was to ensure that mentors would be able to relate to and understand challenges the mentee faces. It was to motivate the mentee if they have a mentor who went through and succeeded in obtaining the qualification they are enrolled for. Thus focusing on enhancing the student's sense of belonging, academic persistence, and success (Jacobi, 1991; Hill & Reddy, 2007).

It was crucial for mentors to get formal training. Therefore, mentors were trained at the inception of the programme, facilitated by the institution's academic development unit to ensure that they were adequately equipped to engage with their mentee, be cognizant of the challenges the mentee may face and develop mechanisms to address these challenges (Lunsford *et al.*, 2017). All students were allocated a mentor to provide one-on-one support and referral for professional intervention when needed. This aimed to enhance social and academic integration. Peer mentors submitted weekly reports on their engagements with students to assist in the identification of problem areas that required further interventions, beyond academics.

#### 4.4 Soft-Skills and Work-Readiness Workshops

For the program to be balanced, the coordinators thought it was necessary to include a component that helped students develop their soft skills as well as other training that would improve their readiness for the workplace, give them a competitive edge when looking for suitable job opportunities, and help them transition smoothly into a working environment. Additionally, students couldn't ignore intangibles like a strong work ethic, a sense of urgency, and a desire to help others as ways to show dedication to their studies. To address the gaps identified in the literature on workplace readiness, the coordinators approached a consulting firm that focused on personal and career development. The coordinators highlighted that they preferred the workshops to consider the following aspects:

- Different socialization and parenting styles exist in South African homes.
- Diverse cultural dynamics may disadvantage students in the workplace.
- A corporate environment that is widely diverse in terms of race, culture, age and sexuality.

- Emphasis on self as a product that is of value to society and business based on the ability to contribute in terms of time, character, skills and qualifications.

It was intended for FtF seminars to be presented on campus so that the facilitator could get to know the students and develop a rapport with them since an outside provider, not a person the students were familiar with, would deliver these lessons. Students and the life coach would have discussed topics in groups while the facilitators could have participated.

#### 4.5 The Decision on How to Act: Pivoting Because of the Pandemic

##### 4.5.1 Academic Intervention

The programme was planned to be delivered FtF. However, the pandemic needed the coordinators to pivot and rethink how the programme could be successfully delivered remotely. The coordinators swiftly developed a strategy to deliver the programme through remote learning under difficult and unprecedented times, to ensure students' academic goals are achieved.

Groups per year of study were set up on the university's LMS as a central point of communication and uploading material. Students were engaged both through asynchronous, pre-recorded videos and synchronous lectures held virtually. Based on students' timetables, Fridays were the most suitable day for the academic interventions.

Questions were uploaded on the LMS for students to attempt a week before the synchronous online lecture. Academics prepared comprehensive, pre-recorded videos explaining the solution to the question. This recording was shared with students to reflect on their understanding after they submitted their attempts, to mark their answers and to prepare questions they may have before the live lecture on Friday. During the synchronous online lecture, students were allowed to ask questions. These lectures were recorded to allow students with data and/or device constraints to access the material afterwards and use the material in preparation for major assessments.

##### 4.5.2 Mentoring

The coordinators felt it necessary for students to have frequent communication with their mentors to build a connection, trust and constructive

engagement instead of ad-hoc interaction. The original plan was FtF weekly meetings of mentors with their mentees. However, all sessions were virtual using platforms best preferred by both parties such as WhatsApp. Students on the programme shared email feedback that their mentors were very crucial in their academic progress because the mentor provided non-academic support to cope with academic progress. Students found that their mentor could relate to some, if not most, of their challenges because they had walked a similar path in recent years. Therefore, the support and advice shared by the mentor were based on previous experience and embodied empathy.

#### **4.5.3 Soft-Skills and Work-Readiness Workshops**

The services provided included ten custom-made, pre-recorded videos developed for the students by a life coach. Numerous topics were covered, ranging from character development, preparing for a virtual interview, social media behaviour, diversity awareness and professionalism. Furthermore, there were four webinars to flesh out the content covered in the videos. This was an eight-week programme and all the content was made available to students for future reference.

#### **4.5.4 General Student Engagement**

The programme team gave the students virtual support by creating WhatsApps group per year to create a community for all the students. The team shared daily motivational quotes and shared voice notes/videos created by the team to discuss specific topics such as exam techniques for remote learning. Overall, the success rate of students on this programme in 2020 was 81%. This is based on students who were either promoted to the next academic year (44%) or who obtained their qualification (56%).

## **5. Reflection-on-Action**

### **5.1 Reconsidering the Situation**

When the lockdown was implemented at the inception of the programme, the coordinators were faced with two options, to relook the strategy of the delivery of the programme remotely or to withdraw the programme. On reflection, the latter was not an option. Students needed greater help because they were more at risk - not simply as F2F at-risk students, but also because the pandemic and the uncertainty it caused threatened both their health and chance to get a higher education credential. These students

required additional support and continuous monitoring of their performance to navigate the remote environment.

The coordinators felt the remote implementation of the programme created more opportunities to reach at-risk students as a whole than there would have been with a silo approach of modules; addressing qualification success rates rather than just module success rates. It also allowed for the provision of support not only to students who have been identified to be at risk academically but the ability to record the sessions and share them widely with all students.

### **5.2 What Needs to Change in the Future**

#### **5.2.1 Academic Intervention**

The challenge of delay in the awarding of the programme funding is likely to result in a delayed programme start date making it difficult to align to the university academic calendar. However, there is an opportunity to offer additional classes during the June/July recess for those students who may need to prepare for supplementary exams. Despite this obstacle, coordinators feel that additional revision sessions before supplementary examinations will help students enhance their chances of passing a supplementary exam.

Forty-one per cent (41%) of the successful students in 2020's were in their second year. For future programmes, preference will be awarded to the 41% who were promoted to the next academic year as they demonstrated that the programme was beneficial to them and that they would like to continue being beneficiaries of the programme.

#### **5.2.2 Mentorship**

Mentorship in this programme is deemed a pivotal and crucial element. Therefore, the recruitment of mentors remains essential. Previous beneficiaries of the programme will be encouraged to apply as a way of 'paying it forward'. The coordinators believe their experience as mentees will add to the common factors to build relationships.

Weekly meetings (physical or virtual) will be required as part of the programme. However, more F2F engagement will be encouraged. Training programs may be designed to help mentors assess their mentee's needs. Sanford (1962) suggests that a mentor should strike a balance between challenge and

support for constructive growth to emerge and avoid excessive support because students can become heavily reliant on their mentors to resolve their problems. Failing which students might be overcome by too many challenges (Jones & Abes, 2011)

### 5.2.3 *Soft-Skills and Work-Readiness Workshops*

The presentation of pre-recorded soft skills videos did not allow for the desired group interaction or interaction with the life coach. This was a costly constraint of pre-recording instead of F2F or synchronous sessions which would have allowed for live engagement and practice of some of the soft skills that were being modelled. The students were exposed to non-technical or non-discipline related information and life skills, such as diversity awareness, that will be useful to them when they enter the working environment. Despite the soft-skills and work readiness webinars taking place after three pre-recorded topics, this remained an important part of the program. The students were exposed to non-technical or non-discipline related information and life skills, such as diversity awareness, that will be useful to them when they enter the working environment. Despite the soft-skills and work readiness webinars taking place after three pre-recorded topics, this remained an important part of the program. These sessions demonstrated the importance of well-balanced and well-rounded graduates.

Two additional opportunities exist in the future; to include 4IR-related content to introduce and prepare the students for the skills that are the most sort after in the 4IR era and sessions on financial literacy (Ramos, 2019) and how to manage finances as students and when they start employment.

### 5.2.4 *General Student Engagement*

The tutors on the programme remain pivotal to the running of the programme. This is because they are the interface between the coordinators and students. The team will continue to use WhatsApp per year-group as a mode of communication and to share daily motivations with students.

## 6. Recommendation and Conclusions

The dawn of democracy increased access to previously marginalised groups to access higher education. However, the difference in socio-economic backgrounds and quality of secondary education has resulted in stark differences in the performance

of students and required a differentiated approach by universities to provide support where gaps have been identified. This programme has the potential to contribute towards the 4<sup>th</sup> SDG goal of ensuring inclusivity and equitable quality of education. The soft-skills and work readiness introduce students to the importance of life-long learning outside of accounting technical knowledge.

Accounting academics and students had to adjust to the varying T&L issues brought about by the pandemic (Sangster, Stoner & Flood, 2020) and there is an opportunity to chart a research agenda for accounting education that evaluates a blended approach (Sangster *et al.*, 2020). Even though COVID-19 appeared to put the programme on hold, it encouraged the coordinators to be innovative. The recorded sessions allowed the students to revisit the material at their convenience. It also allowed for greater access to all students in that the recorded sessions were shared with students who were not part of the programme, allowing for learning opportunities for all. This however does not necessarily address the new threat to equality and access brought on by COVID-19 evident in the differences in access relating to adequate devices, data and network infrastructure (Motala & Menon, 2020) which was not addressed. The reflections above made the coordinators realise there was indeed a method in the process applied to implement the programme under crisis mode.

Considering the potential benefits of such a programme and the fact that it was the first time it was implemented, it is recommended that accounting academics should apply reflective practices to the interventions put in place to support accounting students in higher education. The reflection has allowed the co-authors to reflect on their practice and pedagogy concerning T&L innovations, student engagement and coordination of a programme. Research, supported by literature, will improve their academic rigour in supporting students with T&L.

The reflective practice helped the coordinators improve their strategy and track how these programmes affect performance. The reflections also provide evidence of programme delivery that can be shared beyond the quantitative performance of students, but also qualitatively and programme implementation characteristics that could potentially be shared amongst institutions. This programme has been conducted at a point in time. Longitudinal

research as new similar programmes are implemented presents more opportunity for reflection. Future reflections should include perspectives of students, tutors and peer mentors.

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# Predictors of Project Success at the South African Selected Energy State-Owned Enterprise

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to identify which predictor predicts project success the highest at the selected South African Energy state-owned enterprises (SOE). This study is motivated by the highest failure rates of timeously implementing projects in time by SOEs in the South African context. The literature reviewed revealed many predictors of project success, but the common ones entail the governance committee, project manager, governance structures and project team. Hence in this study, the focus was on them. This study was quantitative and deductive, with a positivist paradigm influenced it. There were 130 employees involved in the projects at the business unit, and a census was used as a sampling strategy. Only 82 responded by completing a close-ended questionnaire which was distributed via SurveyMonkey. The response rate was 63.07%. Statistical techniques like Kurtosis and Skewness were used to determine if the data were normally distributed. Normality and other statistical techniques were calculated in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 27. Through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), these factors were extracted: governance committee, project manager; governance structures and processes; project team and project success. For all the predictors and the target variable (i.e. project success), Cronbach's alphas ranged from 0.7 to 0.83. The data showed that 65.9% of the respondents were males and the Pearson correlation results showed that predictors positively correlated with the target variable. The regression results showed that project team was the highest predictor ( $\beta = 0.62$ ,  $t = 5.15$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and the second-highest predictor was project manager ( $\beta = 4.70$ ,  $t = 4.70$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The R-squared ( $r^2$ ) was 0.58, suggesting that the regression model only predicted 58% of project success at the selected energy SOE. Other predictors were not significant predictors of project success. The results imply that the business unit at the energy SOE should foster a teamwork culture and capitate and support project managers to enhance project success.

**Keywords:** Governance committee, Project manager, Governance structures and processes, Project team and project success

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## 1. Introduction

Capital project research in the energy state-owned enterprise (SOE) is a topic of interest to researchers. Several studies have emphasised that the energy industry needs to develop capital projects for a competitive, productive, long-term development, modernisation, and sustainable demand for energy (Kripa & Xhafa, 2013). This is because of these capital projects' contribution to the economy. Barone (2020) defines a capital project as a long-term capital-intensive investment to improve, refurbish or construct a new capital asset. It is of concern that capital projects on the SOE are often over budget, not delivered on time, and not according to the specifications (Strand, Larsen, Volden & Andersen, 2021). Holgeid and Thompson (2013) define a successful project as the project executed within the specified duration, at the budgeted costs and delivering the expected value. Capital projects on the SOEs involve multiple

stakeholders and multiple objectives. Furthermore, political influence forms part of the strategic setting, consequently impacting measuring success and decision-making (Strand *et al.*, 2021).

The South African energy sector has varying state ownership and regulation patterns across sub-sectors. In South Africa, energy is the economy's lifeblood that directly impacts using labour and capital to produce energy, creating jobs and value by extracting, transforming, and distributing goods and services throughout the economy. The energy SOE that produces 95% of electricity is Eskom (Maleka, 2012). The generated electricity is sold to consumers and municipalities. Currently, the energy SOE has capacity constraints, adversely affecting the electricity supply to consumers and municipalities and impacting the economy negatively (Flepisi & Mlambo, 2021). These shortages have become a powerful hindrance to South Africa's fragile economic recovery

and probably weaken the credibility and legitimacy of the government (Kassides, 2020). The shortages are attributed due to delays in capital projects (Sturesson, McIntyre & Jones, 2015).

Lack of teamwork has been ruled as one factor contributing to the failure to complete most of the SOE's energy capital projects. The study conducted at Medupi and Kusile projects in South Africa revealed that internal factors contributed most to the delay (Flepisi & Mlambo, 2021). According to Ramdaloo (2020), lack of communication between team members has been identified as one of the causes of failure in South Africa's capital projects. The lack of effective project team integration between clients, the supplier and the supply chain is one of the common causes of project failure. Poor site administration and management, unpredictable ground conditions, and slow decision-making by all project teams have been cited as the critical cause of delays in construction projects in Hong Kong (Adugna, 2015).

Lack of corporation from the governance committee is one of the contributing factors to the failure of most capital projects. The study conducted on the South African energy mega projects concluded that slow client decision-making and shortage of skilled labour were ranked as the number one factors that cause schedule overrun (Tshidavhu & Khatleli, 2020). According to Li, Akintoye and Holt (2017), project governance delivers a structure for setting project objectives and decision-making. The most dominant challenges in South Africa regarding projects are unstable management structures, lack of experience, and poor organisational structures (Tshidavhu & Khatleli, 2020). The United Kingdom National Audit Office (NAO) evidence shows that a lack of effective engagement with stakeholders is also a significant reason capital projects failure (Jenner, 2015). Poorly managed project business relationships lack active stakeholder management. The findings from the Price WaterhouseCoopers (PWC) analyst indicate that 92% of occurrences of project failure that were brought to the attention of the board were because of governance issues rather than technical aspects (PWC, 2015).

Furthermore, governance structures and processes contribute to the unsuccessful completion of capital projects. When Moody's Investors Service and Standard and Poor's cut the utility's rating to non-investment grade in November 2014 and March 2015,

respectively, one of the key reasons behind the downgrade was governance failure (Kassides, 2020). The governance process, which includes slow decision-making, delays in approvals and conflicts in the contracts, was cited as the primary cause of delays in the study conducted on construction projects in South Africa (Tshidavhu & Khatleli, 2020). Another challenge is that most of the energy SOEs' capital projects are funded by the governments and private capital investment banks; hence, the decision-making process is slow and negatively impacts the projects' progress (Ashkanani & Franzoi, 2022).

Thus far, the discussion shows that capital projects are unsuccessful in SOEs in the energy sector. This indicates that this research is salient, and the researchers embarked on this study so that they may contribute positively to the predictors of project success body of knowledge. In the next section, the problem statement is elucidated.

There are predictors of capital projects not being successful in the energy SOEs as literature suggests (Ashkanani, & Franzoi, 2022; Tshidavhu & Khatleli, 2020). The literature has established that only 2.5% of the capital projects in South Africa are completed on time (Ramdaloo, 2020). Before this study at the business unit in the energy SOE, no study was conducted to identify the predictors of project success. Thus, this study was conducted to address this gap. The energy SOE had developed a capital project governance framework, yet the 2020 and 2021 annual reports showed that only 70% of the capital projects were not successful or delivered on time. However, it was unclear from the annual report which variable predicted the 30% project success. The research question: which predictor predicts project success at the South African selected SOE?

## 2. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Project success is about completing the project within an agreed timeline, cost and quality (Ohi & Choi, 2020). This study is situated with the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK, 2017) framework, which has set standards on how the project should be conducted. The PMBOK standards are a framework or guidelines that should be used by the organisation, including SOEs, to succeed in implementing the projects. In addition, PMBOK states the roles of the governance committee, project manager, governance structure and team to



predict the role in project success. An SOE is an organisation owned by the state with ownership of the private sector (Mnisi, 2022).

### **2.1 Governance Committee and Project Success**

The governance committee's role is to scope and monitor the projects through meetings at agreed intervals (Willis, 2018). Smit (2018) argued that the governance committee comprise the project sponsor, a programme manager and the project manager. The project sponsor is the senior manager in the organisation who can either be a member of the executive or is given the mandate by the board to implement capital projects in the energy SOE. Their role is to provide the programme with manager/s (i.e. manage the different capital projects) with a mandate to manage the projects. In addition, the programme sponsor's role is to provide leadership and support to the programme managers (Ramdaloo, 2020). It argued that when the governance committee has strategic, technical and operational competencies, they can oversee the SOEs' capital projects so a successful completion (PWC, 2014).

The study's first hypothesis is as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: The governance committee positively and significantly affects a capital project's success at the SOE.

### **2.2 Project Manager and Project Success**

The PMBOK (2017) states that a project manager is a leader who is responsible for managing, leading and controlling the project resources. In addition, they are responsible for the project's success (i.e. cost, schedule and quality). A project manager is accountable for keeping the costs within the budget agreed upon at the beginning of the project. The project manager is responsible for delivering the project on time, using software like Microsoft Project. In the software, the project manager allocates tasks and monitors whether the project team members deliver as agreed. In terms of quality, a project manager is accountable for delivering the capital project according to the customers' expectations and specifications (Haq, Liang, Gu, Du & Zhao, 2018). Cost, scheduling and quality are technical competencies (PMBOK, 2017), and they are essential for a project manager to complete the energy capital project in

SOEs. Research revealed that, on average, capital projects in energy SOEs and organisations overrun by 25% (PriceWatersCooper, 2014).

It also needs to be emphasised that soft competencies are critical for the project manager working on an energy capital project to possess. A project manager who can successfully map internal and external stakeholders has a propensity to successfully deliver a capital project in the energy sector (Khan, Waris, Ismail, Sajid, Ullah & Usman, 2018). They can map stakeholders using the stakeholder categories matrix (Eresia-Eke, 2020). In addition, a project manager with excellent leadership competencies such as inspiration, charisma, support, trustworthiness and integrity (Horváth, 2019; Lokhande & Vaidh, 2018; Ramdaloo, 2020) has completed capital projects in the SOE sector.

Hence in this study, the second hypothesis is:

H<sub>2</sub>: Governance structure positively and significantly affects a capital project's success at the SOE.

### **2.3 Governance Structure and Project Success**

According to Muller (2019), a governance structure is established so that the project team is given a blueprint or framework for delivering the project. The blueprint also assists the capital project team on which policies to follow. Dunović (2010) adds that the purpose of the governance structure is to define the capital project objectives or aims, the procedures to achieve them and the policies put in place to achieve them. When adequately following guidelines, projects are delivered or handed to the customer/s as agreed (Vanderwaldt, 2008). In addition, agility is another critical factor to project success. Agility is about flexibility and not being rigid, and it is about not following one method (State of Illinois Interoperability Project, 2013) to deliver the capital project in the SOEs successfully.

The third hypothesis is as follows:

H<sub>3</sub>: Governance structure positively and significantly affects a capital project's success at the SOE.

### **2.4 Team Structure and Project Success**

Oh and Choi (2020) state that a project team structure comprises the project manager, project leader, team members, and engineers and reports

to the programme manager. A capital project team that works harmoniously and has less conflict is most likely to complete a project within schedule and on time (Radujkovića & Sjekavicab, 2017). In addition, a capital project team with appropriate technical skills has a propensity to succeed. The project team succeed if it adheres to the client's specifications and the client does not alter the scope often during the capital project. Changing the project score is known as scope creep (Taherdoost & Keshavarzsaleh, 2015). In an energy SOE, where the working culture is based on respect, adhering to deadlines and is not bellicose or hostile, capital projects are completed on time, within budget with good quality according to the client's expectations (Radujkovića & Sjekavicab, 2017).

Based on this discussion, the fourth hypothesis is:

H<sub>4</sub>: Team structure positively and significantly affects a capital project's success at the SOE.

Mathematically the theoretical framework of the study is written as follows:

$$Y'_{\text{Project success}} = \beta_1 (\text{Governance committee}) + \beta_2 (\text{Project manager}) + \beta_3 (\text{Governance structure}) + \beta_4 (\text{Team structure})$$

### 3. Methodology

This section discusses the research design, sample distribution, data collection and analysis and ethical clearance.

#### 3.1 Research Design and Sample Distribution

The research design of this study was cross-sectional and predictive. It was cross-sectional because the study was on a single interval (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). The same authors opined that predictive research uses regression analysis to predict the target variable. In this study, the target or dependent variable is project success. Since this study used regression as a statistical algorithm, it was influenced by the positivism paradigm. This paradigm states, or its epistemological position, that testing hypotheses is used to create knowledge. In addition, it states that researchers must be objective or not focus on respondents' subject beliefs or subjective views when analysing the data (Saunders, Briston, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Since the population was less than 500, as suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2015), a census was used. The population was 130, and only 82 respondents participated in this study. The response rate was 63.07%. The sample distribution is shown in Table 1. The majority (65.9%) of

**Table 1: Sample Distribution**

Variable	Frequencies	Percentages
<b>Gender</b>	54 (Male)	65.9 %
	28 (Female)	34.1 %
<b>Age</b>	15 (25 to 35)	18.3 %
	44 (36 to 45 years)	53.7 %
	15 (46 to 55 years)	18.3 %
	7 (56 years or more)	8.5%
<b>Employee occupation</b>	11 (Programme Manager)	13.4%
	22 (Project Manager)	26.8%
	32 (Project Engineer/Project Technician)	39.0%
	7 (Project Planner)	1.2%
	10 (Other)	12.19%
<b>Experience</b>	3 (3 to 5 years)	3.7%
	21 (6 to 10 years)	25.6%
	43 (11 to 20 years)	52.4%
	15 (21 years or above)	18.3%

Source: Authors

the respondents were males. The majority (53.7%) were in this age category: 36 to 45 years. Project engineers and technicians were also in the majority (39.0%), and the majority (52.4%) were employees with experience ranging from 11 to 20 years.

### 3.2 Data Collection

The data were collected via a questionnaire comprising close-ended questions since this study was quantitative. The biographical section of the questionnaire measured these variables discussed in the research design and sample distribution section: gender, age, education and position. The target variable (i.e. project success) 11 items were adapted from Joslin and Muller's (2016) questionnaire. Some items were, "The capital projects are always completed in time" and "The capital projects are always completed within planned cost." The predictors (i.e. project manager, project team, governance structure and process and governance Committee) 35 items were adapted from the questionnaire developed by Li *et al.* (2017). Some of the items were, "The project manager has the necessary skills to execute all capital projects", "The project manager applies the relevant processes during the project life cycle", "There is smooth communication between team members", "Team members complete their tasks within the allocated duration", and "The company has a well-structured governance process", "The company applies the Project life cycle Model (PLCM) process to execute projects" and "The committee makes reasonable decisions for the success of the project." The target and predictor items were measured on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging (1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree).

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Frequencies and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were used to summarise the data (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2009). The frequencies are discussed in the research design and sample distribution section. Descriptive statistics entailed the means and standard deviation. The former was used to determine the averages, and the latter was used to determine the spread of the data around the mean (Pallant, 2016). To test whether the data were normally distributed, Kurtosis and Skewness were calculated. The former is about the pointiness of the distribution, and skewness is the measure of the asymmetry of the distribution (Field,

2018). As suggested by George and Mallery (2010), the range -2 and +2 was used to determine whether the data were normally distributed or not.

Since the data were within the Skewness and Kurtosis range, Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between the predictors and the target variable. Cohen's (1988) criteria to assess the strength of the association were as follows:

- 0.10 to 0.29 means a small correlation.
- 0.30 to 0.49 means a medium correlation.
- 0.50 to 1.0 means a significant correlation.

Regression analysis was calculated to establish the highest predictor of the target variable (Skiena, 2017). In the Pearson correlation and regression analysis, the significance level was set at 0.05 or 5%, as suggested by Pallant (2016). EFA used in this study is called Principal Factor Analysis (PCA). The researchers were interested in identifying how the predictors and target variables accounted for the variance in the data (Field, 2018). The researchers also took Field's (2018) advice and included the variables or factors with an eigenvalue of 1 and above.

### 3.4 Ethical Clearance

The researchers were given ethical clearance by the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) (FCRE2021/FR/01/002-MS: 2). The questionnaire uploaded in the Survey Monkey had an introduction section which informed the respondents about the purpose of the study. It was mentioned that their participation was voluntary, and to ensure that their identity was kept confidential and anonymous, respondents were informed that their information would be kept on a server to which the SOE's management did not have access. In addition, the ethical committee at TUT ensured that the questionnaire did not have language derogatory or demeaning to the respondents.

## 4. Results

Before conducting descriptive and inferential statistical algorithms, PCA was conducted to reduce the number of items into factors. As can be observed in Table 2, the KMO of 0.82 and was above the 0.60 threshold suggested by Glen (2016), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Table 2: EFA

Items or Variables	Governance Committee	Project Manager	Governance Structures	Project Team	Project Success
Governance committee members have adequate skills for decision-making and strategy setting	0.87				
The committees make reasonable decisions for the success of the project	0.86				
Governance committees act in the best interest of the project	0.89				
The governance committee understands the impact of project success/failure	0.82				
The governance committees understand the mandate given to them	0.75				
There is consistency in decision-making	0.72				
Decision-making is always objective	0.63				
The governance committees manage conflict of interest well	0.61				
All company projects are managed using the same methodology	0.389				
The project manager applies the relevant processes during the project life cycle.		0.80			
The project manager achieves the project results expected by applying relevant tools and techniques.		0.78			
The project manager applies the relevant knowledge areas during the project life cycle.		0.77			
The project manager applies the relevant tools and techniques during the project life cycle.		0.72			
The project manager achieves the project results expected by applying relevant knowledge areas.		0.65			
There is a specified clear change process.		0.52			
In terms of a delay in a process, there is always a catch-up plan to avoid further delays.		0.44			
Lessons learned are documented and applied to future projects.		0.43			
There is an explicit maximum limit of possible deviation in the process of PM.		0.41			
The company has a well-structured governance process.			0.83		
The project governance structures contribute to the success of the project.			0.79		
There is a correlation between corporate governance and project governance.			0.73		
The project governance structures support teamwork.			0.64		
The company applies the Project Life Cycle Model (PLCM) process to execute projects.			0.49		
Project management processes are standardised and subject to improvements.			0.48		
Projects are completed according to specifications.			0.36		
There is smooth communication between team members.				0.74	
Team members understand the project scope of work.				0.62	

**Table 2 Continued: EFA**

Items or Variables	Governance Committee	Project Manager	Governance Structures	Project Team	Project Success
There is a smooth flow of communication between the project manager and the project team.				0.57	
Capital projects are always completed with good quality.				0.45	
The projects always meet the client's requirements.				0.40	
Capital projects are always completed on time.					0.83
Capital projects are always completed within the estimated costs.					0.73
Project timelines are always adhered to.					0.54
The project manager completes all projects within the specified duration, the budgeted amount and with expected quality.					0.51
Team members complete their tasks within the allocated duration.					0.46
All challenges faced by the project are resolved in a timeous manner.					0.42
<b>Variances</b>	34.83%	9.69%	7.40%	5.60%	3.84%
<b>Cronbach's alphas</b>	0.80	0.70	0.83	0.79	0.78
<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.82.</b>					
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = <math>p = 0.00</math></b>					

Source: Authors

As suggested by Field (2018), the cut-off to include the factor loadings were 0.3 Factor 1; labelled governance committee had 9 items with factor loadings ranging from 0.40 to 0.87. It had a variance of 34.83% and Cronbach's alpha of 0.87. Factor 2, labelled project manager, had 9 items ranging from 0.41 to 0.80. Its variance was 9.69%, and Cronbach's alpha was 0.70. Factor 3, labelled governance structures and processes, had 7-factor loadings ranging from 0.36 to 0.83. Its variance was 7.40%, and its Cronbach's alpha was 0.83. Factor 4, labelled project team, had 5-factor loadings ranging from 0.40 and 0.74. It had a variance of 5.60% and Cronbach's alpha of 0.79. Factor 5, labelled project success, had 6-factor loadings ranging from 0.42 to 0.83. It had a variance of 3.84% and Cronbach's alpha of 0.78.

The descriptive statistics data are presented in Table 3. The data were normally distributed because Kurtosis and Skewness are within the -2 and +2 range (George & Mallery, 2010). Except for project success, all the mean scores were above 3, suggesting that the respondents rated the items positively. All the standard deviation scores were less than 1, suggesting that the respondents did not vary in how they rated the items.

The data of Pearson correlation are shown in Table 4. All the predictors related positively to the project's success. The strength of the relationship between governance structure and project success was moderate and significant ( $r = 0.47, p < 0.01$ ). The relationship between the project manager and project success was enormous and significant ( $r = 0.66, p < 0.01$ ). The relationship between governance structure and project success was small and significant ( $r = 0.36, p < 0.01$ ). The relationship between the project team and project success was enormous and significant ( $r = 0.68, p < 0.01$ ). Since none of the relationships between the predictors was above 0.80 and above, the study did not have multicollinearity issues (Field, 2018).

The regression results are shown in Table 5 on the next page. The ANOVA of model 1 results were significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), showing an overall model fit. The  $r^2$  was 0.56. The four predictors explained 56% of the variance in project success. Only two predictors (i.e. project manager and project team) were significant predictors of the project's success. The highest predictor of project success was the project team ( $\beta = 0.59, t = 4.79, p < 0.01$ ), and the second highest predictor was the project

manager ( $\beta = 0.53$ ,  $t=3.94$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Model 2 only shows the significant predictors of project success (i.e. project manager and project team). The ANOVA results were significant ( $p<0.01$ ), showing an overall model fit. It had an  $r^2$  of 0.58. The four

predictors explain 58% of the variance in project success. The highest predictor of project success was the project team ( $\beta = 0.62$ ,  $t=5.15$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and the second highest predictor was the project manager ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $t=4.70$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Governance committee	3.57	0.80	-0.45	0.27	-.025	0.53
Project manager	3.60	0.68	-0.29	0.27	-.041	0.53
Governance structures and processes	3.95	0.71	-1.10	0.27	2.02	0.53
Project team	3.67	0.69	-0.22	0.27	-0.004	0.53
Project success	2.94	0.95	1.31	0.27	1.831	0.53

Source: Authors

**Table 4: Pearson Correlation**

Factors	Governance Committee	Project Manager	Governance Structures	Project Team	Project Success
Governance Committee	1				
Project manager	0.52**	1			
Governance structures	0.54**	0.41**	1		
Project team	0.43**	0.56**	0.38**	1	
Project success	0.47**	0.66**	0.36**	0.68**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors

**Table 5: Regression**

Model 1				Model 2			
Predictor	Coef.	t-stats	Sig	Predictor	Coef.	t-stats	Sig
(Constant)	-1.48	-3.07	0.00	(Constant)	-1.41	-3.33	0.00
Governance committee	0.11	0.99	0.32	Project manager	0.58	4.70	0.00
Project manager	0.53	3.94	0.00	Project team	0.62	5.15	0.00
Governance structures and processes	-0.02	-0.15	0.88	$(r^2) = 0.58$ <b>ANOVA results</b> $F = 54.64$ $Sig. = 0.00^b$			
Project team	0.59	4.79	0.00				
$(r^2) = 0.56$ <b>ANOVA results</b> $F = 27.25$ $Sig. = 0.00^b$							

Source: Authors

## 5. Discussion

The study aimed to identify which predictor predicted project success the highest at the selected South African Energy SOE. This study contributes to the project's success body of knowledge by sharing insights from an under-researched sample. The data showed that the majority of the respondents were males. This distribution is consistent with the literature that shows that the project environment, which comprises mainly engineers, project, project technicians and planners, is primarily dominated by males (Haq *et al.*, 2018).

The data showed a positive relationship between the predictors and project success. This is consistent with the previous research (Khan *et al.*, 2018; PWC, 2014). The results can be interpreted that when a competent project manager, a project team, there are agile governance structures and processes, and the governance committee comprising is monitoring the projects effectively, there is a high likelihood that the project would be successful. By doing this, the energy SOE can improve its success rate, which according to the 2020/2021 annual report, was 30%. This means that 70% of the capital projects were not completed on time, within budget and quality (Ohi & Choi, 2020) and thus hampering meeting the electricity demand by customers and municipalities.

In addition, Model 2 showed that only two variables were significant predictors of the project's success. The R-squared was 58% suggesting that both predictors accounted for the variance of project success. The team was the highest predictor of the project's success. The second highest predictor of project success was the project manager. The implication is that the SOE should foster strategies that reduce conflict and enhance harmonious working togetherness to enhance project success (Radujkovića & Sjekavicab, 2017). It has been found that project managers with technical and soft competencies implemented the capital projects successfully (Lokhande & Vaidh, 2018; PMBOK, 2017).

### 5.1 Limitations and Recommendations

Even though this study created insights from an under-researched sample, it had limitations. It was conducted within a business unit, and it cannot be generalised to the entire SOE. Using a cross-sectional research design is very limiting, as it gives

a once-once picture of predictors of project success. The limitations suggest that future research should be conducted in other business units and different energy SOEs. A follow-up study should be conducted to determine if the model will still predict team and project managers as the highest predictors of project success. The following is recommended for managers:

- A teamwork relationship-building intervention should be held to solidify the team spirit.
- The project processes and structures should be agile to meet the changes during the project lifecycle.
- A governance committee should be empowered with competencies to manage the projects effectively.
- Incentive schemes should be implemented to reward the project manager and teams after meeting the project targets.

### 5.2 Conclusion

The literature showed many predictors of project success, and for this study, the focus was on the governance committee, governance structure and process, project manager and team. Based on the study results, it can be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between predictors and project success. The project team is the highest predictor of project success, and the second highest predictor of project success is the project manager.

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# Analysis of Skills Acquired by Auditing Students Through the Project-Based Learning Approach

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**Abstract:** This study aims to contribute to practical teaching and learning approaches adopted in institutions of higher learning to ensure that students acquire the skills required of them in the workplace. It is imperative that higher learning institutions adopt teaching and learning approaches that will equip students with skills required for the workplace. Therefore, this study analyses the project-based learning approach, to determine whether Auditing students will acquire the skills required of them in the workplace as auditors. Higher learning institutions are a platform where students should be prepared for the workplace. Thus, it is necessary for these institutions to adopt teaching and learning methods that will ensure students have the skills required of them in the workplace. Traditional teaching and learning methods often limit the learning of students to the theoretical knowledge based on prescribed textbooks, which is not likely to respond to the skill-set required in the workplace. This study will investigate the skills acquired by students through the project-based learning approach. These skills will then be mapped to the skills required for auditors in the workplace. This is done to determine whether through the project-based teaching and learning approach, Auditing students will acquire the skills required of them in the workplace as auditors. This is going to be achieved through the mixed research methods where the skills required of Auditing graduates are extracted from analysing documents, and the results are quantitative in nature. The study established that through the project-based learning approach, Auditing students would develop up to eighty nine percent (89%) of the skills required of them. The remaining eleven percent (11%) represents only one element of skills, which is visual skills. This study joins an ongoing debate in academia about incorporating practical elements in modules to enhance students' understanding and success. These factors may be critical when students enter the workplace.

**Keywords:** Auditing students, Auditors, Audit profession skills, Project-based learning approach

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## 1. Introduction

It is to no surprise that employers are looking for employees that are work ready, that is, equipped with all the necessary skills they need to be competent professionals (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). With higher learning institutions being the last stop for students before they enter the workplace, they have the responsibility of preparing students for the workplace by equipping them with the skills required therein (Eliyasni, Kenedi & Sayer, 2019; Mbithi, Mbau, Muthama, Inyega & Kalai, 2021). On the other hand, it has been established that there is a gap between what students learn in institutions of higher learning and what is required of them in the workplace (Asonitou & Hassall, 2019; Guo, Saab, Post & Admiraal, 2020). The suspected reason for this worrisome fact is the traditional teaching and learning approach where the teacher is just a transmitter of knowledge and students are the receptors thereof (Guo *et al.*, 2020).

Traditional teaching and learning methods often limit the learning of students to the theoretical knowledge based on prescribed textbooks, which is not likely going to respond to the skill-set required of graduates in the workplace (Sasson, Yehuda & Malkinson, 2018). Among the skills identified as lacking in students as they enter the workplace are soft skills (Asonitou & Hassall, 2019). It was further indicated that teaching and learning approaches that are more reflective of the real place of work must be adopted in institutions of higher learning, in order to better prepare students for the workplace (Asonitou & Hassall, 2019).

Auditing, just like any other profession in the workplace, demands that those that enter the profession are well equipped, not only with the textbook knowledge, but also with the required skills so that the quality of the profession is at an acceptable level (Nguyen, Hau, Do & Thao, 2020; Gunarathne, Senaratne & Herath, 2021). It is unfortunate that a

lack of sufficient facilitation of skills development has been identified in entry-level auditors (Plant, Barac & Sarens, 2019; Steyn, 2021). This is a cause for concern for higher learning institutions, which play a significant role in preparing Auditing students for the workplace (Plant *et al.*, 2019; Gunarathne *et al.*, 2021). For this reason, it is critical that institutions of higher learning should adopt teaching and learning approaches that will best facilitate the development of skills required of auditors (Steyn, 2021).

## 2. Literature Review

Graduates are required to possess skills that will assist them to navigate the professional space (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Wyness & Dalton, 2018). In the same way, the Auditing profession requires a variety of skills in Auditing graduates, which institutions of higher learning must endeavour to understand in order to understand the needs of the market (Gunarathne *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, Auditing educators in institutions of higher learning need to adopt teaching and learning approaches that will facilitate the development of such skills (Steyn, 2021). In addition, the skills required of Auditing professionals necessitates that educators in institutions of higher learning diversify their teaching approaches (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018).

The skills that are sure to create space for an Auditing graduate in the Auditing profession and ensure career success are technical skills as well as soft skills (Cunningham & Stein, 2018; Plant *et al.*, 2019; Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). In addition to these skills, future auditors are required to uphold ethical values, be creative and be able to adapt to change (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020).

The continual evolvement of technology has resulted in the enhancement of computers among other things (Rice, Hagen & Zamanzade, 2018). All these advancements have resulted in automation of work tasks and have caused the world of work to continue to change ever since the first industrial revolution (Zhang, Dai & Vasarhelyi, 2018). Just Like many other industries, the Auditing profession is also affected by the ever-evolving technology and digitisation, which requires upskilling in order to remain relevant in the digital world (Zhang *et al.*, 2018).

Future auditors need to be able to make use of critical electronic spreadsheet functionalities, create electronic working papers and analyse data

amongst other things (Cunningham & Stein, 2018; Hunter, Alberti, Boss & Thibodeau, 2020). Auditors often have to detect irregularities in risk factors in client data, for further substantive testing, and this is one of the areas where technical skills are most useful (Cunninham & Stein, 2018).

Despite the achievement of success rates by institutions of higher learning, the question is whether these institutions equip students with the skills required to face the ever-changing place of work caused by the technology (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). It was established that despite the fast improving technology, the institutions of higher learning are still confined to traditional teaching and learning approaches, and technological advancements are only limited to teaching aids (Oke & Fernandes, 2020).

Entry-level auditors are required to be able to apply soft skills effectively (Tan, 2019; Nguyen *et al.*, 2020; Plant *et al.*, 2019). Accordingly, educators in institutions of higher learning need to invest in teaching and learning approaches that will effectively facilitate the development soft skills, as Auditing graduates need them in the workplace (Plant *et al.*, 2019, Eliasni *et al.*, 2019). Soft skills are also referred to as generic skills, and they include skills such as communication skills, teamwork, analytical skills, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, oral skills, visual skills and aural skills (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020; Gunarathne *et al.*, 2021). Oral skills and aural skills are actually part and parcel of communication skills, as one is required to be able to both listen well and speak clearly and concisely in order to communicate effectively with other parties (Rahman & Maarof, 2018; Bakar, Noordin & Razali, 2019; Indeed, 2021).

There is currently a pronounced emphasis on the critical thinking skill in the Auditing profession and that is because auditors will not be able to adapt to the ever-evolving technology driven workplace if they are not critical thinkers (Terblanche & De Clercq, 2019). The fact that society at large is digitised, means that skills demanded in the workplace will continue to change throughout one's career, and as such, auditors need to be able to adapt to these changes (Eliyasni *et al.*, 2019; Müller & Mildenberger, 2021).

The traditional teaching and learning approach is a method whereby the educator transmits knowledge and the student is a receptor thereof (Guo *et al.*, 2020).

This approach is good for the development of hard skills, that is, the theoretical knowledge of a subject in question (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). However, it is the case as proven by previous research that it is difficult to develop soft skills and technical skills through this approach (Guo *et al.*, 2020). The traditional teaching and learning approach is therefore the reason for the gap between the skills developed by institutions of higher learning and the skills required of graduates in the workplace (Guo *et al.*, 2020).

There is a need for educators to shift from teaching approaches that are educator centered to those that are student centered (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018). Project-based learning is one such approach that can be adopted by institutions of higher learning (Guo *et al.*, 2020). Project-based learning is described as a teaching and learning method that is student driven, interdisciplinary, collaborative and technology centered (Hussin, Jiea, Rosly & Omar, 2019). With this approach, the teacher requires students to work as a team in order to solve real-life problems during the process of knowledge integration, application and construction (Shin, 2018; Tan, 2019; Guo *et al.*, 2020). Throughout the process, students are actively involved in the process of learning and they learn by doing (Zhang, 2019; Putra, Sumarmi, Deffinika & Islam, 2021). Teachers and their assistants, who play the role of clients in a case study, normally act as facilitators who provide feedback and support to students to aid their process of learning (Guo *et al.*, 2020).

Project-based learning affords students an opportunity to partake in a context that mirrors a real professional scenario, which stimulates interest in the participant (Guo *et al.*, 2020; Putra *et al.*, 2021). It is also considered a teaching approach that improves student learning, especially in higher education (Guo *et al.*, 2020). In addition to this, students' curiosity, open-mindedness and cooperation with others are among the notable things that were developed through project-based learning (Admawati & Jumadi, 2018). What is more, project-based learning has also benefited low performing students in a significant manner, and has bridged the achievement gap (Shin, 2018; Admawati & Jumadi, 2018).

The project-based learning approach has yielded more positive results on students' academic performance in comparison to the traditional learning approach (Chen & Yang, 2019). It has been established that in addition to improving students'

attitude, project-based learning has also improved the development of students' knowledge, creativity and most importantly, skills (Shin, 2018; Admawati & Jumadi, 2018; Guo *et al.*, 2020). Skills are an ability to apply theoretical knowledge in a real-life-scenario (Nguyen *et al.*, 2020; Pérez & Rubio, 2020).

Previous studies have revealed that the most effective tools for learning soft skills are case studies and collaborative learning, which fits right into the description of the project-based learning approach (Tan, 2019; Keevy, 2020). For example, with a project-based learning approach, students are required to find real solutions to problems that mimic the real workplace, which develops problem-solving skills (Guo *et al.*, 2020). The process of problem solving involves the application of creativity and critical thinking skills, as well the ability to analyse a problem thoroughly, which means students develop problem solving skills, critical thinking skills and analytical skills, all at the same time (Eliyasni *et al.*, 2019). Previous studies have indicated that after the application of a project-based learning process students report that they are better at communicating and collaborating with other students, which is teamwork (Vogler, Thompson, Davis, Mayfield, Finley & Yasserli, 2018; Chemborisova, Litinski, Almetkina & Bulankina, 2019; Guo *et al.*, 2020).

Results from previous studies established that students who were taught through the project-based learning approach had a significant advantage at the skill of critical thinking compared to those taught through the traditional learning approach (Sasson *et al.*, 2018). Critical thinking skills are developed even better when the project-based learning approach is applied in conjunction with the blended learning approach (Eliyasni *et al.*, 2019). Blended learning is a teaching and learning approach whereby face-to-face instruction is combined with computer-mediated instruction (Galvis, 2018; Eliyasni *et al.*, 2019; Suartama, 2019). One of the definitions of project-based learning approach refers to it as being technology centered, which means through this approach, students are afforded the opportunity to acquire technical skills (Han *et al.*, 2015).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Literature reveals that there is a skills gap between skills developed in institutions of higher learning and skills required by employers in Auditing graduates entering the profession (Asonitou & Hassall,

2019; Guo, Saab, Post & Admiraal, 2020). These skills are said to secure employment for Auditing students and ensure career success (Cunningham & Stein, 2018; Plant *et al.*, 2019; Nguyen *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial for educators in institutions of higher learning to take necessary measures to bridge this gap, seeing that these institutions are a platform that prepares Auditing students for the workplace (Plant *et al.*, 2019; Gunarathne *et al.*, 2021; Steyn, 2021). In order to achieve this, institutions of higher learning need to adopt teaching and learning approaches that will best facilitate the development of the required skills in Auditing students (Steyn, 2021). It is in this manner that institutions of higher learning will produce work ready future auditors. Meaning graduates who enter the Auditing profession do not only have good grades, but they are also adequately skilled, making them competent.

At present, Auditing Educators in institutions of higher learning follow the traditional teaching and learning approach, which is not adequate to develop the skills required in the Auditing profession (Sasson, Yehuda & Malkinson, 2018; Guo *et al.*, 2020). Literature critic the traditional teaching and learning approach where the educator is just but a transmitter of knowledge and the students are but receptors thereof (Guo *et al.*, 2020). This approach is also said to be educator centered instead of student centered (Guo *et al.*, 2020). Literature further highlights the need for a shift from teaching and learning approaches that are educator centered to those that are student centered (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018). In addition, traditional teaching and learning methods often limit the students' learning to the theoretical knowledge based on prescribed textbooks, which is not likely to respond to the skill set required in the workplace (Sasson, Yehuda & Malkinson, 2018). Therefore, based on the discussion above, the traditional teaching and learning approach can be established as the reason for the existing gap between skills required in the Auditing profession and the skills developed in Auditing students (Guo *et al.*, 2020).

Previous research then points educators to adopting teaching and learning approaches that mirror the real-life workplace, so that students are better prepared for it (Asonitou & Hassall, 2019). Project-based learning is one such approach (Hussin, Jiea, Rosly & Omar, 2019; Zhang, 2019; Putra, Sumarmi, Deffinika & Islam, 2021; Guo *et al.*, 2020; Putra *et al.*, 2021).

#### 4. Methodological Approach

There is a gap between the skills currently developed in Auditing students by higher learning institution and the skills required of Auditing graduates by employers (Asonitou & Hassall, 2019; Guo, Saab, Post & Admiraal, 2020). The objective of this study is to establish whether through the project-based learning approach, Auditing educators in institutions of higher learning will best facilitate the development of skills required of Auditing students in the Auditing profession.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objective, mixed research methods were applied. Mixed methodology is known as the merging of qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to achieve research objectives (Hlongwane, 2020). This study applies a qualitative method to collect data, and this method is called document analysis. Document analysis is a technique for collecting documents and analysing them in order to obtain information from them (Dalglish, Khalid & McMahon, 2020). The researcher systematically analyses the literature that outlines skills required for Auditing students, as well as literature that outlines the skills that students can develop through the project-based learning approach. As such, documents will be analysed.

The skills required of Auditing students in the Auditing profession are then mapped against the skills that students can develop through the project-based learning approach. The mapping is conducted to determine whether the skills required of Auditing students will be developed through the project-based learning approach. The results of the mapping are quantitative in nature as they represent the extent to which the skills required of Auditing students will be developed through the project-based learning approach as a percentage. The percentage is calculated as the number of skills developed through the project-based learning approach in relation to the total number of skills required of Auditing students. Therefore, the exploratory sequential design was adopted in this study. Exploratory sequential design is a design whereby qualitative exploration yields quantitative results (Hlongwane, 2020). Thus, mixed research method is applied, which is, the research approach is a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The results of the mapping will be represented as a percentage.

The percentage is calculated as the number of skills developed through the project-based learning approach in relation to the total number of skills required of Auditing students. The Auditing skills developed through the project-based learning approach is therefore calculated using the formula below:

$$X = \frac{Y}{Z} \times 100$$

X = Percentage of skills required of auditors developed through the project-based learning.

Y = Number of skills required of auditors that can be developed through the project-based learning approach.

Z = Total number of skills required of auditors.

### **5. The Mapping of Skills Required of Auditing Students Against the Skills that Students Can Develop Through the Project-Based Learning Approach**

The aim of the study is to determine whether the skills required of Auditing graduates can be developed through the project-based learning approach. Skills that employers require Auditing students to possess when they enter the Auditing profession are presented in the first column of Table 1. These skills were extracted from existing literature that addresses skills required of entry-level auditors, through the process of document analysis. In the second column of the table, the mapping takes place. The mapping was conducted by answering 'Developed' or 'Not developed' in the second column next to each skill required of Auditing graduates. 'Developed' means the corresponding skill in the first column can indeed be developed through the project-based learning approach. 'Not developed' means there is no evidence that proves that the corresponding skill in the first column cannot be developed through the project-based learning approach. The answers given are based on the review of literature cited in this paper in section 2.3. The particular text from section 2.3 that inform these answers are quoted as well in the second column of Table 1. The skills that can be developed through the project-based learning approach were extracted from existing research (as set out under 'literature review' section based of project-based learning approach.

In Table 1 on the next page, skills that employers require Auditing students to possess when they enter the Auditing profession are mapped against the skills that can develop through the project-based learning approach.

### **6. Results**

According to the literature referred to in this paper, the following were established regarding the project-based learning approach:

- This learning approach is student centered instead of educator centered, whereby educators do not just administer information but students learn by doing (Guo *et al.*, 2020).
- With this learning approach, students are afforded an opportunity to work with a scenario that mirrors a real-life work scenario (Shin, 2018; Tan, 2019; Guo *et al.*, 2020).
- The benefits of this learning approach are as follows:
  - » Student learning is improved (Guo *et al.*, 2020).
  - » It develops curiosity, open-mindedness, and the ability to cooperate with others (Admawati & Jumadi, 2018).
  - » It is able to improve students' attitude towards a learning subject and enhance creativity (Shin, 2018; Admawati & Jumadi, 2018; Guo *et al.*, 2020).
  - » It bridges the gap between high performing students and low performing students, that is, the achievement gap (Shin, 2018; Admawati & Jumadi, 2018).
- The following skills can be developed in students if the project-based learning approach is applied:
  - » Problem solving skills.
  - » Critical thinking skills.
  - » Analytical skills.
  - » Communication skills (including oral and aural skills).
  - » Teamwork.
  - » Technical skills.

**Table 1: Skills Required for Auditors**

Skills Required for Auditors	Skills Developed Through The Project-Based Learning Approach
Technical skills (Developed)	"One of the definitions of project-based learning approach refers to it as being technology centered, which means through this approach, students are afforded the opportunity to acquire <i>technical skills</i> (Han et al., 2015)."
<b>Soft Skills</b>	
Communication skills (Developed)	"Previous studies have indicated that after the application of a project-based learning process students report that they are better at <i>communicating</i> and collaborating with other students, which is teamwork (Vogler, Thompson, Davis, Mayfield, Finley & Yasserli, 2018; Chemborisova, Litinski, Almetkina & Bulankina, 2019; Guo et al., 2020)."
Teamwork (Developed)	"Previous studies have indicated that after the application of a project-based learning process students report that they are better at communicating and collaborating with other students, which is <i>teamwork</i> (Vogler, Thompson, Davis, Mayfield, Finley & Yasserli, 2018; Chemborisova, Litinski, Almetkina & Bulankina, 2019; Guo et al., 2020)."
Analytical skills (Developed)	"The process of problem solving involves the application of creativity and critical thinking skills, as well the ability to analyse a problem thoroughly, which means students develop problem solving skills, critical thinking skills and <i>analytical skills</i> , all at the same time (Eliyasni et al., 2019)."
Problem solving skills (Developed)	<p>"For example, with a project-based learning approach, students are required to find real solutions to problems that mimic the real workplace, which develops <i>problem solving skills</i> (Guo et al., 2020)."</p> <p>"The process of problem solving involves the application of creativity and critical thinking skills, as well the ability to analyse a problem thoroughly, which means students develop <i>problem solving skills</i>, critical thinking skills and analytical skills, all at the same time (Eliyasni et al., 2019)."</p>
Critical thinking skills (Developed)	<p>"The process of problem solving involves the application of creativity and critical thinking skills, as well the ability to analyse a problem thoroughly, which means students develop problem solving skills, <i>critical thinking skills</i> and analytical skills, all at the same time (Eliyasni et al., 2019)."</p> <p>"Results from previous studies established that students who were taught through the project-based learning approach had a significant advantage at the <i>skill of critical thinking</i> compared to those taught through the traditional approach (Sasson et al., 2018)."</p>
Oral skills (Developed)	<p>"<i>Oral</i> and aural skills are part and parcel of communication skills, as one is required to be able to both listen well and speak clearly and concisely in order to communicate effectively with other parties (Rahman &amp; Maarof, 2018; Bakar, Noordin &amp; Razali, 2019; Indeed, 2021)"</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Extracted from section 2.1. of this paper.</p>
Visual skills (Not Developed)	-
Aural skills (Developed)	<p>"Oral and <i>aural skills</i> are part and parcel of communication skills, as one is required to be able to both listen well and speak clearly and concisely in order to communicate effectively with other parties (Rahman &amp; Maarof, 2018; Bakar, Noordin &amp; Razali, 2019; Indeed, 2021)"</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Extracted from section 2.1. of this paper.</p>

Source: Own analysis

The objective of this study was to determine whether the skills required of Auditing students will be developed through the project-based learning approach. Below are the skills that are required of Auditing graduates as extracted from literature:

- Technical skills.
- Communication skills.
- Teamwork.
- Analytical skills.
- Problem solving skills.
- Critical thinking skills.
- Oral skills.
- Visual skills.
- Aural skills.

The critical thinking skills as per literature are greatly emphasised as important for future auditors. This is because this skill affords one the ability to adapt to the rapidly developing technology, which is a requirement in this age where work is mostly digitised. The mapping in Table 1 (refer to section five (5) of this paper) was conducted to determine the extent to which the skills required of Auditing students will be developed through the project-based learning approach. Total number of skills required for auditors is nine (9). Out of the nine (9) skills, eight (8) skills required for auditors that can be developed through the project-based learning approach. Therefore, the percentage of skills required for auditors that can be developed through the project-based learning

approach is:

$$\frac{8}{9} \times 100 = 89\% \text{ (eighty nine percent)}$$

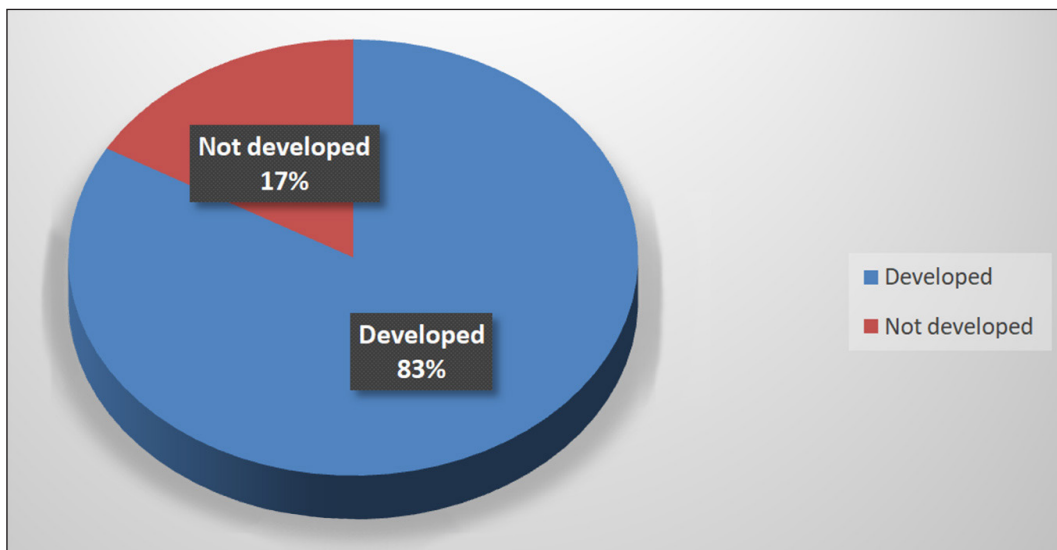
The eleven percent (11%) reminder is just one skill, that is, visual skills.

Figure 1 below represents the results of the mapping referred herein.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The project-based learning approach is an approach that was identified as one that is student centered instead of educator centered. Moreover, this approach stimulates interest, enhances understanding and creative thinking. More importantly, through the project-based learning approach, Auditing students can develop up to eighty nine percent (89%) of skills required of auditors in the Auditing profession. The eleven percent (11%) reminder is just one skill, that is, visual skills. In addition, the skills required of auditing professionals necessitates that educators in higher learning institutions diversify their teaching approaches. Therefore, this study recommends that higher learning institutions should adopt the project-based learning approach in Auditing education and combine it with blended learning. The combination of the approaches are recommended because it was established through literature that

Figure 1: Skills Developed Through the Project Based Learning Approach



Source: Authors

the two approaches combined develop critical thinking skills at an even better note. Educators can also find innovative ways to incorporate in their teaching and learning, in order to facilitate the development of visual skills. This will ensure all the skills required for auditors are developed in Auditing students and thus will enter the Auditing profession work ready.

## 8. Areas for Future Research

This paper was a systematic review of literature that enabled the researcher to make the conclusion that institutions of higher learning should adopt the project-based learning approach in Auditing education. This is to ensure that Auditing graduates enter the Auditing profession well prepared, equipped and competent. In the future, Auditing lecturers can conduct an empirical study whereby the project-based learning is actually applied, to determine that indeed Auditing students do acquire up to eighty nine percent (89%) of the skills required of them in the workplace. Auditing lectures can further combine the application of the project-based learning approach with the blended learning approach as recommended in this study. The combination of the two approaches can assist in testing whether the development of the critical thinking skill is on a high level compared to when the approaches are not used in combination.

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# Skills Developed Through Problem-Based Learning Approach and its Benefits to Auditing Students in Higher Institutions in Developing Countries: A Literature Review

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**Abstract:** Teaching approaches play a pivotal role in students' performance. Students' performance is not only measured by throughput but also by the skills they possess to perform tasks relating to their disciplines. Problem-based learning (PBL) has been widely used in other disciplines such as medicine, science, and engineering. However, the adoption thereof in accounting education is limited. With PBL, students are presented with unstructured real-life problems and work in teams. The ability to ask further questions from the facilitator and relevant additional information form part of PBL. This study found through a literature review that skills associated with PBL that can benefit Auditing Students include problem-solving, teamwork, communication, critical thinking, and self-regulated learning. It is recommended that Auditing educators consider implementing PBL for Auditing Students to develop various skills and improve students' performance. PBL is recommended as a pedagogical approach that equips students with various skills and can be used to enhance students' performance.

**Keywords:** Accounting education, Auditing, Problem-based learning, Students' performance

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## 1. Introduction

Problem-based learning (PBL) has its origin in medical education in Canada and United States in the 1950s and 1960s and has successfully been adopted in various other disciplines, such as nursing, engineering, social work, law, management, science, business, economics, and accounting (Barrow, 1996; Stanley & Marsden, 2013; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Wyness & Dalton, 2018). Despite its long origin, the use of PBL in accounting education is limited (Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Wyness & Dalton, 2018). Changes in audit education require effective and efficient teaching approaches that motivate students to adopt deep learning (Barac, Kirstein, Kunz & Beukes, 2016). Therefore, this study will review the literature on PBL to determine if the skills developed can benefit Auditing Students.

### 1.1 Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning forms part of the taxonomy of teaching and learning approaches (Barrows, 1996). PBL is broadly explained as a teaching approach that is student centred, and provides multidisciplinary scenarios and problems for groups to research and present their recommendations (Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Wyness & Dalton, 2018). In PBL, learning outcomes are linked

to problems that need to be solved by students (Suryanti & Nurhuda, 2021). PBL allows students to think about a problem and integrate it with prior knowledge, a key to the learning process (Wyness & Dalton, 2018). In PBL, students direct their own learning and work in groups to develop the skills and knowledge required to solve the problems, while the instructors take the role of facilitator (Bergstrom *et al.*, 2016; Terblanche & De Clercq, 2020; Oosthuizen, De Lange, Wilmshurst & Beatson, 2021). PBL uses a problem-solving approach involving the interaction between facilitators and students to form a learning process, requiring students to solve unstructured problems (Fauzi & Respati, 2021). Since the adoption of PBL in accounting education is limited, it is essential to determine if skills developed through PBL can benefit Auditing Students. Therefore, this study will review literature on PBL and assess its beneficence to Auditing Students at undergraduate level.

### 1.2 Attributes of Problem-Based Learning

Stanley and Marsden (2012) argue that the PBL approach should comprise the following attributes:

- The learning process starts with a problem.
- The problem should be real life, unstructured, and probe for additional information.

- The problem should be multidisciplinary with the integration of other modules.
- Students must obtain additional information from other sources.
- Students work in smaller groups and exposed to self-regulated learning.
- Students existing knowledge, attitudes, and competencies are challenged, providing a platform for new learning.
- Concludes with the evaluation of students' experience to the learning process.

### 1.3 The Benefits and Challenges of Problem-Based Learning

Skills developed in PBL include questioning, research, critical thinking, communication, leadership, dealing with conflict and group dynamics, research, linking theory to practice, report writing, and reflection (Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Stanley & Marsden, 2013; Bergstrom *et al.*, 2016; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Wyness & Dalton, 2018). Despite these great benefits, teaching problem-solving skills tends to be more challenging to train than content. Material for teaching problem-solving skills needs to be developed by educators, which requires more time, effort, and creativity (Stanley & Marsden, 2013). Moreover, challenges relating to group work, such as conflict and free riders, should not be overlooked. Ahmed and Kannaiah (2018) argue that the benefits of PBL are unlikely to be met through traditional pedagogical approaches. Challenges that may be experienced in PBL include discomfort and pullback from students who are more comfortable with traditional teaching and learning approaches (Yew & Yong, 2014). Despite the great benefits of PBL, the fear to change hampers its implementation (Barut *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, educators should look at all sides of the coin in deciding to implement PBL approach to teaching and learning.

### 1.4 Problem-Based Learning in Accounting Education

Despite previous literature extensively debating the benefits of PBL, the adoption thereof within accounting education is limited (Stanley & Marsden, 2013; Bergstrom *et al.*, 2016; Hsu, Yen, & Lai, 2016). The major subjects in accounting education

include auditing, financial accounting, management accounting, and taxation. Wyness and Dalton (2018) argued that the shortfalls of PBL include not being transferable to other disciplines. Therefore, this paper aims to review the literature on PBL and identify skilled developed. Thereafter the skills developed will be assessed to determine if they can benefit undergraduate Auditing Students in institutions of higher learning in developing countries.

### 1.5 Problem-Based Learning and Skills Developed

There are some concerns that accounting students lack lifelong and self-directed learning, which is fundamental to succeed in their profession (Bergstrom, Pugh, Phillips & Machlev, 2016; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018). The lack of professional skills necessitated a call for academics to move from traditional teaching and learning to teaching approaches that actively encourage students to learn by doing (Bergstrom *et al.*, 2016; Apostolou *et al.*, 2017; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018). PBL, which allows students to learn by doing, is highly recommendable for accounting education (Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018). This is because PBL can be used to achieve greater knowledge and understanding (Barut *et al.*, 2016). As such, this study will determine if skills developed through PBL are transferable to Auditing Students. Decisions regarding alternative curriculum structures are essential in accounting education to achieve relevant knowledge and students' performance (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018). Students' performance is judged not only by acquiring specific knowledge relating to their subjects but also through various skills and competencies relating to their profession (Gómez-Ortega & Macías-Guillén, 2022). Acquiring the necessary competencies that define each qualification requires students to learn by doing (Johnstone & Biggs, 1998; Gómez-Ortega & Macías-Guillén, 2022). Therefore, the PBL approach may be used to improve student performance.

The poor performance of students in accounting education may be partly attributable to the traditional teaching approaches. Challenges that come with traditional teaching and learning include passive students and limited student activity (Barut *et al.*, 2016; Sasson, Yehuda & Malkinson, 2018). Barut *et al.* (2016) and Suryanti (2016) argue that if nothing is done to change the traditional teacher-centered approaches, students will continue to be passive students and memorize concepts taught in lectures.

Therefore, accounting graduates exposed to traditional teaching and learning approaches show limited skills in analyzing, problem-solving, communicating, and giving opinions (Suryanti, 2016). On the other side, it is argued that the learning process should empower students to think, analyze and interact (Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Suryanti, 2016). Dolce, Emanuel, Cisi & Ghislieri (2019) found that accounting graduates lack various skills such as teamwork, communication, time management, and problem-solving skills, which are important in their professional space. Accounting curricula should find a way to instill an attitude of lifelong learning and information search and analysis skills in their teaching and learning processes to enhance students' performance (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Bergstrom *et al.*, 2016).

### 1.6 Problem-Based Learning and Skills Developed

The accounting field can benefit immensely through the introduction of PBL (Barut *et al.*, 2016). Given the increasing market demand for students who possess communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-learning skills, educators are under increasing pressure to re-think traditional approaches that rely primarily on information delivery (Pike *et al.*, 2017). Team work, communication, adaptability, time management, and self-management are among crucial skills required by accounting graduates to meet the challenges of today's diverse workplace (Plant, Barac & Sarens, 2019; Jackson & Meek, 2021). The accounting profession is challenged to develop problem solving, communication, and leadership skills through active learning instead of traditional passive learning approaches to achieve improved learning outcomes (Riley & Ward, 2017; Stephenson, 2017; Jackson & Stephanie, 2020). Therefore, this study will assess the skills developed through PBL and their applicability to Auditing Students. The limited studies conducted on PBL in accounting education and a lack of professional skills provides an opportunity to review literature on PBL and identify various skills developed. The skills developed through PBL will then be assessed to determine their transferability and benefits to Auditing Students.

## 2. Literature Review

There have been various calls for accounting education to move away from content-based knowledge to the development of professional skills and lifelong

learning skills to improve student performance (Stanley & Marsden, 2013; Bergstrom *et al.*, 2016). Despite PBL's potential benefits to accounting students, accounting educators ignore implementing it in their teaching and learning process (Stanley & Marsden, 2012). Wyness and Dalton (2018) argue that PBL is not a panacea, and its limitations include a lack of transferability in other disciplines. As such, this study assesses if skills developed through PBL skills can be transferable to Auditing Students.

Stanley and Marsden (2012) adopted a PBL for third-year accounting students in Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Australia by developing a FIRDE (Facts, Ideas, Research, Decide, Execute) model. The students in question have already acquired two years of accounting technical knowledge and were placed in groups of 4-5 for the whole semester. The PBL was run on a pilot and voluntary basis for three consecutive semesters (2006 & 2007). The project became compulsory for all students in the 2008 and 2009 semesters. The students were provided with unstructured accounting problems, requiring further research and additional information from the educator. The facilitator documented all questions asked by groups and responses to avoid future clashes. Students were later asked to submit written reports and make oral presentations. The study found that the PBL approach influenced problem-solving, questioning skills, and teamwork development. This study will assess if the skills developed through PBL can be beneficial to Auditing Students.

To expand their study Stanley and Marsden (2013) used PBL to deliver an accounting capstone at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Australia. Using PBL in accounting capstone, individual subjects and content were integrated into a project covering real-life accounting problems. This was done to bring the subjects together and bridge the silo approach adopted throughout the accounting undergraduate qualification. The empirical results indicate that PBL integrates students' technical knowledge to unstructured multi-disciplinary problems and enhances professional skills. The development of professional skills may be key in Auditing students. Barut, Soares, de Araujo and Kanet (2016) found that PBL assists students in acquiring knowledge, problem-solving, communication skills, and becoming more self-confident. Additionally, Bergstrom *et al.* (2016) found that PBL is advocated because it supports various essential outcomes such as collaboration, self-regulated learning, student

engagement, and critical thinking. These skills are fundamental to Auditing Students.

Gerstein, Winter and Hertz (2016) used PBL for college accounting students with a group of 7-8 students and concluded that PBL could be used to teach ethics to accounting students. The study found that various skills essential for understanding ethics were developed through the PBL approach, such as flexible thinking, problem-solving, self-directed learning, collaboration, and intrinsic motivation. The development of ethics through PBL may be what Auditing Students need, given that the auditing profession is often on the spotlight for unethical behaviour. Hsu, Yen, and Lai (2016) assessed the influence of PBL on the learning outcomes of accounting students registered for the intermediate accounting course at a private university in northern Taiwan. The study adopted experiential learning whereby one group were taught on PBL and the other on traditional teaching approach. The study found that PBL enhanced the students thinking skills and ability to learn independently. These results are supported by Sugeng and Suryani (2020), who used the same methodology (a combination of PBL and traditional approach) to assess the learning outcomes of Financial Management students and found an improvement in critical thinking and self-regulated learning in students exposed to PBL. Critical thinking skills and the ability to learn independently are paramount to Auditing Students.

Suryanti (2016) conducted a study at Riau Islamic University (UIR) to determine if PBL differs from Drill Model. Two groups of accounting education students were used in 2014/2015, whereby one was exposed to PBL and the other to a conventional teaching approach. Suryanti (2016) found no difference in learning outcomes between students who were taught using PBL Model and Drill Model. The findings may be partly attributable to the lack of curiosity, creativity, and inability to search for knowledge in students exposed to PBL. Critical thinking skills are important because Auditing Students who possess such skills may be able to solve social and practical problems facing them.

Ahmed and Kannaiah (2018) analysed the status of PBL in accounting education by reviewing articles peculiar to PBL from 1998 to 2017 and found that although PBL is picking momentum in accounting education, it is done in countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia, Taiwan, and Malaysia. The study

concluded that major skills mentioned in the articles that implemented PBL include communication, problem-solving, teamwork, analytical skills, critical thinking, pleasure in learning, presentation, leadership, knowledge integration, and technology usage skills. The limited research in the South African context necessitates a need to assess if PBL can be transferable to Auditing Subjects. Wyness and Dalton (2018) assessed the value of PBL in introducing the sustainability concept for third-year accounting students at the University of South West, England. One of the key questions was whether students consider PBL a vehicle for learning sustainability accounting. The project was run on a voluntary basis for a group of students (34) throughout a semester. Students found PBL to be beneficial and requested that this method be adopted for the current curriculum. However, some students still felt the PBL should be combined with traditional lectures and guest speakers. This study found that skills developed include problem-solving, collaborative working, conflict management, research, report writing, and presentation skills. Again, these skills are considered essential for Auditing Students.

Gómez-Ortega and Macías-Guillén (2022) assessed whether PBL improves university students satisfaction with complex subjects. The study found that the combination of PBL and Information system Technology (ICT) improves students' motivation and performance relating to the subject. The inclusion of technology in teaching Auditing Students to improve performance will be in line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Nurkhin, Kardoyo, Pramusinto, Setiyani and Widhiastuti (2020) used the blended PBL method for the introduction to Accounting course in the first semester of the 2019-2020 academic year for accounting students at the Faculty of Economics, Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES). The authors adopted classroom action research and other social media platforms to enhance student understanding and performance. The study found that creativity and critical thinking skills were developed among students, which subsequently improved their performance. Similarly, Fauzi and Respati (2021) and Fitriani, Nurhuda, and Ina (2021) found that the PBL approach improves student's critical thinking skills. Auditing Students that are critical thinkers will be able to face uncertain real world.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The constructivism theory guides this study. Constructivism places the learner at the center of

learning, not the teacher as the transmitter of knowledge (Biggs, 1996; Johnstone & Biggs, 1998; Barut *et al.*, 2016; Sasson *et al.*, 2018). PBL, like other experiential learning approaches, such as case-based instruction, project-based learning, and inquiry learning, originates from a constructivist approach to teaching and learning, which encourages students to construct their own knowledge (Bergstrom *et al.*, 2016). Barut *et al.* (2016) argue that group work, which is a major component of PBL, leads to constructive learning compared to teaching, which leads to the transmission of knowledge. This study reviews the literature on PBL, which is a student-centred approach that encourages students to learn by doing other than being transmitters of knowledge (Stanley & Marsden, 2013; Bergstrom *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the constructivism theory is applicable to this study because it reviews skills acquired through PBL and assesses their transferability to Auditing Students.

#### 4. Research Method

This study followed a qualitative research method through a systematic literature review. This study followed The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) that assist systematic reviewers transparency by reporting the reason for the review, how it was done, and the results from reviews (Page, McKenzie, Bossuyt, Boutron, Hoffmann, Mulrow, Shamseer, Tetzlaff, Akl, Brennan & Chou, 2021). The study objectives are twofold: Firstly, review accounting literature on PBL and note various skills developed. Secondly, assess if skills derived from PBL can benefit auditing

students. This study reviewed accounting education literature from international and local journal articles, and conference proceedings relating to problem-based learning. The word "problem-based learning" and "accounting" has been searched on Google scholar and sorted by relevance. The search displayed showed 777 results. The search was further refined to 10 years (2012 to 2022). Of the 777 results, it was identified that they include other disciplines, such as education, engineering, science, economics, and business management, which were excluded. Other documents on the problem-based method that does not relate to the context of this study were further excluded.

After exclusion, the authors remained with 29 articles to review. When reading literature, journal articles relating to seminal authors such as Biggs (1996) and Johnstone and Biggs (1998) were also reviewed, irrespective of them falling outside the search period. When reviewing the literature on PBL, the focus was on skills developed through PBL and whether those skills can be beneficial to Auditing Students. During the data analysis, skills developed through PBL which were mentioned more than twice in the reviewed literature were grouped into themes that were further assessed for beneficitation relating to Auditing Students.

#### 5. Data Analysis

During the data analysis, common themes were identified through literature. This include skills that are mentioned more than twice in the literature. Refer to Table 1.

**Table 1: Common Skills Developed Through PBL**

Common Themes/Skills Developed Through PBL	Authors
Problem-solving	(Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Barut <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Gerstein <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018)
Teamwork	(Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Bergstrom <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Gerstein <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Wyness & Dalton, 2018)
Communication skills	(Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Barut <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018)
Critical thinking	(Bergstrom <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Hsu <i>et al.</i> , 2016; (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Nurkhin <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Sugeng & Suryani, 2020; Fauzi & Respati, 2021)
Self-regulated learning	(Bergstrom <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Gerstein <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Hsu <i>et al.</i> , 2016; Sugeng & Suryani, 2020)

Source: Authors

## 6. Results and Discussion

In the discussion, common skills developed through PBL are unpacked and assessed if they are beneficial to Auditing Students.

### 6.1 Problem-Solving Skill

In a PBL environment, students are offered with problems that are multidisciplinary in nature (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Jackson & Meek, 2021). Auditing educators can start by designing small unstructured problems in their teaching as a way to embrace PBL. The problems designed can incorporate auditing with other subjects such as accounting, tax, and financial management. Auditing students can benefit from solving unstructured problems presented by educators. This is because auditors require knowledge of other subjects to perform the audit effectively.

### 6.2 Team Work

Teamwork is a powerful tool that enables different talents, skills, and personalities to gather together to solve a common problem (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2021). In PBL, students work in smaller groups, and the class looks like a tutorial (Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Stanley & Marsden, 2013; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018). This gives an opportunity for students to learn from each other, interact with their peers, and make discussions, and presentations. Problems that come with group work, such as group dynamics, free riders, and allocating marks to groups and individuals should not be overlooked (Wyness & Dalton, 2018). Exposure to teamwork may benefit Auditing Students as professional auditors work in teams.

### 6.3 Communication Skill

In PBL, discussions are made within the groups and with the facilitator improving verbal communication skills (Stanley & Marsden, 2013; Wyness & Dalton, 2018). PBL also requires students to make written reports and oral presentations (Stanley & Marsden, 2012; Stanley & Marsden, 2013). Communication also happens amongst the team to seek clarity about certain concepts before taking it further with the facilitator. Presentation of task assists students in improving their communication skills (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Wyness & Dalton, 2018). The development of effective communication skills can be beneficial to Auditing Students. This is because professional auditors communicate with their clients

daily. Therefore, effective communication through written reports or oral presentations is critical in auditing context.

### 6.4 Critical Thinking Skills

In PBL, students are afforded an opportunity to think critically (Sugeng & Suryani, 2020; Fauzi & Respati, 2021). This may be because they are presented with unstructured problems with no right or wrong answer, which challenges their thought process. Developing critical thinking skills may benefit Auditing Students because auditors are often confronted with problems that have no clear solution.

### 6.5 Self-Regulated Learning

Students exposed to PBL develop self-regulated learning (Hsu *et al.*, 2016; Sugeng & Suryani, 2020). This can be attributable to more self-confidence (Barut *et al.*, 2016), intrinsic motivation (Gerstein *et al.*, 2016), pleasure in learning (Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018) noted in students exposed to PBL. Auditing Students can benefit from taking ownership of their own learning rather than waiting for educators to instruct the learning process.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper reviewed accounting literature on PBL to determine the skills developed and further determined if common skills identified can be beneficial to Auditing Students. Common skills developed through PBL include problem-solving, team work, communication, critical thinking, and self-regulated learning. These skills developed are all considered beneficial to Auditing Students. This is because PBL starts with an unstructured multifaceted real-life problem (Stanley & Marsden, 2013; Ahmed & Kannaiah, 2018; Wyness & Dalton, 2018). This applies to Auditing Students as professional auditors often face complex client's problems and need to bring multifaceted knowledge. Secondly, in PBL students work in smaller teams, and each team member is responsible for performing certain tasks. Individual work gets integrated into the teamwork after review and discussions (Stanley & Marsden, 2013). Learning how to effectively work in teams can benefit Auditing Students. Again, mastering communication skills cut across various disciplines, including Auditing Students. Similarly, developing critical thinking skills may unlock other skills required of Auditing Students. Lastly, students that regulate their own



learning will go a long way in challenging the conventional teaching approaches.

## 8. Recommendations and Future Research

Based on the results from literature it is highly recommendable that PBL be adopted for Auditing Students. This is because the skills identified through PBL are beneficial to Auditing Students. However, the extra effort, time, and creativity from the educator's side should not be overlooked to make the project successful. Future studies can conduct an empirical study after exposing students to PBL to determine if the skills can indeed be developed in Auditing Students.

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# The Effects of Biographical Variables on Affective Commitment at the Municipalities in the Nkangala District

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to determine the effects of biographical variables on affective commitment in the municipalities in the Nkangala district. International literature revealed that similar studies had been conducted before in municipalities, but there is a shortage in the South African context, especially in the Mpumalanga municipalities. Therefore, this study addressed this gap. Other key findings in the literature showed that it is vitally crucial for municipal managers to have affectively committed employees because they are less likely to resign, and they support managers in achieving strategic objectives. This study was quantitative and influenced by the positivism paradigm. The population size was 2941, and 808 respondents were conveniently sampled. The response rate was 27.47%. The researchers tested five hypotheses using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and T-Test. The key findings revealed no significant difference at 0.05 or 5% in affective commitment levels regarding gender and employment status. Males have a lower affective commitment mean (M) score (M=2.65) as compared to their female (M=2.67) counterparts. Older employees (55-65: Years, M=3.09) had a higher level of affective commitment than the other age groups. Senior management (M=3.00) had higher levels of affective commitment, but the difference was insignificant at 5%. Employees with a certificate (M=3.33) had the highest affective commitment levels compared to employees with other education levels. The difference was significant at 5%. This study implies that municipal managers might find it challenging to retain younger and educated employees because they have lower levels of affective commitment.

**Keywords:** Affective commitment, Age, Education, Employment levels, Gender, Nkangala district

## 1. Introduction

Research on biographical effects on affective commitment is gaining traction in international municipalities (Qu, Jo & Choi, 2020). A municipality is the third sphere of government, and in the South African context, it is responsible render different services to the communities (Bojang & Bwando, 2018). Researchers established that municipal managers who source talent from diverse backgrounds offer excellent service delivery (Anser, Ali, Anwar & Usman, 2020). In addition, municipal employers who hire employees from different biographical backgrounds comply with transformation legislative requirements (Peng, Liao & Sun, 2020).

However, research conducted in international municipalities has found mixed and conflicting outcomes about the biographical effects on affective commitment (Coffie, Boateng & Coffie, 2021). For example, it was found that permanent and non-permanent employees express the same ability when working with co-employees for the job given. Still, the

level of affective commitment was found to be lower for non-permanent than permanent employees (Giunchi, Chambel & Ghislieri, 2015). The unintended outcome of having municipal employees with lower levels of affective commitment is that they resign, and municipal managers spend more time recruiting (Tuysuz, Doğan & Tuysuz, 2020). In some instances, Municipal employees who are not affectively committed did not offer excellent support and customer service. On the other hand, Visagie and Diedericks (2018), who conducted a study in Gauteng District municipalities, established that employees who were affectively committed supported managers to achieve their strategic objectives.

Employees in managerial positions display commitment because of the benefits and job security they have within the organisation (Giffords, 2009). Those who have been deployed in the municipal management were more likely to be affectively committed because they were paid more than other employees in the lower levels, and they were promoted (Konya, Matić & Pavlović, 2016).

The literature has revealed that female employees are more talented with a high level of commitment than male employees in organisational development (Messner, 2017). Kidron and Peretz's (2018) study conducted in Israeli municipalities found that female municipal workers had lower levels of affective commitment due to poor working conditions (Francesco & Mahtani, 2011) and were not employed permanently (Nguyen, 2020). Conversely, municipal employees who are permanently employed were highly committed due to the benefits that are part of permanent employees' contracts (Balz, 2017).

Educational level is another variable shown in the literature to display mixed effects on employees' level of commitment in municipalities. Municipality employees with higher educational levels are most likely to be affectively committed. Their commitment levels were found to be higher because they were loyal to municipal managers who had invested in their educational development. The other body of literature showed that the highly educated are mobile compared to other employees with lower educational levels because their skills are in demand (Cherian, Alkhatib & Aggarwal, 2018).

The mixed findings above show more space further to conduct the effects of biographical variables on affective commitment. This is what motivated the authors of this paper to conduct this study so that they can contribute to the biographical variable effects on affective commitment body of knowledge. In the next section of the article, the purpose of the study is propounded. Then the literature and the hypotheses are discussed, followed by the methodology used to address the research question. Elucidated in the results section are the frequencies of the sample distribution and the inferential statistics (ANOVA and T-Test) calculated to test the five ( $n=5$ ) hypotheses. The article ends with a discussion that includes limitations and recommendations for future research and managers.

Research conducted in the municipalities on the effects of biographical variables on affective commitment is mixed (Nguyen, 2020; Visagie & Diedericks, 2018) and under-researched in the South African context, especially in Nkangala District. Hence, this study was conducted to address this gap. This study seeks to address this research question: which biographical variables have a higher and a significant effect on affective commitment in the municipalities in the Nkangala district?

## 2. Theoretical Lens and Hypotheses

Affective commitment is about employees' attachment to the employer or organisation. Employees attached to the organisations are least likely to retain and benefit by not incurring talent organisation costs (Ahmed, Kanwal & Lodhi, 2020; Brimhall, 2019; Maleka, Mpofu, Hlatywayo, Meyer, Carr & Parker, 2019). Affective commitment is the extent to which an employee identifies with the organisation's values and goals (Hodgkinson, Hughes, Radnor & Glennon, 2018). When employees have an affective relationship with the organisation, they experience internalisation in which they feel that their values and goals are aligned with that of the organisation.

The authors' theoretical approach to affective commitment is from an affective (Skosana, Maleka & Ngonyama-Ndou, 2021). Wegge, van Dick, Fisher, West and Dawson (2006) and Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) are the scholars who are attributed to including affective commitment in the affective event theory (AET). AET has been used in research on organisational behaviour and human resource management (HRM) (Maleka, Mmako & Swarts, 2017). It has been found that municipalities and other workplaces render excellent customer service, are happy, and support managers in achieving their strategic objectives (Nel & Werner, 2021). Behavioural scholars influenced by AET brought scientific evidence suggesting that certain work affective behaviours such as moods, attitudes and emotions are likely to predict employees' affective commitment (Gong, Wu, Huang, Yan & Luo, 2020). Given this argument, employees evaluate their jobs and react congruent to their feelings, moods and emotions (Rosen, Harris & Kacmar, 2009). The next section is on the effects of biographical experience and affective commitment. The section highlights key findings from the literature and the authors' hypotheses.

### 2.1 Gender and Affective Commitment

Indeed, the distinction between the affective commitment of males and females is unclear due to the varying views of various authors (Ditlev-Simonse, 2015). One hypothesis suggests that males tend to display more affective commitment behaviours as compared to their female counterparts. Comparable to female employees, males enjoy better job involvement and career growth because of their high affective commitment levels and demonstrate better worker participation (Wang, Weng, McElroy,

Ashkanasy & Lievens, 2014). Consequently, males are more successful in their careers, while women are emotionally detached because of low career mobility. On the contrary, another view emerging uncovered that women were more committed than their male counterparts. This is due to female municipal employees' having fewer career advancement opportunities (Pala, Eker & Eker, 2008). This study formulated the below hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: Males have a higher level of affective commitment as compared to females in municipalities.

## **2.2 Employment Status and Affective Commitment**

According to Balz (2017), permanently employed municipal employees are emotionally attached to municipalities because they enjoy job security, job stability, developmental opportunities and benefits like medical aid, provident fund, etc. As a result, permanent employees build and maintain good working relationships with other employees (Giunchi *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, permanent employees report fewer stress levels associated with job insecurity than part-time employees. Part-time work arrangements could lead to reduced commitment levels due to anxiety caused by a lack of job security and less favourable working conditions and treatment (Kidron, 2018; Torka & Schyns, 2010). Thus, part-time municipal employees usually experience negative attitudes towards the organisation, low levels of commitment and high probabilities of seeking alternative employment elsewhere (Chambel & Castanheira, 2007).

H<sub>2</sub>: Employees who are permanently employed have a higher level of affective commitment as compared to employees hired on a part-time basis in the municipalities.

## **2.3 Age and Affective Commitment**

There are different views about the effect of age on affective commitment. Younger municipal employees are likely to exit employment where future career progression and growth opportunities are not clearly defined and, in some instances, due to ill-treatment received from older employees who feel threatened by them (Hemdi & Rahim, 2011). On the one hand, more senior employees have demonstrated a high level of commitment compared to younger employees (Rubin & Brody, 2005).

The third hypothesis of this study is as follows:

H<sub>3</sub>: Older employees have a higher level of affective commitment as compared to younger employees in municipalities.

## **2.4 Education and Affective Commitment**

There appears to be limited research linking education level with affective commitment in the municipal context. However, scholars such as Pala *et al.* (2008:58) point out that employees with qualifications are more affectively committed than employees with lower qualifications. It has been established that they are most likely to get higher-paying positions that offer them excellent benefits.

The fourth hypothesis of the study is as follows:

H<sub>4</sub>: Employees with higher education have a higher level of affective commitment compared to lower qualifications in the municipalities.

## **2.5 Employment Levels and Affective Commitment**

The hierarchical level of employment has proven to affect affective commitment in municipalities. Employees at the higher level of the organisational hierarchy are empowered to make decisions that contribute positively to the corporate strategic goals (Giffords, 2009). For instance, scientific evidence suggests that managers are more emotionally committed than subordinates. Amongst other reasons, higher salaries and better benefits have improved their level of affective commitment (Ditlev-Simonse, 2015).

The fifth hypothesis is suggested as follows:

H<sub>5</sub>: Managers have a higher level of affective commitment than lower-level employees in municipalities.

The methodology followed to address the research question is elucidated in the next section.

## **3. Methodology**

The quantitative approach and positivism paradigm influenced the research methodology deemed appropriate for this study. It was influenced by quantitative and positivism because the researchers tested hypotheses using statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Studies influenced by

quantitative and positivism are deductive because there is a relationship between theory and empirical results (Bryman, 2012).

### 3.1 Population and Sampling

The Nkangala District has six (n=6) municipalities. The authors collected the data from four (n=4) in

this study because they were only given ethical clearance. Hence, the population (N) of this study is 2941. The researchers did not have a sampling frame; therefore, they used non-probability sampling, known as convenience (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The sample (n) size of the study was 808. The proportions of the samples are shown in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Biographical Distribution**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Municipality A	Male	364	65.8
	Female	189	34.2
	Total	553	100.0
Municipality B	Male	25	34.7
	Female	47	65.3
	Total	72	100.0
Municipality C	Male	53	41.1
	Female	76	58.9
	Total	129	100.0
Municipality D	Male	21	38.9
	Female	33	61.1
	Total	54	100.0
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Municipality A	Employed full-time	405	73.2
	Employed part-time	148	26.8
	Total	553	100.0
Municipality B	Employed full-time	57	79.2
	Employed part-time	15	20.8
	Total	72	100.0
Municipality C	Employed full-time	56	43.4
	Employed part-time	73	56.6
	Total	129	100.0
Municipality D	Employed full-time	50	92.6
	Employed part-time	4	7.4
	Total	54	100.0
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Employment Levels</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Municipality A	Non-management	481	87.0
	Management	52	9.4
	Senior management	20	3.6
	Total	553	100.0
Municipality B	Non-management	71	98.6
	Management	1	1.4
	Total	72	100.0
Municipality C	Non-management	106	82.2
	Management	16	12.4
	Senior management	7	5.4
	Total	129	100.0

**Table 1 Continued: Biographical Distribution**

Municipality D	Non-management	48	88.9
	Management	5	9.3
	Senior management	1	1.9
	Total	54	100.0
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Municipality A	Grade 12	294	53.2
	Certificate	80	14.5
	Diploma	15	2.7
	Degree	52	9.4
	Postgraduate	9	1.6
	Other	103	18.6
	Total	553	100.0
Municipality B	Grade 12	40	55.6
	Certificate	13	18.1
	Degree	3	4.2
	Other	16	22.2
	Total	72	100.0
Municipality C	Grade 12	63	48.8
	Certificate	19	14.7
	Diploma	4	3.1
	Degree	19	14.7
	Postgraduate	1	.8
	Other	23	17.8
	Total	129	100.0
Municipality D	Grade 12	27	50.0
	Certificate	7	13.0
	Degree	6	11.1
	Postgraduate	1	1.9
	Other	13	24.1
	Total	54	100.0
<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Municipality A	18 - 24 years	3	.5
	25 - 34 years	84	15.2
	35 - 44 years	129	23.3
	45 - 54 years	231	41.8
	55 - 65 years	106	19.2
	Total	553	100.0
Municipality B	25 - 34 years	12	16.7
	35 - 44 years	15	20.8
	45 - 54 years	29	40.3
	55 - 65 years	16	22.2
	Total	72	100.0
Municipality C	18 - 24 years	1	.8
	25 - 34 years	16	12.4
	35 - 44 years	27	20.9
	45 - 54 years	58	45.0
	55 - 65 years	27	20.9
	Total	129	100.0
Municipality D	18 - 24 years	1	1.9
	25 - 34 years	6	11.1
	35 - 44 years	13	24.1
	45 - 54 years	23	42.6
	55 - 65 years	11	20.4
	Total	54	100.0

Source: Authors

### 3.2 Data Collection Instrument

The data were collected by means of a close-ended questionnaire (Maree, 2016), which comprised two sections. The first section of the questionnaire consists of biographical variables (i.e. age, gender, education, employment levels and employment status). Section B comprised affective commitment scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1997) with a Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.90. In another South African study, when Meyer and Allen's (1997) affective commitment scale was used by Makhathini and Van Dyk (2018), there was 0.76. Since this study and other South African studies are above the Nunnally (1978) threshold of 0.7, it can be argued that it is reliable. The data collection used two methods, viz., drop-off and face-to-face interviews. The latter was done with the assistance of the students for respondents who did not have a good command of English. The respondents who understood English well were given the questionnaire and dropped it off at the sealed box. The questionnaire was distributed before the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3.3 Statistical Analysis

As Tarbachnick and Fidell (2014) suggested, the authors used Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and T-Test to address the hypotheses. The same authors are the views both statistical techniques can be calculated in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). In addition, both statistics are used when the independent variable is categorical, and the outcome/dependent variable is a scale variable (Field, 2018). Independent variables were age, education, gender and employment levels. The significance level was set at 0.05 or 5%, as Field (2018) suggested.

### 3.4 Ethical Consideration

The researchers were given ethical clearance (FCRE2018/FR/07/009-MS). The respondents were informed about the benefits of the study and that their participation was voluntary. In addition, no respondents were coerced to divulge any personal

information that could be traced to them. Anonymity and confidentiality were enhanced by reporting aggregated results.

## 4. Results

This section discusses biographical frequencies and the difference statistics (ANOVA and T-Tests). The biographical frequencies are discussed in Table 2. The gender results show that it was in Municipality A, where males were hired in the majority (65.8%). Municipality C was the one that had the highest number of employees hired on a part-time basis (56.6%). Non-managers were in the majority in the four ( $n=4$ ) municipalities, and their distribution was as follows: Municipality A (87.0%), Municipality B (98.6%), Municipality C (82.2%) and Municipality D (88.9%). The data also showed that Municipality B did not have a senior manager. In addition, in all municipalities, the majority of the respondents had Grade 12: Municipality A (53.2%), Municipality B (55.6%), Municipality C (48.8%) and Municipality D (50.0%). Lastly, in all municipalities, the age cohort that was in the majority was 45–54 years, and the distribution was as follows: Municipality A (41.8%), Municipality B (40.3%), Municipality C (45.0%) and Municipality D (42.6%).

### 4.1 Hypotheses Testing

In this section, the inferential statistics (T-Test and ANOVA) that are used to test the hypotheses are discussed. Presented in Table 2 are T-test results, and they showed that males ( $M = 2.65$ ) had lower levels of affective commitment than their female counterparts ( $M = 2.67$ ). Since the  $p = 0.77$ , the difference was not significant. Hence,  $H_1$  is not supported.

Presented in Table 3 are T-test results, and they showed that permanently employed employees ( $M = 2.63$ ) had lower levels of affective commitment than employees hired on a part-time basis ( $M = 2.73$ ). Since the  $p = 0.28$ , the difference was not significant. Hence,  $H_2$  is not supported.

**Table 2: Gender and Affective Commitment**

Affective Commitment	Gender	N	M	SD	p-value
	Male	463	2.65	1.16	0.77
	Female	345	2.67	1.22	

Source: Authors



Presented in Table 4 are ANOVA results, and they showed that older employees (55-65 Years, M=3.09) had higher levels of affective commitment than other age groups (18-24 years, M=1.80, 25-44 years, M=3.00, 35-44 years, M=2.22 and 45-55 years, M=2.59). Since the  $p=0.00$ , the difference was significant. The post-hoc comparison was calculated using the Turkey HSD test. The data shows that no age groups differed significantly. Hence,  $H_3$  is supported.

Presented in Table 5 are ANOVA results, and they showed that employees with a certificate (M=3.33)

had a higher level of affective commitment than other employees with different educational levels (Grade 12, M=2.53, Diploma, M=1.96, Degree, M=2.78, Post Graduate, M=2.69, Other, M=2.49). Since the  $p=0.00$ , the difference was significant. Turkey's HSD test showed that certificate means significantly differed from other education levels. The results show that  $H_4$  is not supported.

In Table 6, ANOVA results showed that the results were not significant ( $p=0.24$ ). Similarly, Turkey's HSD test results were not significant. The results show that  $H_5$  is not supported.

**Table 3: Employment Status and Affective Commitment**

Affective Commitment	Employment Status	N	M	SD	p-value
	Employed full-time	568	2.63	1.15	0.28
	Employed part-time	240	2.73	1.26	

Source: Authors

**Table 4: Age and Affective Commitment**

Affective Commitment	Means (M) and Standard Deviation (SD)					F	p-value	Effect Sizes
	18-24 Years (M=1.80, SD=0.00)	25-34 Years (M=3.00, SD=1.05)	35-44 Years (M=2.22, SD=0.90)	45-54 Years (M=2.59, SD=1.25)	55-65 Years (M=3.09, SD=1.91)	15.92	0.00	0.07

Source: Authors

**Table 5: Education and Affective Commitment**

Affective Commitment	Means (M) and Standard Deviation (SD)						F	p-value
	Grade 12 (M=2.53, SD=1.89)	Certificate (M=3.33, SD=1.08)	Diploma (M=1.96, SD=1.05)	Degree (M=2.78, SD=1.15)	Post Graduate (M=2.69, SD=1.00)	Other (M=2.49, SD=1.18)	11.52	0.00

Source: Authors

**Table 6: Employment Levels and Affective Commitment**

Affective Commitment	Means (M) and Standard Deviation (SD)			F	p-value	Effect Sizes
	Non-management (M=2.64; SD=1.16)	Management (M=2.72; SD=1.33)	Senior management (M=3.00; SD=1.22)	1.42	0.24	0.00

Source: Authors

## 5. Discussion

This study contributed to the affective commitment body of knowledge by providing insights from an under-researched sample in Nkangala district. It showed that males had lower levels of affective commitment than their female counterparts, but the difference was insignificant. This result was not in line with previous research that showed that males had a higher level of affective commitment (Wang *et al.*, 2014). It is also noteworthy that the difference on 0.02 or 2%.

Based on previous research (Giunchi *et al.*, 2015), it was hypothesised that permanently employed employees had higher levels of affective commitment than part-time employees. Surprisingly, the data of the study was contrary, and it was not significant. A plausible reason for this finding is that part-time employees hoped they might be appointed permanently since this study was during the insourcing period. Another reason might be that their working conditions were not bad as was found by other researchers, or they were not mistreated by municipal managers (Torka & Schyns, 2010). This finding has implications for three municipalities' managers because they hired employees permanently, and only Municipality C had 56.6% of its staff complement as part-time. This showed that even when the other three municipalities invested in developing and offering their employees secured the job, they were not committed.

Regarding the age difference, the results were consistent with the literature (Rubin & Brody, 2005). Older employees had a higher level of affective commitment than other age groups. The human resource (HR) benefit of this finding is that municipal managers might still reap the benefits (i.e. less resignation and adhering to the strategic objectives) of commitment from this age group. Like other studies, municipal workers in Nkangala district in this age group, 18 to 24 years, had the lowest level of commitment. This group is known as Generation Z, and previous research showed that they had a higher propensity to quit (Hemdi & Rahim, 2011). Previous study in the public sector recommended HR strategies like developing flexible policies, structuring their reward policy to have a higher component of cash, and recognising that they are adequate to keep them affectively committed (Aggarwal, Sadhna, Gupta, Mittal & Rastogi, 2020).

Contrary to the literature (Pala *et al.*, 2008:58), the study found that employees with certificates had a higher level of affective commitment than the other groups. The results imply that investing in municipal employees' education does not lead to higher levels of responsibility. In addition, when educated municipal workers are not committed, they do not offer the customers or community members excellent service. The result is community protests or municipal workers not paying rates and taxes in one of the Nkangala municipalities (Maleka, Motsima, Matang & Lekgothoane, 2016).

Lastly, the results showed that senior managers had a higher level of affective commitment than other groups. In some instances, they are committed due to being responsible for implementing the municipality's strategic goals. This finding is consistent with previous research (Giffords, 2009).

### 5.1 Limitations and Recommendations

Despite this study contributing to the affective commitment body of knowledge, it had limitations. Using a non-probability sampling is one of its limitations and does not cover all the municipalities in the Nkangala district, so the results cannot be generalised. In addition, this study used a cross-sectional research design, giving a once-off picture of the effects of biographical variables on affective commitment. Based on these limitations, it is recommended that in future, probability sampling should be used. In terms of management, the following is recommended:

- In terms of Gen Z Strategies like developing flexible policies, structuring reward policy with a higher cash component should be explored and implemented; and
- A team building or workshop should be held with permanently employed employees; to establish why they had lower levels of commitment. This will include other education levels across gender, age and occupational groups.

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that females in four (n=4) Nkangala districts had a slightly higher level of affective commitment, but it is not significant. The same conclusion can be made for employees who are either permanently employed

or employed on a part-time basis. Another conclusion is that older employees had higher levels of affective commitment than other age groups, and the difference is significant. The other conclusion is that employees with the certificate were affectively committed to other employees. The other important difference was that senior managers were more highly affectively committed than lower-level employees.

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# Exploring the Effects of Social Media Discourse on Public Policy

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**Abstract:** The advent of social media has provided non-authoritative users a space to spread ideas and information to vast audiences. Given this paradigm shift, public policy makers and public administrators can benefit from a deeper discussion on the effects of social media platforms and how meaning is contextualized and recontextualized at a rate that can potentially confound public messaging. This paper provides an analysis of social media discourse at the intersection of news dissemination and individual interpretation. Using the concept of grafting which allows language users to make language compatible to suit their goals, the study in this paper examines how language intended to characterize concepts and people in a negative light can be recontextualized to take on more positive meanings. The implications for this phenomenon on public policy and messaging will also be discussed to provide a starting point for the development of real-world applications for authoritative sources of information to address social media discourse.

**Keywords:** Social media, Grafting, Discourse analysis, Public messaging, Public administration

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## 1. Introduction

Traditional discussions of mass mediation (Spitulnik 1996, 1993) rely on assumptions of an authoritative source from which language and meaning are communicated to entire cultures and communities. This largely unidirectional transfer of knowledge has carried implications about the enduring power of authoritative knowledge, which now faces challenges from the rise of social media and the resulting decentralization of authority. As the power of centralized authority diminishes through new technologies and social media platforms aimed at incorporating more voices in public policy discourse, a deeper understanding of the role of social media in issue messaging requires further study.

This paper examines the linguistic phenomenon of grafting (Gal, 2018) through a discourse analysis of social media. The notion that users of language have the power to recontextualize meaning to achieve ends that are different from what is originally intended has long been documented in the scholarly research but is especially true in social media contexts, confounding public policy discourse to an extent that deserves further discussion. To that end, this paper observes occurrences where new meanings and expressions of power and identity

are grafted onto language in social media. An analysis of the evolution of meaning and messages on social media reveals several important examples where language that was originally coded to have negative connotations have been recontextualized to assume more positive orientations. This paper seeks to emphasize this dynamic attribute inherent in social media discourse as a characteristic that those involved in public policy should seek to address in public messaging.

## 2. Background

Public policy messaging as conceptualized by the authors of this paper refers to efforts by public officials to frame a particular issue to a mass audience for the purposes of collective action or, at minimum, common cause. Druckman (2001) describes the relationship between how issues are framed and the extent to which the public responds accordingly. Within this context, those responsible for carrying out public policy are in constant interaction with the public audiences for which they are responsible as well as mass media entities that, in societies that grant journalistic freedom, frame issues independent of official control. This interaction involves multiple actors and carries the assumption that public officials do not (and in open societies, should not) have total

control over their audiences, particularly as mass media plays a consequential role in interpreting public policy to the public (Bonilla & Mo, 2019).

In more recent times, social media has also played a growing influence that informs and confounds public messaging. A discourse analysis of the relationship between public messaging and social media is especially useful in a "post-truth" era dominated by misinformation and disinformation. Social media has been observed to not only facilitate the proliferation of such knowledge not only by authoritarian entities but also by sympathetic social media users and eventually unwitting propagators who may unintentionally lend their validation of knowledge that runs counter to public education of critical issues. Messaging around the COVID-19 pandemic provides one pointed example of this phenomenon, where social media has contributed to the spread of disinformation regarding mitigation measures and vaccination campaigns around the world (Lang *et al.*, 2021). The resulting skepticism about the effectiveness of measures recommended by public health experts has been shown in the research to contribute to a significant number of infections and deaths from the coronavirus to date, prompting scholars to characterize misinformation as a public health crisis (Merchant, South & Lurie, 2021). The recent history of social media with respect to this and other issues where public messaging is essential thus justifies a discussion on the discursive practices that contribute to misinformation and disinformation among users of social media.

### 3. Theoretical Context

A basic understanding of mass mediation, at least with respect to language (Spitulnik, 1996), suggests that mass media platforms (e.g. television, radio, print publications) have long held an outsized influence on knowledge at play in daily life within a community. Put simply, mass media provides a platform to easily disseminate knowledge to a large audience within a community. In turn, the resulting shared knowledge can be amplified by each member within that audience, thus normalizing that knowledge to the extent where it is unquestioned and definitive of a culture (Lessig, 2002).

This construction of cultural knowledge, however, is complicated by the bidirectionality of language and communication, which is especially manifest at scale thanks to recent developments around

social media. Even as mass media platforms endure and grow to this day, platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok provide spaces for greater numbers of Internet users to share information and communicate ideas beyond the gatekeeping reach of traditional platforms. Combined with the speed at which information on social media perpetuates and the potential for social media to amplify a multitude of voices, ideas that are voiced and shared on social media have a power that can challenge, refute, and perhaps erase ideas that traditional platforms disseminate.

The power of social media provides a means for speakers to recontextualize language and apply new meanings that may conflict with their original intent and orientation. Gal (2018) calls this phenomenon "grafting," which is a more complex occurrence than a simple encoding of language, as evidenced by the following example:

*A quick example is the way the president of Russia justified the controversial military incursions by Russian forces into Ukraine in 2014. He invoked the "responsibility to protect" and other shibboleths of humanitarian discourse (Dunn & Bobick, 2014).*

*More generally, linguistic, social, and material practices that are indexical of existing authoritative personae and organizations (in this case, humanitarian ones) in one arena (international diplomacy) provide the sap (authority) for the graftings (practices) added to them from another arena (in this case, military invasion). The effect is like troping, as in parody. An analogy is formed. However, in parody the ironic or humorous effect comes from the recognition of a difference between two practices interdiscursively framed as "the same." (Gal, 2018:4)*

In this example, the use of humanitarian discourse to justify the use of military force is, as Gal puts it, a "parody." Under a critical lens, the discursive practices analysed for this discussion depict Russia's argument for a humanitarian rationale as little more than a disguise for invading Ukraine. A similar assertion can be made with regards to Russia's more recent incursion in Ukraine which President Vladimir Putin has sought to justify with the stated goal of protecting the ethnic Russian minority population in Ukraine from persecution by an allegedly neo-Nazi government. The stated need to "denazify" the region provides enough of a rationale to claim

a humanitarian purpose behind the 2022 invasion of Ukraine with the same sort of language traditionally crafted to justify more traditional humanitarian efforts such as aid work in and food shipments to developing countries.

A similar example revolves around the use of the term "fake news" particularly in Western political contexts. While it has arguably been an enduring phenomenon throughout the era of mass media, fake news perpetuated through disreputable news sites and social media has been shown to have had a consequential effect on the 2016 United States presidential election (Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020). In contemporary popular discourse, however, the phrase is often a derogatory epithet used against news media or other sources of information with which critics are not aligned. The then President, Donald J. Trump, often used "fake news" as an accusation to discredit information or journalists critical of his presidency (Tamul, Ivory, Hotter & Wolf, 2020). The development of language in this manner highlights that users of language can take utterances and recontextualize their meaning and purpose (while preserving much of their power) to suit their own ends, thus highlighting how authoritative messaging can be confounded by potentially bad actors or actors who adopt different worldviews.

Whereas the examples above show that language is used to justify intuitively conflicting intentions, this paper examines the act of grafting employed to more directly nullify the original intention altogether. The goal of the sort of grafting identified in this study is the same as that found above, in that a particular use of language is recontextualized in such a way that the two uses, when juxtaposed together, seem contradictory or incongruent with each other. The salient detail examined in this paper, however, deals with recontextualization that takes away the traditional power of the language. In the exemplars presented below, language that is meant to depict certain concepts or even people in a negative light is recontextualized in a favorable manner by those that are targeted by that language in the first place. Language users employing this sort of grafting thus nullify ideas and sociocultural identities that define others' characterizations of them and create new, more positive epistemologies that are more aligned to their perspectives. Ultimately, this, in conjunction with the velocity and volume of information that social media provides (Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020), also confounds authoritative

messaging that warrants discussion by public policy makers and public administrators with regards to mitigation and effective messaging.

## 4. The Study

This paper relies on an analysis of social media to capture patterns with respect to recontextualization of terminology used in online discourse. The goal of this study is to identify the concept of grafting defined by Gal (2018) to observe how language is reinterpreted to the extent that the phenomenon can confound public messaging. To that end, this study looks at terminology that is used by one discursive community to critique another (i.e. terminology that is derogatory or otherwise negative) and, in turn, employed by others in a manner that more positively aligns to their perspectives. In effect, the researchers looked for recontextualization in social media where a community uses terminology employed against them and recasts it in a way they find more appealing.

### 4.1 Data Collection

The researchers collected tweets through keyword-specific and location-specific searches. The Twitter platform embeds tweets with metadata that includes a user's location (usually provided by their smartphone or other mobile device with which they use Twitter). This allows for searches for tweets within a particular area and, more importantly, excluding tweets that may use the keywords of interest but are not ultimately related to a location-specific topic being explored in this study. These tweets were compiled in a database with universal resource links (URLs) and screenshots of texts for later reference in case authors delete their tweets later on.

### 4.2 Ethical Considerations

Tweets are largely available to the public and openly readable on the Internet, addressing the main ethical concerns with respect to privacy and confidentiality. That said, the authors acknowledge the potential for abuse and otherwise improper usage of essential and confidential information. As a result, the researchers removed any and all identifying information (e.g. real names, Twitter handles, work affiliations) from tweets that are collected and analyzed for this paper. Moreover, to further anonymize and prevent searches of social media data used in this paper, written representations of

tweets are paraphrased to mitigate the possibility of online searches while preserving as much of the meaning as possible.

### 4.3 Data Analysis

The study employs a composite theoretical lens beginning with a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) to allow for conceptual development of the phenomenon as the researchers perceive within the data. Tweets are coded by whether the researchers perceive the terminology in question is being used in a positive or negative manner, then coded for other characteristics that might further contextualize the use of the terminology. The data as coded are then analyzed through discussion of Gal's (2018) understanding of grafting to gain a sense of how meaning is embedded and re-embedded into the terminology in question.

## 5. Results and Discussion

During the course of data analysis, the researchers identified a number of terms at varying degrees of recontextualization as evidenced by how they are used by social media users. Given these variations, the researchers identified a series of stages, which can best be conceptualized along a continuum from no recontextualization to full recontextualization, where new meaning is grafted onto language as it is used and reused in social media discourse. The four exemplars below illustrate these stages, emphasizing the potential, gradual development of language over time.

### 5.1 "Deplorable"

The now-famous term "deplorable" is one that has undergone full recontextualization as it has been repeatedly recycled in social media discourse. While it is not a new word, it exists in contemporary social media discourse as a politically-charged term that has since been reinterpreted as a positive identity by those who feel they were targeted by this language. In this sense, the word "deplorable" has taken on almost the exact opposite connotation from that found in its original usage.

In the context of the 2016 United States presidential election, the then Democratic Party candidate, Hillary Rodham Clinton, was reported to have used the term "deplorable" to define supporters of the then Republican Party candidate, Donald J. Trump,

in what was perceived as a derogatory manner. The use of the word "deplorable" later entered the popular discourse as a means to more generally define right-wing extremists in the United States, but remains indexed to steadfast, almost irrational support of former President Trump. In turn, conservatives have since used the term as a badge of honor, accepting the word as associated to their political and cultural identity while rejecting the substance embedded within the intended use of the word.

Among many examples, two come to mind (with emphasis added) to highlight how American conservatives have grown comfortable with using a term they perceive to be used against them. The first tweet depicts "deplorables" as an enduring force that is characterized as positive and good when juxtaposed with Democrats who are seen as having a singular goal of character assassination:

*Democrats think destroying President Trump will solve their problems. They are foolish to think that the movement dies with him – assuming he can be destroyed.*

*But President Trump is real.*

*And, Deplorables won't go away.*

*NOT EVER. (tweet from July 2022)*

Tweets such as this clearly presents those aligned with the former president as a positive force. The tone of this tweet is far different than those that cast "deplorables" as toxic to the political discourse in the United States. As a result, the user who published this tweet signals to those aligned with the conservative cause that it is acceptable to take on the "deplorable" identity despite the use of the term in the years prior.

In turn, American conservatives on social media have used it to describe themselves or those they perceived to be like-minded in almost a neutral sense, long after negative connotations have been scrubbed and positive connotations have been embedded, such as the tweet below.

*Deplorable people will continue to oppose Biden's Electors! (tweet from August 2022)*

The phrase "deplorable people" as used in this tweet is not necessarily positive or negative. Rather,



the tweet describes the action (i.e. opposition to the 2020 United States presidential election) in a very matter-of-fact way, assuming that those who would likely take on the term as their own agree with the positive usage. As a result, the researchers characterize this term as having undergone full recontextualization, where further advocacy or reassurance about the new meaning is no longer necessary and people can feel free to use the term with those with whom they align.

## 5.2 "Sakoku" ("Isolated Country")

The term "*sakoku*", identified as a term used in current social media discourse to describe recent restrictions on travel into Japan, has a meticulously crafted history in Japan dating back to the days of European colonization of Asian countries. The shogunate, seeking to repel Spanish and Portuguese influence within 17<sup>th</sup> century Japan, restricted trade with and travel to and from other countries for over two and a half centuries. The ultra-conservative policy on interaction with foreigners has had an enduring influence on Japanese culture that continues to this day, as evidenced by the use of the term "*sakoku*" in contemporary discourse.

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic forced many countries to close their borders to non-essential international travel, if not all travel altogether. In particular, Japan saw the closing of borders as an essential measure to mitigate the spread of the disease from travelers coming from abroad while the medical scientific community worked to develop vaccines and other remedies to COVID-19. Starting in late 2020, countries began to relax their border policies to allow for the resumption of travel as vaccines and customs for masking and social distancing provided a sense of security and safety for international travelers. However, among developed nations, Japan continued to have some of the most stringent border restrictions as late as mid-2022, and particularly in early 2022 when international students began in earnest to protest the restrictions imposed on student visas. The growing online protests employed terminology such as "cruel Japan" (a play on the phrase "Cool Japan" which is used to describe Japanese culture to a young international audience as hip and trendy) and "*sakoku*", likening COVID-19 border restrictions to the isolationist policies of old.

The traditional and contemporary uses of the term "*sakoku*" are intended to critique Japanese

policies and cultural attitudes regarding foreigners. International students who devoted financial resources to receiving an education in Japan and other groups of foreigners (e.g. those separated from family members already in Japan, those with work visas unable to enter the country for work) used this word to highlight hardships incurred by enduring restrictions on travel into Japan. As a result, users of the term "*sakoku*" in this context aim to judge Japanese policies and culture in a negative light.

Against this backdrop, a number of social media users mostly within Japan also use this term positively to describe a sense of safety from COVID-19 as well as the resulting tranquility that accompanies a lack of foreign tourists and other foreigners in the country. One such tweet paraphrased here, accompanied by pictures of Japanese comfort food, pointedly praises the idea of an isolated country where strangers are not present to pose a bother (emphasis added).

*Every person has their own tastes, but as someone from the countryside, I appreciate getting to eat fried food made by an eighth-generation tempura shop in Japan. I am also glad there are no strangers. Better than the tempura was the miso soup. The taste of bonito and the smell of Japanese seasoning combined with the taste of red miso. It would be good to stay in an isolated country forever. (tweet from February 2022)*

This user employs "*sakoku*" toward the end of a tweet that is largely about their experiences while eating out. In this sense, the discussion of "*sakoku*" is almost an afterthought in this tweet, given that the focus is largely devoted to the food. Nonetheless, its use here illustrates the benefits provided by the concept embedded in the term being used in this tweet.

Some tweets are more pointed in their criticism of foreigners, as is the case with the following tweet (emphasis added).

*Stop foreign workers from entering the country!*

*An isolated country is good*

*I'm not satisfied with Chinese people! (tweet from February 2022)*

In many tweets such as these, it is worth pointing out that COVID-19, the original rationale for the

contemporary border restrictions, is hardly mentioned if at all, as users employ the term "sakoku" to draw attention to the perceived positive effects, however unintentional, of border closures. At least from the perspective of those using the discourse in this way, emphasizing the connection between border closures and the reduced influence of foreigners makes what would otherwise be a toxic or negative term a more palatable one.

As a result, social media users who use "sakoku" in a positive sense, potentially, also perceive to have license to freely express ideas they feel align with isolationism, such as banning foreign workers or negatively judging foreigners based on their nationality or ethnicity. Putting aside the expressed discrimination in such tweets, that people feel comfortable with expressing such ideas also points to comfort with the language they are using when it otherwise be considered undesirable, as is the case in the next example:

*Let's make the number of people who can enter the country very small through a policy of an isolated country (tweet from February 2022)*

Here, isolationism continues to be promoted as a good thing but without any particular rationale for why it is good. Instead, the user publishing this tweet simply assumes that having an isolated country is something to strive for through the suggestion they put forward (i.e. limiting the number of foreigners entering Japan). However, there is not sufficient evidence that this term has undergone full recontextualization as is the case with the previous exemplar, as tweets that use the term primarily focus on advocacy of isolationism rather than treating the concept as an eventual or lasting circumstance. Nonetheless, the use of the term "sakoku" in the examples provided here create spaces for like-minded social media users to find comfort in the use of the term and belief in the concept when it would otherwise be treated as an undesirable eventuality.

### 5.3 "Tenderpreneur"

The following two exemplars illustrate language that has undergone little or no recontextualization. They are presented here to highlight the resiliency of embedded meaning, or at least the possibility that recontextualization is not necessarily a foregone conclusion. In African contexts,

the term "tenderpreneur" is a play on the term "entrepreneur" and can be considered a derogatory word to describe someone who uses political connections for personal, financial gain. It evokes a similar meaning to that of "oligarch" in that political influence dictates who is more likely to attain wealth and who is left behind. The term has gained awareness in common discourse in South Africa to the extent that political parties have used the term to critique each other on the issue of political corruption ("Tenderpreneurship is the stuff of crooked cadres & fighters, South African Government" n.d.).

As the term is circulated around social media with casual frequency, it becomes sanitized and achieves more of a neutral form, at least when one applies the term to themselves. One example of this act of sanitizing revolves around the gossip associating television presenter Bonang Matheba and Jeremy Chibuye, a Zambian considered by social media to be a tenderpreneur. Setting aside the rumors that both figures have other partners, the story provides an opportunity for social media to recontextualize the term "tenderpreneur" into a form that is less derogatory and more playful when social media users try to put themselves in Jeremy Chibuye's position.

*I want to be the tenderpreneur that gets her tongue! (tweet from July 2022)*

Another tweet treats the term "tenderpreneur" in a similar fashion that is not negative in characterization. In response to a viral tweet asking which careers are more lucrative than others, one social media user associates "tenderpreneur" with careers that produce millionaires.

*If you want to make billions, work in mining.*

*Millions, work as a commercial farmer, CA, lawyer, engineer, doctor, investment banker or tenderpreneur.*

*For a comfortable living... banking, insurance or IT. (tweet from August 2022)*

Within these two examples, the animosity associated with the term "tenderpreneur" is all but gone when taken out of political contexts and when used to talk about money and status. In these cases, being a tenderpreneur is less a bad or corrupt force and more a title one can adopt if they want to join the elite classes. That said, the researchers

did not find any particular tweets where users, as in the previous exemplars, felt comfortable to incorporate the terminology into their own identity or directly characterize it as a positive thing that warrants aspiration. There is an acknowledgment of an elite status afforded to tenderpreneurs, but little, if any, validation or refutation of the connotations of corruption and political favors embedded into the term. In this case, the extent of recontextualisation is less than that found in terms such as "deplorable" and "sakoku," highlighting that in some cases, the dominant or original meaning is resilient enough to endure the co-construction of meaning in social media, even if it is used in a neutral sense at times.

#### 5.4 "Struggle Credentials"

The last exemplar discussed in this paper has experienced little or no recontextualization so as to further demonstrate that meaning embedded in language can remain resilient to change. In the South African context, "struggle credentials" is a term social media users employ to negatively characterize officials and other political figures they perceive as using past economic and political struggles, particularly experienced during apartheid, as a shield against criticism. The intended use of the term ultimately serves as a critique against the perception that people hide behind such struggles as an excuse for political inaction and corruption.

A search for tweets with the words "struggle credentials" finds that the meaning embedded in the term is generally accepted as negative and toxic. Two example tweets shown here are indicative of the enduring connotations associated with the term, juxtaposed with few, if any, attempts to frame the term in a positive manner.

*The false notion that struggle credentials are more important than getting things done is what keeps Africa bound to leaders with outdated ideas. (tweet from July 2022)*

The first tweet reinforces the negative meanings embedded with the idea of "struggle credentials," that they are employed mainly by politicians who do not accomplish things and who impede progress as perceived by this social media user. Most tweets that employ this term are politically charged. Taken out of political contexts, the term appears to retain its negative connotations when social media users mock themselves, as is the case in the next example.

Attached to the next tweet is a picture of outdated mobile phones that the social media user says they found in old possessions.

*I was looking through my stuff. I found these.*

*I also have struggle credentials. [laughing emoji]  
(tweet from August 2022)*

While this tweet uses "struggle credentials" in a less negative sense, it nonetheless seeks to minimize the importance and power of the struggle by associating the term with outdated possessions such as old mobile phones. The use of the term in this sense is evidence of recontextualization of language but not in a manner where negative values are replaced by positive ones. Overall, "struggle credentials" remains a negative term that few, if any, social media users seek to incorporate into their own identity as a positive characteristic.

## 6. Discussion

The exemplars presented above demonstrate how social media allows users to sanitize language that is traditionally considered unpalatable, not to make such language objectively, universally good, but to provide users against whom such language is targeted a means to incorporate it into their identity and perspectives. The discussion of exemplars from various countries seeks to also highlight the phenomenon of grafting is not specific to any one context, and should indeed be an issue for public policy makers and public administrators to take into consideration with respect to messaging. This discussion regarding the shifting values attributed to language holds implications for the crafting of messaging for public policy, as discourse shaped by social media evolves at a pace and scale beyond which mass mediation cannot fully address.

This paper examines one linguistic phenomenon among many that confounds any straightforward influence between public policy messaging and its intended audiences, particularly as the meanings and values embedded into language evolves in social media spheres outside of official control or approval. The research discussed here reaffirms Druckman's (2001) treatise on message framing while emphasizing the role that social media plays in complicating how audiences interact with message frames and recontextualize them to their own beliefs and preferences. The role of policy makers and officials

responsible for public messaging would do well to take this dynamic interaction into greater consideration when crafting messages intended to effectively facilitate common cause among mass audiences.

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# Reflections on the Effect of the COVID-19 Lockdown in South Africa: The Case Study of Nursing Colleges

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**Abstract:** The World Health Organization says that 21st-century global trends require that traditional and conservative approaches to health care delivery including its mode of education be seriously reconsidered if health global needs are to be met. Moreover, educational institutions are sources of growth, development, and innovation. The emergence of the unprecedented novel coronavirus in 2019 and its related measures to contain its global spread resulted in lockdowns in South Africa, affecting education across all levels when innovative measures were employed. In the nursing profession, the pinch of such lockdowns affected Nursing Education Institutions in various ways due to the emergency shift from physical contact to virtual teaching and learning. In the event of the COVID-19 pandemic, most countries were on national lockdown for more than a month thus affecting teaching and learning. The emergency shift to online teaching and learning was applied across all disciplines to preserve the academic calendar. The aim of this paper is to present a desktop literature review to highlight the implications and the effect of the emergency shift from face-to-face to online teaching and learning among poorly resourced institutions offering nursing programmes in South Africa. Its main objective is to analyse the position of Nursing Education Institutions and their readiness to use virtual teaching and learning platforms in order to achieve its throughput in students' course completion which feeds into the nursing human resources of the country. A systematic literature review from indexed journals, professional organisations, books, and reports on Google Scholar, departmental websites, and electronic libraries will be engaged to draw arguments, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations. The paper also presents the implications of delayed course completion on student nurses, the general public health consumers, and the health system of the country. The conclusions drawn are that the Nursing Colleges in South Africa are generally under-resourced and not ready for online teaching.

**Keywords:** Nursing Education, Nursing College, Historically Disadvantaged Institutions, Coronavirus, Lockdowns

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## 1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the 21st-century global trends require that traditional and conservative approaches to health care delivery including its mode of education be seriously reconsidered if global health needs are to be met (Al-Shorbaji *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, educational institutions are sources of growth, development, and innovation. Such innovation applies to pedagogical practices as well (Ghilay, 2017). In the event of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, most countries were on national lockdown for more than a month (WHO, 2020), thus affecting teaching and learning. The situation required quick responses such as online teaching and learning to ensure learning outcomes and make sure that no learner is left behind (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2020).

According to Tshuma (2016), using educational technology for teaching and learning requires that the curriculum be designed to suit the context. In case of the emergency shift from face-to-face (F2F henceforth), the majority of the educational facilities had no time for curriculum revision since learning had to continue immediately from the announcements of lockdowns (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 2020a). The curriculum planning includes taking into consideration of the content, the level of readiness of both the teacher (pedagogy), the student, the teaching mode, and assessment methods (Tshuma, 2016). Since the lockdown was unplanned, most F2F-based institutions in developing countries had no pre-designed online teaching (Redden, 2020). There are various online platforms available to continue learning and teaching. These platforms allowed students to use self-directed content at their own pace and

space, and real-time teaching involving interaction with the educator (Schleicher, 2020). This posed some challenges for both educators and learners. Online learning has been reported to have its own challenges such as learner's self-regulation abilities, technical limitations for those at various levels of digital literacy, and the teacher's lack verbal questions and feedback, among others (Korinek & deFur, 2016; Sinclair *et al.*, 2015; Ngcamu, 2019). This is against the backdrop that the current health dispensation requires health providers with various skills mix to meet the universal health care coverage (RSA, 2020b).

This paper focuses on nursing programmes offered at the Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) (CHE, 2020), whose original intention was to offer mainly contact or face-to-face teaching offered to nursing students. Such institutions were forced to drastically shift to online teaching during the course of the year. The emergency shift from contact teaching to virtual teaching can be challenging to the novice ICT users (Stone & O'Shea, 2019). Such challenges may imply that a steady approach in the introduction of online teaching is taken for educators to build confidence in the new approach. This requires consideration for blended learning, when online teaching is mixed with physical contact, immediate feedback clarification, and assessments (Wu, Chi, Selvam *et al.*, 2020). This affirms methods should complement each other for the best outcome. The paper seeks to present the implications and effects of emergency online teaching and learning among poorly resourced institutions offering nursing programmes. The paper does not focus on the experiences of teachers and learners in such institutions but undertakes a literature review to present the implications of online teaching and its indirect implications on the learner, the educator, and poorly resourced health facilities in South Africa.

The aim of the paper is to present a desktop literature review to highlight the implications and the impact of the emergency shift from face-to-face to online teaching and learning among poorly resourced institutions offering nursing programmes in South Africa. Its main objective is to analyse the position of Nursing Education Institutions and their readiness to use virtual teaching and learning platforms in order to achieve its throughput in students' course completion which feeds into the nursing human resources of the country. A systematic literature review from indexed journals,

professional organisations, books, and reports on Google Scholar, departmental websites, and electronic libraries was engaged to draw arguments, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations. This paper presents the background, the historical context of SA higher education institutions, the gradual opening of higher education institutions and its implications, the effect on clinical training facilitates, the reality of the effect of practice-based courses and online teaching, the implications on the student, the implications of the COVID-19 lockdown on the health system in SA. The paper closes by presenting recommendations to promote access to learning in nursing programmes.

## 2. Background

Globally, online education has increased in both developing and underdeveloped countries (Ghilay, 2017; Farrell & Brunton, 2020). In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recommended that online teaching and learning be used as an option to save the academic year (UNESCO, 2020). As identified by most universities, online teaching and learning should be the future strategy if Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are to be sustained (Kumi-Yebaoh, Young & Boadu, 2013; Seaman, Allen & Seaman, 2018). The traditional pedagogical practice of face-to-face contact with students during the COVID-19 pandemic had to be quickly reconsidered to stop the spread of the virus. Teaching innovation that includes technology has to be considered. Challenges such as the underdevelopment of ICT technology infrastructure were felt among both developing and developed countries. For example, the OECD (2020) indicated that Spain experienced a 2 percent network shortage compared to 30 percent reported in France and Italy. Such shortages affect online teaching especially in a time of great demand during the pandemic outbreak.

Online education refers to teaching and learning situations in which the instructor and learners are geographically separated and use technological devices for interaction (Seaman *et al.*, 2018). Different concepts are used for online education such as distance education, telemedicine, computer-based training, audio conferencing, e-learning, web-based learning and teleconferencing, among others. Online teaching allows for various advantageous options that are suitable for both learners and educators. According to findings on a study by Ghilay (2017) which concurs with Smith, Passmore

and Faught (2009), learners expressed positive feedback related to flexible and continuous revisit of learning content, personalised learning time, and discipline. Stone and O'Shea (2019) reported that online teaching is suitable for adult first-time students who missed such university opportunities due to various constraints that include family educational background and financial constraints during the youth stage (Seaman *et al.*, 2018; Stone & O'Shea, 2019). According to Ghilay (2017), online teaching is best suited for quantitative courses (courses relying largely on knowledge rather than skills). The programs and courses range from teacher development, administration, law, human resource management, actuarial studies, mathematics, accounting science, and public health, among others (Raza, Qazi, Qazi & Ahmed, 2021; Kumi-Yebaoh *et al.*, 2013).

Most African states are known to be lagging behind in ICT due to infrastructure problems such as poor electricity coverage, lack of bandwidth and network coverage, lack of funding, and poor or no access to internet devices (Kumi-Yebaoh *et al.*, 2013; Sinclair *et al.*, 2015). Accordingly, institutions encountering such challenges tend to drift between traditional and contemporary face-to-face teaching (80%) and virtual (20%) methods-blended learning. In relation to the instructors or lecturers, there are reported challenges irrespective of one being technologically experienced or otherwise (Ghilay, 2017). Smith *et al.* (2009) have reported challenges such as assessment planning and implementation among educators. According to Ghilay (2017), other aspects of the educator's effective and extensive involvement include the teacher's presence to monitor and address challenges experienced by students during learning and assessments. However, it takes skill to manage and manoeuvre between various computerized options. Most lectures fall within the category of those "born-before-technology" which might pose challenges to migrate and navigate the ICT teaching world (Sinclair, Kable & Levett-Jones, 2015). Teacher presence in online teaching is important to enhance student-teacher connection. Whether in theoretical content or practical content teaching, it is reported that the absence of teacher presence can lead to students' boredom, confusion, isolation and feelings of overload (Bharuthram & Kies, 2013; Ngoyi & Malapile, 2018). It is important to note that online teaching does not replace teachers/instructors.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), distance education increased with the growing demand for education

and shortage in educational facilities to accommodate the growing numbers of students and improve economic development (Barteit *et al.*, 2019; Kotouaa, Ilkana & Kilic, 2015). Historically, the first online university in Africa was founded in 1996 by the World Bank to improve cyber education in Africa (Kotouaa *et al.*, 2015). This included countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. According to Kotouaa *et al.* (2015), Ghana has some of the best universities offering online education. In South Africa, universities such as UNISA are known to fully offer distance education worldwide, while Stellenbosch, University of Pretoria and Wits are among those offering online programs (RSA, 2017). Despite the early introduction of online teaching and teaching in the general educational facilities in SA, full implementation of technology among health professions in some HEIs has not been done until the COVID-19 pandemic (RSA, 2017). Various factors impeding the full use of online teaching in some Universities and Colleges of Nursing include personal behavioral factors, environmental limitations and financial implications (Sinclair *et al.*, 2015). To the relief of the ailing African states, the Association of African Universities (AAU), the UbuntuNet Alliance (UA), the West and Central Africa Research and Education Network (WACREN), the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) and the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in Africa are therefore calling for investments to support the development and strengthening of campus networks & research and education networks infrastructure and provision of online/remote teaching and learning platforms/tools for African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (AAU, 2020).

A plethora of studies have been conducted among experiences of learners in secondary and primary schools and universities (Smith *et al.*, 2009; Kumi-Yebaoh *et al.*, 2013; Stone & O'Shea, 2019; Farrell & Brunton, 2020). Among the health-related programs, the online teaching strategy was mostly suitable for registered nurses who are working and could not have time for traditional courses but want to develop professionally (Kumi-Yebaoh *et al.*, 2013; Diab, & Elgahsh, 2020). Online teaching in nursing has been implemented for post-basic courses (Smith *et al.*, 2009). A systemic review conducted by Knebel (2001) focusing on health-related studies among undergraduates included studies conducted between 1989 and 2000. The population under study included nursing graduates, allied health, and medical students on courses such as

health education, epidemiology, family planning, reproductive health, Cholera studies, and diarrheal disease and not undergraduate students' clinical courses. On the other hand, a similar systemic review was conducted by the WHO evaluating online teaching among health professions programs (Al-Shorbaji, Atun, Car, Majeed & Wheeler, 2015). The review included studies from 2001-2013 including both theory and clinical teaching. The review was conducted on studies done in developing and underdeveloped countries which included medicine, dentistry, psychology and nursing outside Africa. Moreover, available studies did not include the effect of the emergency shift to online teaching on nursing programmes in HEIs in SA. There is a lack of literature on the effect of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic among Nursing programmes in SA, thus presenting a gap in Africa, hence the need for this paper.

### 3. The Context of the South African Institutions of Higher Education

The higher education context is rooted on the political past marred by the political apartheid policy (RSA, 2017). The previous political climate and government in South Africa produced two kinds of Institutions of Higher education. The aim was to maintain the status quo of the ruling class in separating the SA population in Whites and Non-whites. This was practiced across all spheres of such as residential divisions, economic and educational institutions, leisure and agriculture, among others (Sehoole, Adeyemo, Ojo & Phatlane, 2019). In the case of post-secondary education, the institutions serving the elite Whites were fully resourced with both human and material resources (Mafukata, 2015; RSA, 2017). While those meant to serve non-whites were under-resourced in all aspects. There are two kinds of post-secondary institutions, Historically Advantaged Institutions (HAIs) and Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs). The HDIs include Universities such as the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, Rhodes, Wits University, University of Pretoria, University of Johannesburg, University of Free State, and the University of South Africa (UNISA). The HDIs include the University of Fort Hare, Limpopo, Venda, Western Cape, Zululand, Walter Sisulu University, Mangosothu University of Technology, Sol Plaatjie and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (RSA, 2017) among others. The HDIs serve a larger population of Blacks mostly from poor economic backgrounds without laptops and smartphones and

ICT skills (Matshotyana, van Rooyen & Du Rand, 2015; Armstrong & Rispel, 2015; Kapepo & Mayisela, 2018).

Historically, SA Nursing colleges were placed under the Department of Health and administered by hospital nursing managers as part of hospital infrastructure (RSA, 2017). This was different from the University nursing programmes which were under the Department of Higher education. More so, Colleges have been categorised to offer free education where students were serving both as workers and students (RSA, 2017). They were paid stipends or given bursaries and were attached to the human resources at hospitals. Nursing Colleges had greater student intake to serve a mixture of middle and lowest-income groups, especially blacks who could not afford university tuition fees (RSA, 2020b). Most of the students at the College could not afford ICT devices, thus affecting migration from F2F to online teaching. This is noted by (Ngcamu, 2019) who reported that HDIs are composed of educators and students who are technological strangers which affect negatively on digital migration. In the case of nursing colleges in SA the level of ICT supply is very low (Mohudi, 2013). Teaching and learning are purely classroom-based with very limited use of other forms of technological teaching.

The Council of Higher Education (CHE) defined emergency remote teaching and learning as an emergency transfer of contact and face-to-face to digital teaching (CHE, 2020). The council went on to spell out conditions of the teaching that it is unplanned but meant to save the academic year by attaining "social justice, student retention, and success, quality emergency remote teaching, learning, and emergency remote assessment". The introduction of ICT in nursing and midwifery has been included in the 2016/17 national Nursing strategic plan (RSA, 2017). However, this is still in the process due lack of funding especially in the Colleges and some HDIs. In case the Nursing Colleges in SA, there are computer work stations but without internet or Wi-Fi access for both students and staff (Mohudi, 2013). As revealed in a study done by Mohudi at a Nursing College in Gauteng, South Africa, there is low usage (37%) of the internet for learning Students at Nursing colleges for many reasons which include access and interest of students. Some colleges do not have enough basic infrastructure such as classrooms, residence, and poor electricity supply plus poor or delayed students' funding (Matshotyana *et al.*, 2015; Armstrong & Rispel, 2015; RSA, 2017). Some state-owned Nursing colleges do not have



websites to market their products. More so, some of those with websites have are not updated. This resonates with findings by UNESCO (cited in Kapepo & Mayisela, 2018) that graduates from developing countries lack ICT skills.

#### **4. Gradual Opening of Higher Education Institutions and its Implications**

With the continuous monitoring of trends of the Coronavirus globally and locally, the government through the directives of the WHO initiated the easing of lockdown regulations. This was to save economic growth, academic calendars, and other activities of life. In South Africa, the Minister of Higher Education, Mr. Blade Nzimande announced the staggered returning of students into university campus (RSA, 2020c). The priority was given to students who needed practical and laboratory training in their final year. Among the health professions, student doctors in their final year were the first priority (RSA, 2020c). The nursing students were on the second scheduled after a month of student doctors' returning. This amounted to further tensions and pressure among the nursing students whose training requires more work-integrated learning than all health professions in South Africa. For example, the Bachelor's degree programme and the four-year diploma in nursing offered by colleges required 4000 hours of clinical hours for the student to complete the programme (SANC, 2005). According to SANC, the students must have achieved 80% of clinical hours to be admitted in the summative assessment.

The Minister of Higher Education in South Africa announced the phased-in opening of Universities and vocational colleges (TVET) to save the academic year (RSA, 2020c). It is concerning that no announcements were made relating to nursing colleges. This lack of information related to Nursing Colleges in South Africa is raising the question of the importance of the profession displayed government. On searching the websites disseminating information of HEIs such as Educonnet (Educonnect, 2020), the National Department of Health and the National Department of Higher Education there is a dearth of information related to Nursing Colleges in SA. Nursing education information is mainly found at Universities offering nursing courses and some private colleges.

The COVID-19 lockdown exposed some management differences between the Universities and

College nursing programmes. Except in nursing programmes offered by Universities, there has been no formal communication and standard set for the return of student nurses in the colleges in SA. The same trend was reported in the USA where academics and health facility leaders took the decision of resuming training to balance the health and life of all concerned (Clinical Education in a Pandemic Era, 2020). Concerns of safety and fear in caring for patients infected with COVID-19 have been noticed among nursing, medicine and other allied health care students and professionals (Clinical Education in a Pandemic Era, 2020). Options such as telemedicine and simulation were used to replace the practical allocation of students in clinical facilities. In England, health care training was provided through E-clinics and other digital platforms (Nursing Practice, 2020). Sadly, the situation is different in Developing Countries, especially in Africa due to a lack of funding to provide digital devices and related resources.

#### **5. The Effect on Clinical Training Facilitates**

The public health sector in South Africa is predominantly nurse-driven, with nurses making up 56% of health care providers (RSA, 2020b). Student nurse training in SA is regulated by the South African Nursing Council as an accreditation statutory body. The council ensures the production of a responsible and professionally proficient nurse by providing guideline rules and regulations to direct nursing education institutions (NEIs) on the planning of both theory and practice for all levels of nurses (SANC, 2005). The student nurse is placed for clinical training at various learning fields in the hospitals, clinics, and other related community resources such as the occupational facilities, environmental health facilities, and others. In order to avoid overcrowding of facilities and ensuring correct and manageable student/professional nurse ratio, the provincial clinical coordinator facilitates the collaborative placement meetings with all provincial or regional NEI's for a fair distribution of students across all learning levels and specialties (RSA, 2017). In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic academic calendars were temporarily halted and later extended to manage the spread of the virus. In South Africa, like any other student, the nurse students have lost nearly 15 weeks from the first announcement (5 March 2020) of the state of emergency in South Africa (RSA, 2020a). The resumption of the learning activities faced multiple interruptions

especially in the clinical facilities when facilities had to be temporarily closed for deep cleaning after a positive case report among staff and patients (Zali, 2020; Moatshe, 2020). Such unprecedented closing of clinical facilities causes shortage of clinical hours needed for course completion by SANC which is the nursing accreditation and regulating body. Additionally, the COVID-19 infections of staff members affected teaching and learning because of the shortage of staff due to occupational sick leaves which negatively affects student supervision. Remarkably, there have been feelings of dissatisfaction and concerns noted from clinical health workers when nurses could teach student at clinics due to workload even before lockdown (Motsaanaka, Makhene & Ally, 2020). Given the extreme shortage of health care professionals in SA, the extended course completion would suggest an increased burden on the nurses in the health facilities. In reality, SA doctors account for 8.6% of health care workers while nurses make 56% (RSA, 2020b).

## 6. The Implications for the Student

Goal-setting is part of human development to measure and monitor strides towards the desired outcome. The same applies to students who join the HEI for learning towards the desired profession in record time. The COVID-19 lockdown disruptions and temporary interruption of learning and teaching had negative implications for some learners in globally and in SA. The most pinch is felt by students in the HIDs where ICT infrastructure is less developed. As reported by the Minister of Higher education in SA, some Universities and Colleges had funding challenges to purchase laptops for students. This brought delays as suppliers were out of stock and the fact the students and academics had to be trained on e-learning and assessments (Mohudi, 2013). The sudden migration to online teaching can be challenging to first-year students who are still transitioning from teacher-led learning at the secondary school level. This is confirmed by a study by Matshotyana *et al.* (2015) who found that first-year students complained of independent learning at the tertiary level.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), institutions of higher education are vital to personal and the country's skills development (Schleicher, 2020). The delayed course completion will affect the country's skills supply and this will further affect

redressing health inequality in both developing and developed countries. In the case of SA, foreign students from countries such as Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Zanzibar registered for specialised clinical courses such as Advance Midwifery and Neonatal care, Intensive care nursing, trauma, and emergency care, among others. These students are offered study permits/visas with limited time in the host country (RSA, 2020a). Delayed course completion will affect the students personally and socially. Some students registered for these courses are on full-time funded study leave with definite time frames. Moreover, in the opening of Level One lockdown in SA, all foreigners entering the country are required to produce negative COVID-19 test results (RSA, 2020a). This holds financial implications for the student and probably the family. Additionally, Schleicher (2020) has acknowledged that remote teaching has robbed foreign students of the basic objective of interacting with faculty, and the intended aim of studying abroad.

After the Presidential announcement of lockdown measures to contain and control the spread of the Coronavirus in SA, alternative ways to continue with daily activities in the education system were sought (CHE, 2020, Schleicher, 2020; RSA, 2020c). Academic and support staff were requested to work from home. The new work adjustment had its pros and cons. While workers were saving from travelling expenses to the offices, there were multiple negative implications, especially in the developing countries. The academic staff, who were digitally naïve, had to be trained remotely on various online teaching platforms and methods such as Blackboard, Microsoft Teams, Google Team, Zoom, and other methods. Working from home also meant adjustment and balancing between work and household activities especially for women (Ngcamu, 2019).

## 7. The Reality of the Effect of Practice-Based Courses and Online Teaching

Nursing is the main pillar of health among all health professionals. In Africa, there is a shortage of doctors and health facilities. In order to address the health needs of the citizens in the country, a primary health care approach is the main approach. This requires qualified and skilled nurses to provide care across the spectrum. The compounding effects as found by Abbasi, Ayoob, Malik & Memon (2020) among medical and dental students at Liaquat College of Medicine and Dentistry, on smooth

shifting from face-to-face (F2F) is the resistance from students which includes device use preference and the practicability of online teaching on clinical/practical courses, especially those involving higher cognitive and emotional aspects of patient assessments.

Nursing is known as science and art of human caring (RSA, 2017). The preparation of a professional includes clinical practice to optimum clinical competence not only on practical skills but on soft skills such as communication, situational assessment, teamwork, decision making and leadership (Baloyi & Mtshali, 2018). The ICT innovation has brought some relief to situations which are difficult to teach because of student numbers at colleges and universities. The use of virtual patients is ideal for teaching and assessment of students. Virtual Simulated Patient Resource (VSPR) is designed for undergraduate health professional students to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes related to non-technical skills in health and patient care (Peddle, Bearman, Mckenna & Nestel, 2019). Peddle *et al.* (2019) reported that there are limitations to VSPR technology such as students' fear, overconfidence, and confusion which can be managed by providing debriefing sessions to students. The same study also confirmed that technology cannot replace human interaction especially, in the health profession. However, such VSPR resources could be a daunting task to purchase because of poor funding in most HDIs in SA.

### 8. Learner-Teacher Missed Opportunities Due to Online Teaching

As indicated above, the radical shift from F2F teaching to online teaching has been decided to save the academic year across educational facilities. However, this carries worrisome implications for both the students and the educator, especially in practical skills. Nurse training is aimed at producing a professionally competent practitioner capable of taking professional and personal judgement. Such soft skills are learned and practised in

physical contact with the educator through the facilitation of reflective learning (Baloyi & Mtshali, 2018). While online learning provides learning opportunities through problem-solving as students search for information to address different study topics, clinical reasoning cannot be left to remote learning without the engagement of the educator (Tshuma, 2016). Clinical reasoning is best learned and assessed during the F2F encounter with the student. The migration from F2F teaching mode for the HDIs is a trial and error situation where both the students and the educator are learning both the curriculum content and mastering or grasping computer literacy. Reflectively, I would call it "on-the-class training" just as much as there is on-the-job training for the educator. The emergent shift also means that assessment methods are also new and need to be mastered (Wu *et al.*, 2020).

### 9. The Implications of the COVID-19 Lockdown on the Health System in South Africa

It is an undeniable fact that the disparity among countries into developed and developing categories reflects the state of leaving and quality of services in such countries. For example, in the case of health and education, developed countries have better resources in both human resources and infrastructure compared to developing countries (Schleicher, 2020). In South Africa, such disparities are found and observed in the w and urban areas. The urban areas have better resources in both human and infrastructure (RSA, 2017; SANC, 2020). The RSA (2017) strategic plan has provided a projected human resources gap in both the public and private sectors in SA, as indicated in the table below (Table 1). The table highlights the state of the shortage of professional nurses in the SA health system. The Nursing Profession is regarded as the backbone of the health workforce in SA (RSA, 2017; RSA, 2020b). There are three nursing categories in SA: Professional Nurses, enrolled nurses, and assistant nurses (SANC, 2020). The Professional nurses are trained in Universities, colleges, and nursing schools.

**Table 1: The Projected Strategic Professional Nurses' Distribution Goals**

	2011	2015	2020	2026
Existing and projected public sector vacancies	45,682	46,603	47,780	49,231

Source: SANC (2019)

The SANC (2019) annual statistics recorded a total of 25,613 student nurses. The number is comprised of 20,822 Professional nurses, 2,917 enrolled nurses, and 1,874 auxiliary nurses (SANC, 2019). This is against the total population of nearly 59 million who require nursing care across the health facilities in South Africa. The effect of the lockdown and challenges on online learning puts the SA health system in a bleak future.

In response to the unprecedented educational facilities closures, the nursing profession accreditation body South African Nursing Council released Circular 9/2020 SANC announcing the postponement of examination to March 2021. The delayed 2020 completions due to rescheduling of the planned examination dates by both the NEI's and the SANC widen the projected human resource gap as indicated by Table 1 above. The delayed resumption of teaching and learning may affect the quality of the professional produced. Lavy (2015) reported findings on a study done among 50 countries from developed and developing countries. The study found that there is a correlation between the instruction time and assessment grades. On the other hand, according to the Department of Higher education, the newly qualified health professionals are required to provide one year of community service at public facilities as an internship program (RSA, 2017). The implications of the delayed completion put health facilities under pressure because there will be a gap between the existing professionals and new graduates.

In essence, training of professionals is mainly conducted to meet the demands of the population at large. This addresses social responsibility and accountability in meeting the health needs of the country (Armstrong & Rispel, 2015; RSA, 2017). The SANC annual statistics indicate that SA Nursing colleges are the largest suppliers of Professional Nurse (80%) including other specialisations such as advanced Midwifery, advanced Psychiatry, Paediatric nursing, and Surgical nursing among others (SANC, 2019b; Parliamentary Monitory Group, 2009). In 2019, the colleges supplied 2,279 Professional nurses while universities supplied 1,324 in 2019 alone. In the case of the unprecedented closing of educational facilities due to COVID-19, the situation is that health facilities will be largely affected because most, if not all Colleges do have access to ICT facilities to shift to emergency online learning and teaching during the lockdown. This

means that they will be a delayed completion across all SA Colleges with only a few University completions to be placed on community services to assist in addressing health worker shortages. Such delays put more pressure on the already strained health services especially in the rural areas where higher staff shortages have been reported (Maphumulo & Bhengu, 2019). Similar shortages of health care workers have been reported in countries such as Botswana (Nkomazana, 2017).

The global proposed Sustainable development goal (SDG) threshold is 44.5 doctors, nurses, and midwives per 10,000 people. In Africa, the average ratio of doctors, nurses, and midwives is around 14 per 10,000, whereas the SA average ratio of doctors, nurses, and midwives is reported to be slightly below 60 per 10,000. The 2030 SA strategic plan reported that the most recent SA nurse composition in the health care human resource is 282 per 100,000. The SA project reveals a Professional nurses shortage of 16,000 for the better-resourced area to meet the 2025 target. This shortage viewed in relation to ICT technical skills in the HEIs paints a bleak health care future especially in meeting the most important SDGs in reducing inequalities and reducing maternal and neonatal mortalities (United Nations, 2017).

## **10. Recommendations to Promote Access to Learning in the Nursing Programmes**

The study from Afrehealth recommended data price reduction across all network providers, especially among poor countries (Afrehealth, 2020). Given the fact that there has been an emergency shift from traditional class roomed-based teaching to online teaching among all nursing education institutions, it is therefore recommended that a curriculum revision be done focusing on teacher philosophy, content, assessment methods, and student-related implications. Blended learning has proven to be suitable especially for clinical teaching where there is open interaction between learners and the educator.

Partnership with businesses in the provision of zero-rated internet access to HEI and learner will assist in bridging the learning gap in developing countries. The introduction of online teaching and learning cannot replace teacher-student interaction, especially in nursing where care is provided through human interaction. This requires careful attention in guiding students to develop non-technical skills

such communication, problem-solving, judgement, and emotional cognitive skills. There are three types of student interaction described by Terry Anderson cited in CHE (2020):

- Student-content interaction marked by student's direct cognitive interaction with content.
- Student-student interaction marked by students' collaborative discussions, sharing and learning from each other.
- Student-teacher interaction marked by full discussion between the student and educator.

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# Exploring the Impact of Technology on the Economy in the Republic of South Africa

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**Abstract:** The impact of technology has been the focus of extensive scientific, economic, and political discussion in South Africa. Technology has always had the potential to both make lives easier and harder. This article gathers information from the economists in higher education institutions in Limpopo Province, and an interpretive qualitative study with a case study was used, along with semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups. The Connectivism and Engagement theories served as the theoretical frameworks underpinning the paper. Purposive sampling was used in this study to select ten participants. This article used the thematic data analysis technique. The results of this study include massive job losses from automation; the effects of digital transformation; lack of appropriate skills; slow productivity growth; and the rising income inequality in most major economies. This paper aims to investigate how technology has affected the economy in Limpopo Province in the Republic of South Africa. The study suggests that the state plays a crucial role in creating an environment that makes technology use and access possible.

**Keywords:** Digitalisation, Economic growth, Impact, Technology

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## 1. Introduction

Since its inception, technology is equally capable of making lives easier and harder. It depends pretty much on how people use it (Paterska, 2021). According to Numba (2017), South Africa is lagging its emerging markets as well as the world's technical and knowledge leaders. Automation and technological advancements, according to Celik, Kose and Ohnsorge (2020), cause a shift in the labour demand away from regular low- to middle-level skills and toward higher-level, more advanced analytical, technical, and management skills. According to Celik *et al.* (2020), workers are not equipped with skills that complement the new technologies resulting in a hindrance to the broader diffusion of innovation within economies. In the same vein, Zhang, Dai and Vasarhelyi (2018) assert that industries require upskilling to remain relevant in the digital world. Similarly, Gray (2016) adds that those working in sales and manufacturing should need technological literacy skills. Holzer (2022) resolves that more workers need reskilling or upskilling whether on the job or in higher education institutions both public and private. In addition, Moritz (2022) claims that employers need to embrace upskilling for their workers to future-proof their business and reduce societal polarisation. Celik *et al.* (2020) assert that education and training have been losing the race with technology.

The province of Limpopo's economy is harmed by technology. At the moment, technological advancement hasn't helped the economy or productivity much (Qureshi, 2020). It has exacerbated income inequality and raised concerns about the possibility of a few "robocalypses" – massive job losses brought on by automation (Qureshi, 2020). According to Qureshi and Woo (2022), employees who can increase their education and training, either on the job or in other settings, can pick up new skills or become better suited to work alongside machines. The fear of people being replaced by machines is cited as a challenge of significant technology breakthroughs in society by Shoki (2019). According to Celik *et al.* (2020), there has been a growth in income inequality throughout the majority of developed countries, and in some cases, such as the U.S., the increase has been very apparent. Technological change can be disruptive by nature and involve challenging transitions. Although policies are essential, they have been slow to respond to the difficulties of change.

Furthermore, Lacity, Khan and Yan (2016) and Liu and Aron (2014) argue that digital technology has transformed the way firms operate globally. Again, Zhao, Wallis and Singh (2015) assert that it has also revolutionised how people communicate and the way governments engage with citizens through e-government platforms. Bukht and Heeks (2017) reveal that "datafication" and "virtualisation" have

been facilitated by digital technologies. De', Pandey and Pal (2020) add that the significance of digital technology has rarely been greater understood than during the 2020 global economic shutdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Digitisation can play a pivotal role in assisting policymakers to spur economic process and employment. Elding and Morris (2018) contend that digital technologies also change how firms do business and interact with their customers and suppliers. Again, due to a continuous digital divide, which includes a lack of digital skills, a lack of ICT infrastructure, and expensive structures, African countries have once again struggled to benefit from the economic success associated with digitalisation (Banga & Velde, 2018; Melia, 2020; Yoon, 2020). According to Counted and Arawole (2016), millennial digital entrepreneurs faced significant difficulties as a result of internet inequality in Africa. Structural unemployment has been one of the negative effects of digitalisation (Rifkin, 2015; Bühler & Hagist, 2017; UNCTAD, 2017; Valenduc & Vendramin, 2017). Furthermore, without separating the effects of individual, company, and government ICT usage in a comparative context, Evangelista, Guerrieri and Meliciani (2014) and Counted and Arawole (2016) suggested that ICT usage, rather than access, is what matters for the economic process.

Technology drives the economic growth of countries, regions, and cities. The impact on productivity more widely across firms has been weak although firms at the technological frontier have reaped major productivity gains. The unemployment rate in South Africa is still among the highest in the world (Bloomberg, 2021). Lack of technical skills is adding to the ongoing skills gap in Limpopo Province, which is negatively affecting employment across various industries in the world. Therefore, a lack of skills may prevent investment, innovation, and business. Once more, the South African economy, and the economy of Limpopo Province in particular, is in decline. The researcher aims to investigate how technology is affecting the economy in Limpopo Province in the Republic of South Africa.

### 1.1 Research Questions

This study answered the following main research question:

- What are the effects of technology on the economy in Limpopo Province in the Republic of South Africa?

#### 1.1.1 Sub-Questions

- How is technology affecting the economy in Limpopo Province in the Republic of South Africa?
- How can the Limpopo Province deal with the effects of technology on the economy in the Republic of South Africa?
- In what good ways might technology boost Limpopo Province's economy in the Republic of South Africa?

### 1.2 Objectives of This Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- Identify the effects of technology on the economy in Limpopo Province in the Republic of South Africa.
- Explore how technology is affecting the economy in Limpopo Province in the Republic of South Africa.
- Determine what can be done to address the effects of technology on the economy in the province in the Republic of South Africa.
- Identify the positive ways that technology can benefit the economy in the province in the Republic of South Africa.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Technology Drives the Economic Growth

The development and adoption of technology have helped societies in increasing productivity, and enhancing overall well-being. The world of technology evolves at a lightning-fast pace and its potential for improving our lives and businesses is exciting (Kang, 2022). Technology has the power to help level the economic playing field in South Africa, facilitating more and better access to money and access to jobs (Moed, 2018). Technology drives the economic growth of countries, regions, and cities. Numba (2017) discovers that harnessing South Africa's untapped potential for innovation could help create jobs and reduce poverty reduction by commercialising better goods and services. Numba (2017) asserts that innovation can play a task to make jobs, through increased productivity, and improve the lives of the poor, through providing



better products and services in South Africa's low growth environment.

## **2.2 Technology' Detrimental Effects on the Economy in Limpopo Province**

Qureshi (2020) asserts that productivity growth has slowed as digital technologies have boomed. The impact on productivity more widely across firms has been weak although firms at the technological frontier have reaped major productivity gains. Dominant firms have acquired more market power, market structures became less competitive, and business dynamism has declined. Qureshi (2020) points out that weak productivity growth and investment have reinforced one another and are linked by similar shifts in market structures and dynamics. Digital transformation affects companies' sales, prices, productivity, and employment, as well as the expected overall direction (Elding & Morris, 2018). The most obstacles to the adoption of digital technologies are the issue of adjusting the organisation of the corporate and also the have to recruit and retaining highly skilled ICT staff. The take-up of digital technologies at the companies is extremely high, with big data and cloud computing being the foremost widely adopted.

## **2.3 Addressing the Detrimental Effects of Technology on the Economy in Limpopo Province**

Governments can lessen the effects of employment losses brought on by automation by making infrastructural investments that will encourage job growth. Additionally, they can invest in human capital by assisting educational institutions in meeting future demands by enhancing the study of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, particularly in primary education (Magwentshu, Rajagopaul, Chui & Singh, 2019). Magwentshu, Rajagopaul, Chui and Singh (2019) make the same argument that new career-development and training initiatives are required to help people reposition themselves for future demands. In order to repurpose and reskill our workforce and help them become better employees and people overall, technology must be utilised. It's also crucial to invest in vocational training. Examples from nations that have successfully made the switch to digital technology demonstrate the importance of providing low-friction access to courses that advance key skills. In the interim, people must embrace lifelong learning and develop

their entrepreneurial, behavioural, and mind-set skills in order to be ready for the workplace of the future. People can take on higher-level work, decision-making, and critical thinking when technology frees them from mundane, repetitive tasks (Magwentshu, Rajagopaul, Chui & Singh, 2019).

## **3. Theoretical Frameworks**

The 21st-century society is demanding a lot of its members due to the rapid changes in the political, cultural, social, economic, and technological situations (Moloi & Mhlanga, 2021). According to Magout (2020), personal computers, social networks and platforms, and cell phones have a massive impact on the culture of society and it is very difficult to live without them. Millions of youths are unemployed due to the growing mismatch between youths' skills and employers' needs, while employers have jobs they cannot fill (Deloitte Global Business Coalition for Education, 2018). If unaddressed, the matter will likely intensify with the speed at which the technology is happening.

Reaves (2019) points out that the kind of skills students require to be prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is different from what they needed 20 years ago. The concepts of lifelong learning and its role in building a knowledge society are on top of the agenda (Moon & Seol, 2017). There is an urgent need to devise new ways of teaching and learning the government prepares workers to live, work and prospers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. New educational technologies become available, and re-thinking conventional practices around teaching and learning are of paramount importance as resources diminish and demand access to better quality higher education increases. Investigating the influence of the technological revolution on skills development and the general preparedness of the working sector in skills development is of vital importance. The Connectivism and Engagement theories are the two theories that were relevant for this study.

### **3.1 The Connectivism Theory of Learning**

The Connectivism theory has to explain the effect of technology on how people learn, live, and communicate (Downes, 2014). The use of technology makes people interact with one another. The Theory of Connectivism combines relevant elements of the many learning theories, social structures, and technology to return up with a robust theoretical

construct for the digital age. Siemens (2006) argues that some knowledge will reside in machines while some will reside in humans. Due to the explosion of technology, learning is no longer in the control of the student; technology performs many operations like storage of information and retrieval which were the duties of students (Kop & Hill, 2008). The challenge which faces lecturers is to design instruction for machines and humans (Downes, 2014). Siemens (2006) believes that learning is more than the general acquisition of knowledge but rather must be structured with the flow of knowledge in the networks.

The theory of Connectivism is justified and relevant for this study because key features of the technology in South Africa came forth with the principles of Connectivism which include, learning and knowledge that rest in a diversity of opinions, learning as a process of connecting specialised nodes or information sources, and learning that resides in non-human appliances, capacity to know more that is more critical than what is currently known among others as suggested by Downes (2014). Again, the theory of Connectivism can be applied in this study because it can connect the knowledge from technology and the knowledge from people.

### 3.2 Engagement Theory

In addition, engagement creates intrinsic motivation in students to learn on account of the nature of the environment created and its activities. As indicated by Magout (2020) technology helps to facilitate all aspects of engagement in ways, which are difficult to attain without technology. This theory is justified and relevant to this study because it uses online discussions, conferencing, emails, chat, and video conferencing, and it can create an environment where engagement among all participants becomes easy and creative. This theory can be applied in this study because workers are engaged in the technology, economy, and development in South Africa. According to Reaves (2019), Engagement Theory is among the new paradigm of theories for teaching and learning in the information age which emphasises the positive role that technology can play in human interaction and evolution. Concerning Magout (2020), this theory is related to the concepts of constructivism, situated learning, and experimental learning as this focus more on collaborative efforts and project-based assignments that end in creative, meaningful, and authentic.

## 4. Methodology

The qualitative approach and interpretivism were adopted as the underpinning paradigm for this study. Qualitative approach allows for interaction with the participants in real settings where they can express their views, perceptions, or beliefs on their actual experiences about exploring the impact of technology on the economy in their settings (Andersson, 2018). Hence the researcher's exploration and description of the phenomenon took place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving semi-structured individual interviews, and focus group discussions. The interviews enabled the researcher to collect data that was soft, and rich in descriptions of economists from higher educational institutions. The population in this study comprised all economists from higher educational institutions in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The selection of the Limpopo Province was based on the locality and accessibility of the research sample by the researcher.

In this study, the researcher employed a case study research design to study the impact of technology on the economy in the Republic of South Africa. The study was limited to two selected higher educational institutions in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The researcher chose to interview participants purposefully, taking into account the experience and knowledge they have about the impact of technology on the economy in the Republic of South Africa. Purposive sampling was used in this study to select the economists in two educational institutions in the Limpopo Province that have the relevant information required. According to Cohen, Morrison and Manion (2011), for a qualitative research study to produce the desired results the sampling population must be relatively small. Ten participants were selected for this study. The semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with five participants from higher educational institution in Limpopo Province. One focus group was organised. The focus group discussion was conducted with five participants from the other higher educational institution in Limpopo Province. This was done for the researcher to get the experiences of economists regarding the impact of technology on the economy in the Republic of South Africa. The results may not be generalised, but the focus is on the in-depth information and data provided by the participants. Participants made informed independent decisions to either participate or not in the research.

## 5. Data Collection

Semi-structured individual interviews and focus-group discussions were used in this study. The semi-structured interview is an exploratory interview used most often in the social sciences for qualitative research purposes (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues (Cho, Song & Lee, 2018). Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with five participants (Senior Economists in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences) from higher educational institution in Limpopo Province and the focus group comprised five participants (Senior Economists in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences) from another higher educational institution in Limpopo Province. The semi-structured individual interview was found to be suitable for this study because it allowed the participants to express their experiences about the impact of technology on the economy in the Republic of South Africa. Focus group discussion was also used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences about the impact of technology on the economy in the Republic of South Africa. With consent, the interviews were captured on audio recorder. The semi-structured individual interview enabled the researcher to identify and develop the themes that emerged from the paper and made comparisons between the various interviews that were used in the study.

## 6. Data Analysis

This study used the thematic data analysis technique. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative analytical method due to its flexibility. The inductive data analysis approach was employed in this paper. As a prerequisite to analysing the recorded data, Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend transcription of audio data, that is, play a recording in very short bursts and type up what the researchers hear. All recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim after the interviews have taken place. The transcriptions were carefully and attentively read and re-read to be familiarised with the content thereof. The transcripts were read several times, and notes were taken, sorted, and organised according to the objectives of the study to identify important themes that emerged from the research. Based on this initial reading, a clarification system for major themes was developed. To protect the identity of the participants and their universities and for ethical reasons, codes

were used. To code the data, the researcher looked for small and large chunks of data that potentially addressed the research question of the study. The data were coded into themes from the patterns, categories, and emerging concepts. The data were coded and categorised so that repeated themes emerged. The researcher reviewed themes by double-checking the coded data and making sure that data were used. The researcher wrote the report that involved choosing examples of transcribing to illustrate elements of the themes. The more frequently a concept occurred in the text, the more likely it was considered a theme of the study.

## 7. Results and Discussion

The following themes emerged from the results.

### 7.1 Theme 1: Massive Job Losses from Automation

Findings from semi-structured individual interviews indicated that workers lost jobs massively from automation. It emerged from the study that the use of machines to do work that was previously done by people was the order of the day. On the contrary, findings from the focus group emphasised the good work the machines are doing. The following participants accounted for their experience as follows:

*UNIA1: "Machines replace workers. Many workers are retrenched due to technology. Those who are dependants of workers suffer."*

*UNIB: "Automation is a challenge to workers."*

*UNIA2: "Workers voice their dissatisfaction because the machines replace them and do their jobs. Although technology is good it is also a threat to workers."*

The responses above indicate that Automation is a problem. Shoki (2019) points out the fear of humans being replaced by machines as the challenge of major technological advancements in society. It appears that workers lose their work due to automation. It is an arguable fact that workers are retrenched and their dependants start to suffer.

### 7.2 Theme 2: Lack of Appropriate Skills

Findings from semi-structured individual interviews indicated that in South Africa, people suffer from

skills deficits that are much more fundamental than the ones people are being urged to address ahead of the technology. It emerged from the study that workers are not equipped with skills for technology. Findings from the focus group revealed that the required set of skills is significant to achieve the goal of obtaining the best results from new technology. To validate the above assertion, participants reported:

*UNIA1 (Economist in semi-structured individual interviews) in higher educational institution): "Technology comes in a hurry and South Africans are ill-equipped."*

*UNIB (Economists in Focus group in higher educational institution): "We lack technological expertise."*

*UNIA2: "Skill gaps exist."*

The aforementioned enlightenments point to the fact that there is a lack of appropriate skills. According to Celik *et al.* (2020), workers are not equipped with skills that complement the new technologies resulting in a hindrance to the broader diffusion of innovation within economies. Banga and Velde (2018), Melia (2020) and Yoon (2020) emphasise digital skills shortages. It is an arguable fact that there shall be no economic growth due to a lack of appropriate skills. Similarly, Gray (2016) adds that those working in sales and manufacturing should need technological literacy skills. Arguably, people need skills to be conversant with technology.

### 7.3 Theme 3: The Effects of Digital Transformation

All the participants agreed that the effects of digital transformation played a vital role in the economy. Findings from the focus group indicated that digitalisation was regarded as a technology shock that affects the main economic aggregates. Findings from semi-structured individual interviews revealed that the adoption of digital technologies brought many challenges to South Africa. The views of the participants were encapsulated in the following statements:

*UNIA2: "Technological change is inherently disruptive. It has profound effects on labour markets."*

*UNIB: "The importance of digital technology has rarely been greater understood than during the 2020 global economic shutdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic."*

*UNIA3: "Technology poses new challenges for the economic convergence. The effects of digital transformation are felt by the South African economists."*

The preceding responses above indicate that digital transformation brought challenges to South Africa. Elding and Morris (2018) contend that digital technologies change how firms do business and interact with their customers and suppliers. Lacity *et al.* (2016) and Liu and Aron (2014) reveal that digital technology has transformed the way firms operate globally. In the same vein, Bukht and Heeks (2017) add that digital technologies have also facilitated "datafication" and "virtualisation". It appears that the effects of digital transformation are felt in South Africa.

### 7.4 Theme 4: The Rising Income Inequality in Most of the Major Economies

Findings from semi-structured individual interviews revealed the rising income inequality in most of the major economies. It emerged from the study that the rising income inequality in most of the major economies was the order of the day. Findings from the focus group emphasised the income inequality that has been rising within many countries. The following participants had to say:

*UNIB: "The widening income disparity that has been observed in numerous businesses."*

*UNIA2: "There is economic disparity across most major economies."*

*UNIA5: "Big economies are not similar."*

From the responses above, it is clear that the rising income inequality in most of the major economies occurred. Celik *et al.* (2020) denote that income inequality has been rising in most major economies. It appears technology has pushed income inequality higher.

### 7.5 Theme 5: Slow Productivity Growth

Findings from the focus group discussion revealed slow productivity growth. Findings from semi-structured individual interviews indicated that productivity growth is very slow in South Africa. It emerged from the study that slow productivity growth exists. In support of the above introduction, the subsequent comments are given as examples of what the participants said:

UNIB: "We cannot talk of production growth."

UNIA2: "It is believed that the economy is in a poor state."

UNIA5: "No one is happy about the productivity growth."

The evidence from participants in the quotations and responses above suggests that there is slow productivity growth in South Africa. According to Qureshi (2020), technological change currently has not boosted productivity and the economic process. Again, Qureshi (2020) argues that weak productivity growth and investment have reinforced one another and are linked by similar shifts in market structures and dynamics. It appears that slow productivity growth is the order of the day.

## 8. Conclusions, Recommendations and Implications

This paper set out to report on the impact of technology on the economy in the Republic of South Africa. An interpretive qualitative study using a case study was used and data collection techniques involving semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions were employed to collect data from the economists of the higher educational institutions in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The two theories that were taken into consideration for this paper to investigate the problem around the impact of technology on the economy in Limpopo Province in the Republic of South Africa were Connectivism and Engagement. Massive job losses from automation and higher unemployment rate negatively impact the development and economic growth in South Africa. It is suggested therefore that workers need reskilling or upskilling whether on the job or in higher education institutions both public and private. High-quality training in high-demand sectors of the economy should be provided.

Again, this article revealed lack of appropriate skills that leads to slow productivity growth which negatively impacts economic growth. It is suggested therefore that workers should acquire appropriate skills for innovation to help create jobs and reduce poverty and those who work in sales and manufacturing should need technological literacy skills in South Africa. The effects of digital transformation should be revisited and relooked into in South Africa and nation-states should align their national workforce

per the demands of a brand new digital landscape. Moreover, slow productivity growth leads to market structures becoming less competitive, business dynamism declining and weak investment in most major economies. Fast productivity growth should be put into practice to have an economic boom in South Africa and the state should provide an enabling environment for technology access and usage. It is suggested therefore that the rising income inequality in most major economies should be reduced in South Africa and industries should require upskilling to remain relevant in the digital world.

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# A Peer Mentorship Programme as a Tool for Adding Value to University Students During and Post the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** In March 2020, the COVID-19 Pandemic surged, disrupting people's lives and livelihoods, globally. This disruption changed many people's quality of life, including that of university students. Most universities had to adapt and swiftly develop new strategies to ensure that teaching and learning continued with minimal disruptions. This study explores the role and impact of a peer mentorship programme on students, both mentors and mentees, during and post COVID-19 Pandemic. The study investigated whether the peer mentorship programme added value to better students' quality of life during the 2020 to 2022 academic years. Data was collected using a questionnaire that included an adapted instrument, namely the COVID-19 Impact on Quality of Life. Results were obtained from 110 students from a faculty at a South African university. The study's results indicate that the peer mentorship programme significantly impacted students, as demonstrated by the standard deviation during the pandemic at 3.21 and 2.77 post the pandemic. As such, peer mentorship is an effective tool that universities may use globally to enhance students' quality of life in general and especially, during adversities.

**Keywords:** Peer Mentorship, Students, University, COVID-19 Pandemic, Quality Life

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## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 Pandemic erupted on 5 March 2020 in South Africa, destroying many people's lives and livelihoods worldwide (Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020; Meine, Strömer, Schönfelder, Eckhardt, Bergmann & Wessa, 2021; Mohamed, Ismail, Shuib & Ali, 2021). The pandemic has proven to have had an impact on people's mental health, as well as their physical health (Asiyah, Kumalasari, & Kusumatawi, 2020; Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020; Repišti, Jovanović, Kuzman, Medved, Jerotić, Ribić & Russo, 2020; Son, Hegde, Smith, Wang & Sasangohar, 2020; Coupland, 2021; Guillasper, Oducado & Soriano, 2021; Meine *et al.*, 2021). During the epidemic, mental health concerns became a focal topic (Gunawan, Aunguroch & Fisher, 2020; Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020; Guillasper *et al.*, 2021; Meine *et al.*, 2021; Mohamed *et al.*, 2021). Students often responded to the epidemic by becoming mentally upset (Silver, 2020; Son *et al.*, 2020; Coupland, 2021).

This disruption changed many people's quality of life (QOL), including that of university students (Guillasper *et al.*, 2021; Konstantinov, Gritsenko, Zinurova, Kulesh, Osipenko, Reznik & Israelowitz, 2021). The implementation of lockdown made students feel lonely, as they were required to isolate

and study online. As such, this resulted in a threat to healthy development and growth, as loneliness is a severe social risk factor (Arslan, 2021; Williams, Townson, Kapur, Ferreira, Nunn, Galante, Phillips, Gentry & Usher-Smith, 2021). Most universities had to adapt and swiftly develop new strategies to ensure that teaching and learning continued with minimal disruptions. Universities should be welcoming and caring institutions, that create an environment that is respectful and safe for learning, embrace diversity, and foster a sense of belonging (Coupland, 2021). Some Universities use various support systems to assist students in transitioning from high school to university. Peer mentorship programmes may be one of the forms of intervention used to assist students during the transition stage (Terrion & Leonard, 2007; Collings, Swanson & Watkins, 2014). Coupland (2021) also indicates that mentorship may be used for connection purposes, especially for students who felt lonely during the pandemic and the lockdown. Similarly, Ding and Yao (2020) posit that peer education intervention can significantly reduce anxiety and depression.

The emergence of the COVID-19 Pandemic inspired a few authors to conduct empirical studies on the impact of the pandemic on the students' QOL (Ding & Yao, 2020; Satpathy & Ali, 2020; Algahtani, Hassan,

Alsaif & Zrieq, 2021; Williams *et al.*, 2021). Algahtani *et al.* (2021) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia to examine the predictors of the QOL during the first wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Their study found that the pandemic harmed students' physical and psychological health and suggested that community-based interventions be put in place to mitigate the adverse effects and enhance the health and QOL of the general population in Saudi Arabia (Algahtani *et al.*, 2021). However, specific interventions were not specified. Williams *et al.* (2021) identified effective interventions that may be used to reduce social isolation and loneliness due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Through systematic analysis, they found that psychological therapies, such as mindfulness, lessons on friendship, robotic pots, and social facilitation software may be effective interventions. Furthermore, they found that facilitated communication between peers may be an effective intervention, which involved cognitive or educational components (Williams *et al.*, 2021).

Ding and Yao (2020) conducted a study in China and found that peer education intervention can significantly reduce anxiety and depression in adolescents and improve sleep quality. The study was not limited to university students only. However, these studies did not assess the impact of peer mentorship in improving students' QOL during and post the pandemic. The available literature on peer mentorship in university settings focuses on the formation and impact of peer mentorship programmes (Fowler & Muckeart, 2004; Budny, Paul & Bon, 2006; Collings *et al.*, 2014), the types of mentorship programmes (Coupland, 2021), and the qualities of the peer mentors (Terrion & Leonard, 2007).

Coupland (2021) studied several types of student mentorship programmes that might be utilized to manage mental health concerns caused by COVID-19. In their study, Collings *et al.* (2014) conducted a literature review of peer mentorship programmes in higher education and found that these papers mostly used quantitative methods to evaluate the peer mentorship programmes relating to students dropout rates and performance grades. These papers indicated that peer mentorship positively affected student retention and academic achievement (Budny *et al.*, 2006; Collings *et al.*, 2014). In contrast, Fowler and Muckeart (2004) found no significant difference in performance when comparing the performance of students who participated in the peer mentorship programme and those who did not.

Terrion and Leonard (2007) conducted a literature review to identify the characteristics of the student peer mentors in higher education; their study was aimed at valuable characteristics that needed to be considered by the university peer mentorship programme coordinator when recruiting peer mentors. They found a taxonomy of five prerequisites for the student peer mentor characteristics that support the career-related function and eight that support the psychosocial function (Terrion & Leonard, 2007). These eight psychosocial functions include communication skills, supportiveness, trustworthiness, interdependent attitude to mentoring, mentees and program staff, empathy, personality match with mentee, enthusiasm and flexibility (Terrion & Leonard, 2007). Peer mentorship may also assist students in dealing with loneliness and depression, which students usually experience during the transition stage (Fisher & Hood, 1987, 1988; Collings *et al.*, 2014). With the surge of the COVID-19 Pandemic, these negative life experiences usually experienced during the transition worsened, as students were also required to isolate themselves. As such, students required social support to mediate these negative experiences.

Peer mentorship forms part of social support for university students, and it would be interesting to investigate whether students, who were and are still involved in the peer mentorship programme, have a better quality of life. Cai and Jin (2021) and Mohamed *et al.* (2021) posit that social support is one of the coping strategies that may be used to improve the students' well-being. Similar results of improved QOL and well-being of mentees were noted in the study conducted in the academic teaching hospital in South Carolina (United States of America), where a peer mentorship programme was used to improve the disease self-management and quality of life of mentees (Williams, Hyer, Viswanathan, Faith, Voronca, Gebregzaibher, Oates & Egede, 2018). Williams *et al.* (2018) found that mentees improved in the health-related quality of life, and also decreased their anxiety and depression after completing the peer mentorship programme. It should be noted that Williams *et al.* (2018) limited their study to African American women with Lupus.

As such, available literature has its limitations on the impact of peer mentorship as a tool for adding value to students and their quality of life during and post the COVID-19 Pandemic era, Thus, justifying the need for this study. The rest of the paper will be



organised as follows: section two will include the theoretical framework applied in the study. Section three includes the literature review. Section four will delineate the material and methods applied in the study. Section five presents the results of the study. And the discussion of the results as linked to the literature is included in section six. Lastly, Section 7 provides the conclusion of the study.

### **1.1 Research Purpose and Objectives**

This study explores the peer mentorship programme role and its impacts on mentors and mentees during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic. The secondary objectives of the study are:

- To determine if the peer mentorship programme enables students to have a better quality of life during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- To evaluate the peer mentorship programme's impact on students' quality of life.

Furthermore, the study also aims to answer the following research questions:

- Is peer the mentorship programme adding value to the students' quality of life?
- To what extent did the peer mentorship programme add value to the students' quality of life?

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 A Quality-of-Life Theory**

The Quality-of-Life (QOL) theory was derived from Abraham Maslow's human developmental perspective, and quality is related to progressive satisfaction of a hierarchy of needs (Sirgy, 1986). Individuals in developed societies are primarily concerned with the higher order of needs, such as social, esteem, and self-actualization. Those in less developed societies are primarily concerned about the lower order needs, such as biological and safety-related needs. As such, QOL is defined "in terms of the hierarchical need satisfaction level of most people in society" (Sirgy, 1986:229). Moreover, Sirgy (1986) posits a positive relationship between the satisfaction of needs and the QOL. Therefore, when needs are met, then these might result in an improved QOL. In relation to institutions, it is argued that institutions

exist to serve and enrich human needs within the society and improve QOL (Sirgy, 1986). Thus, universities are institutions within a society that must serve students to enrich these students' quality of life (Marullo & Edwards, 2000).

The QOL theory has been used in multiple disciplines to measure variables within given settings. For example, in economics, Fox (1973) constructed the QOL in relation to total income and how monetary values affect individuals' behaviour, time, and QOL. In marketing, the QOL theory was applied to study the value a marketing programme had as well as the effect it had on long-term satisfaction (Sirgy, Samli & Meadow, 1982; Sirgy, Morris & Samli, 1985). While in the ecology discipline, QOL theory addresses environmental issues, and how the environment affects human QOL and how humans interact with the environment (Bubolz, Eicher, Evers & Sontag, 1980). In the public health discipline, the QOL theory is mainly used to assess individuals' needs. Lastly, in the community psychology discipline, the QOL theory is used in studies related to the provision of resources through improving the well-being of communities (Sirgy, 1986).

The QOL theory was applied in this study to address the research objectives of evaluating the impact of the peer mentorship programme, as a tool to add value to students' quality of life. The theory is appropriate for the study as it addresses issues similar to those studied in the public health discipline of assessing individual needs and satisfaction, especially since the study questionnaire included questions that addressed mental challenges and health issues. Furthermore, the community psychology discipline applied the QOL theory to assess communities' well-being. Thus, this speaks to the study as the students' well-being was assessed and evaluated using the COV-19 – Impact on Quality-of-Life instrument.

## **3. Literature Review**

People throughout the world have been dealing with a variety of difficulties and uncertainties because of the COVID-19 Pandemic for more than two years, especially in the first few months of 2020, when the COVID-19 Pandemic was at its peak. Significant changes and safeguards were implemented to guarantee that people's lives were saved and safeguarded. Some tactics included social distancing and instituting a work-from-home policy (Khan, Sultana,

Hossain, Hasan, Ahmed & Sikder, 2020; Mahamid & Bdier, 2020; Yustika & Widyasari, 2021). This meant studying from home for university students as most colleges had to transit from face-to-face teaching and learning techniques, to online ways of teaching and learning (Asiyah *et al.*, 2020; Mahamid & Bdier, 2020; Was & Greve, 2021; Meine *et al.*, 2021; Yustika & Widyasari, 2021; Guan, Tavitiyaman, Ren, Wang & Hong, 2022). As a result of the social alienation, students were forced to separate and stay at home, which was difficult (Asiyah *et al.*, 2020; Mahamid & Bdier, 2020; Yustika & Widyasari, 2021). Because humans are social creatures, the term "social distancing" confused everyone (Asiyah *et al.*, 2020; Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020; Yustika & Widyasari, 2021). These difficult conditions caused stress, anxiety, fear, rage, despair, and other mental health concerns (Asiyah *et al.*, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2020; Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020; Mahamid & Bdier, 2020; Rogowska, Kuśnierz & Bokszczanin, 2020; Son *et al.*, 2020; Cai & Jin, 2021; Konstantinov *et al.*, 2021; Meine *et al.*, 2021; Mohamed *et al.*, 2021; Yustika & Widyasari, 2021; Hoferichter & Steinberg, 2022). This uncertain scenario, in which the entire world's population struggled to adjust to the new normal, also tested the quality of life of university students (Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020). Similarly, Mahamid and Bdier (2020) contend that vital qualities, such as resilience and social skills may help to treat psychological impairments, such as stress, depression, anxiety.

### 3.1 Peer Mentorship

During the pandemic, everyone, including university students, were isolated because of the lockdown. Literature shows that certain university students developed mental health issues due to the isolation (Coupland, 2021; Khan *et al.*, 2020; Meine *et al.*, 2021; Mohamed *et al.*, 2021; Hoferichter & Steinberg, 2022). Coupland (2021) thus studied several types of student mentorship programmes that might be utilized to manage these mental health concerns caused by COVID-19. Peer mentorship must be focused on and communicated to individuals who desire to engage to be successful, as research shows that structured peer mentorship programmes give better academic help (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014; Coupland, 2021).

Mentoring is common in everyday life and can occur between children, adults, and peers (Smith, 2017; Coupland, 2021). There are many different types of mentorship programmes and approaches; as per

Coupland (2021), there are Cross-Age Mentorship, Adult-Youth Mentorship and Community Based Mentorship Programmes. In addition, Terrion and Leonard (2007) indicate two forms of mentorship, namely, traditional and peer mentorship. In traditional mentorship, there is a hierarchical relationship, where a mentor is older and more experienced individual, as compared to the mentee. Whilst peer mentorship is considered a better and more valuable alternative than traditional mentorship because mentors are roughly the same age, have more experience and can provide task and psychological support (Terrion & Leonard, 2007; Angelique, Kyle & Taylor, 2002; Kram & Isabella, 2017). Interestingly, Terrion and Leonard (2007) note that these forms of peer mentorships (traditional and peer) offer similar psychosocial functions in a relationship, such as confirmations, personal feedback, emotional support, friendship, acceptance, counselling, and role modelling. As such, the study will not dwell much on the form of peer mentorship definition.

The study's advantage pertains to peer mentoring at universities, which contains features of several of the previously stated kinds of peer mentoring. According to the literature, most students who participate in peer mentoring improve their academic performance and appreciate their ties with their peers' mentors and other mentees (Weiss, Harder, Bratiotis & Ngyuen, 2019; Coupland, 2021). Mentorship effectively motivates young people by teaching them skills, listening to their ideas, and building a sense of belonging (Coupland, 2021). Although this could not be confirmed by a study conducted by Coupland (2021), while peer mentoring is primarily intended to assist the mentee, it also benefits the mentor (Nabors, Poteet, Blankemeyer & Kamphaus, 2019; Coyne-Foresi & Nowicki, 2021). Improved academic achievement, good behaviour, and psychological and social consequences are some advantages (DeWit, Wells, Elton-Marshall & George, 2017). Peer mentoring may reduce negative risk behaviours, while increasing favourable ones (Douglas, Jackson, Woods & Usher, 2018; Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014; Coupland, 2021).

Literature shows that peer mentoring is an effective intervention method for encouraging healthy youth development (Haddock, Weiler, Lee, Henry, Lucas-Thompson, Zimmerman, Krafchick, Fredrickson, Yetz & Youngblade, 2020; Coupland, 2021). According to Karcher (2014) a peer mentoring programme

should focus on youth development by establishing a close relationship between the mentor and mentee. According to Karcher (2014), the mentor should provide empathy, gratitude, and attention to the mentee. There should be distinctions between mentor and tutor positions, as the mentees frequently anticipate their mentors fulfilling the role of tutor, which should not be the case. Social support, as a form of peer mentorship, can assist students in coping with the new environment and buffer the transition's adverse effects (Collings *et al.*, 2014), which might also add value and improve the university students' quality of life.

### 3.2 Quality of Life

COVID-19 affected people's quality of life, especially the youth who are prone to adverse psychological problems, such as anxiety and depression (Ding & Yao, 2020). In Satpathy and Ali's (2020) study, students' anxiety, sorrow and stress levels during the COVID-19 outbreak revealed that depression was widespread in about 43% of the students. The causes of depression were mental stress, career challenges, negative psychology, the economic slump, financial difficulties, future life, social unhappiness, life satisfaction, and rescinded job offers. Similar results were also reported in Bangladesh, with results indicating that 28.5% of students indicated being stressed, experiencing anxiety 33%, and suffering from depression 42.92 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic (Khan *et al.*, 2020).

In the United States, Son *et al.* (2020) conducted a study to assess the effects of COVID-19 on the mental health of college students. Their study indicated students' increased stress, anxiety, and depression levels with 71% of the participants indicating anxiety. In Poland, 65% of students who participated in the study reported having general anxiety disorders, while 56% indicated a high level of perceived stress (Rogowska *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, in Germany, Ravens-Sieberer, Kaman, Erhart, Devine, Schlack & Otto (2021) completed a study to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on health-related quality of life in children and adolescents. They found that the pandemic negatively affected children and adolescents, increasing their mental health problems, anxiety and depression. As such, the student's quality of life is also negatively affected. Similar findings were reported by Ding and Yao (2020), who suggested interventions to mitigate these problems.

Due to issues of mental health affecting QOL, Repišti *et al.* (2020) developed a COVID-19 – Impact on Quality of Life (COVID-19-QoL) scale to measure the perceptions of the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on QOL. They then tested the scale through clinical samples and trials and found a high internal consistency and a moderate to strong positive correlation among participants' scores in different items. Repišti *et al.* (2020) study was limited to clinical and non-clinical samples but not focused on or administered to university students. As such, it is evident that the COVID-19 Pandemic had a negative impact on student's mental health and wellbeing, negatively affecting the QOL of university students. However, there is no available literature indicating the COVID-19-QoL instrument for measuring the quality of life of university students participating in a peer mentorship programmes.

## 4. Material and Methods

The study is quantitative in nature and the empirical study was carried out in May 2022, involving participants of the peer mentorship programme for the 2020 to 2022 academic years. A survey questionnaire was used to perform the study, which included the Business and Economics Faculty students from a South African university. The data was collected using the adopted COVID-19 – Impact on Quality of Life (COVID-19-QoL) instrument by Repišti *et al.* (2020) and included additional questions.

### 4.1 Participants

The population and sample of the study were first-through third-year students who were part of the peer mentorship programme for the 2020 to 2022. Students were sent the questionnaires through email. Random sampling method was applied as all students who participated in the peer mentorship during the period were sent an email. Therefore, all students have equal opportunity to participate. A sample of 110 students completed the questionnaire correctly and their submissions were collected and analysed, the students were assured that their participation was voluntary, that anonymity would be upheld in the study because their student numbers and names were not collected, and that their responses would be confidential and used only for research purposes and to improve the peer mentoring programme. This study was approved and received ethical clearance from the university where it was conducted, and the ethical number is SAREC20220414/04.

## 4.2 Procedure

The questionnaire was delivered via a Google Form, and students had to fill out a consent form before completing the questionnaire. Students were asked to select one of five possibilities, each statement that best represented their experience and ideas. Microsoft Excel and the SPSS System were used to analyse static data. The study's researcher first entered data into MS Excel before transferring it to SPSS for Windows, where the proper analyses were performed. To summarize the demographics of the participants, descriptive analysis was utilized. Two additional questions were asked to further determine the impact of the peer mentoring programme on pupils. These modified variables were used to assess the Peer Mentorship Programme's impact on student's lives.

## 4.3 Tools (Measures)

The study used the adapted questionnaire from the COVID-19 Impact on Quality of Life (Repišti *et al.*, 2020). Most of the studies conducted to assess the impact of Covid on student health used the questionnaire as an instrument to collect data (Asiyah *et al.*, 2020; Repišti *et al.*, 2020; Konstantinov *et al.*, 2021; Yustika & Widyasari, 2021; Hoferichter & Steinberg, 2022). The COV19-QoL measure comprises six items that are given on a 5-point Likert scale. The statements address the significant aspects of mental health and quality of life.

## 5. Results

Presented in Table 1 are the demographics and descriptive data of the study's independent variables. From the 128 responses received, 110 were valid responses and used for data analysis to address the research objective and research question. Most of respondents were females (67,3%), age group 21-25 years (53,6%), and mentees (65,5%) were the most participants compared to mentors (34,5%).

Table 2 demonstrates the COVID-19-Impact on life results, with a composite score of 3.21 (SD = 1.44). The results indicate how the students' lives were affected during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The mean score for all six questions demonstrates that students were affected by the Pandemic since the score is above 3.

### 5.1 The COV-19-Impact on Quality of Life (COV19-QoL) was calculated

The results indicate how the student lives were affected post the COVID-19 Pandemic. Table 3 demonstrates the COVID-19-Impact on life results, with a composite score of 2.77 (SD = 1.39). The mean score for all six questions demonstrates that students were affected by the pandemic as the score is below 3. The higher score indicates the more significant impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on students' quality of life.

**Table 1: Demographics and Descriptive Data of Independent Variables (n = 110)**

		Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Female	74	67.3
	Male	36	32.7
<b>Age Group</b>	18-20	48	43.6
	21-25	59	53.6
	Over 25	3	2.7
<b>Role</b>	Mentee - 2020	18	16.4
	Mentee - 2021	18	16.4
	Mentee - 2022	36	32.7
	Mentor - 2020	6	5.5
	Mentor - 2021	8	7.7
	Mentor - 2022	24	21.8

Source: Author

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Covid-19 Quality of Life – During Pandemic**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
During Pandemic (2020 and 2021) – I think my quality of life was lower than before	3.27	1.333
During Pandemic (2020 and 2021) – I felt that my personal safety was at risk	3.44	1.493
During Pandemic (2020 and 2021) – I felt more tense than before	3.60	1.363
During Pandemic (2020 and 2021) – I think my mental health had deteriorated	3.06	1.479
During Pandemic (2020 and 2021) – I think my physical health may have deteriorated	2.88	1.425
During Pandemic (2020 and 2021) – I felt more depressed than before	3.00	1.574
<b>COVID-19-QoL Scale Total</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>1.44</b>

Source: Author

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Covid-19 Quality of Life – Post Pandemic**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Post Pandemic (2022) – I think my quality of life is lower than before (2020 and 2021)	2.53	1.32
Post Pandemic (2022) – I feel that my personal safety is at risk	2.70	1.37
Post Pandemic (2022) – I feel more tense than before (2020 and 2021)	2.88	1.30
Post Pandemic (2022) – I think my mental health has deteriorated	2.87	1.50
Post Pandemic (2022) – I think my physical health has deteriorated	2.75	1.45
Post Pandemic (2022) – I feel more depressed than before	2.87	1.43
<b>COVID-19-QoL Scale Total</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>1.39</b>

Source: Author

**Table 4: The Influence of Peer Mentorship Programme on Students Quality of Life**

	To a large Extent	To a lesser Extent	Not at All	N/A	Total	Relevant Total
Influence – Mentorship During Covid – Quality Life	34	24	9	43	110	67
%	51%	36%	13%			
Influence – Mentorship Post Covid – Quality Life	38	31	21	20	110	90
%	42%	34%	23%			

Source: Authors

Table 4 presents the results of the influence the peer mentorship programme had on students. Overall, most of the students (87%) who were part of the peer mentorship programme during the pandemic indicated that the programme influenced their quality of life, with 51% indicating that the influence of the peer mentorship programme was material. The students who selected the N/A option

were not part of the peer mentorship programme during 2020. Hence, the relevant participants for the "during" pandemic group were 67 students, as indicated in the last column of Table 4.

From the total of 110 students who completed the questionnaire, 20 students selected the N/A option, as these students did not participate in the peer

mentorship programme post the pandemic in 2022. Of the ninety students who participated, most of the students (76%) indicated that the peer mentorship programme influenced their quality of life. At the same time, 42% of these students indicated that the influence was to a large extent.

## 6. Discussion

The study evaluated whether the peer mentorship programme enabled students to have a better quality of life during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic. Furthermore, the influence and value of peer mentorship on students' quality of life were also analysed.

When comparing the results during and post the COVID-19 Pandemic, it becomes clear that the pandemic had a greater impact on students' quality of life during the first year of the pandemic. These are similar results as per literature (Guillasper *et al.*, 2021; Konstantinov *et al.*, 2021). Students felt more tense, and their mental health deteriorated, and were more depressed and their physical activity also deteriorated. These are similar findings noted in literature (Sim & Chua, 2004; Asiyah *et al.*, 2020; Maheshwari & Jutta, 2020; Repišti *et al.*, 2020; Son *et al.*, 2020; Coupland, 2021; Guillasper *et al.*, 2021; Meine *et al.*, 2021).

Post the pandemic, the result of the study indicates that the significance of the COVID-19 Pandemic on students' quality of life decreased. The total mean was 2.77, thus this is a significant improvement as the impact on students QOL has decreased, compared to results during the pandemic of 3.22. The results indicate that students felt less depressed and intense post the pandemic when compared to the 2020. The results also indicate that students' mental health improved compared to 2020 and 2021.

The researched added two more questions to the adopted instrument to evaluate whether the peer mentorship programme had an impact on students' quality of life during and post the pandemic. Eighty seven percent (87%) of the students indicated that the peer mentorship programme had a significant influence in their quality of life during the pandemic. Whilst 76% of the students indicated that the peer mentorship had a significant influence on their quality of life post the pandemic. This study concurs with previous studies (Fisher & Hood, 1987, 1988; Collings *et al.*, 2014; Williams *et al.*, 2018). That peer mentorship programme is an effective and acceptable

tool, as it adds value to both mentors' and mentees' QOL. The results are also aligned with the Quality-of-Life Theory which suggests that institutions exist to serve and enrich human needs within the society and improve QOL (Sirgy, 1986).

## 7. Conclusion

The study indicates that the peer mentorship programme is an effective tool for adding value to university students. The result of the study demonstrates that the peer mentorship programme significantly influenced students' quality of life during and post the COVID-19 Pandemic. The COV19-QoL scale results also indicate that students' quality of life was positively affected during and post COVID-19. Therefore, the study recommends that other universities implement peer mentorship programmes to ensure that the students receive the required social support to remain resilient, especially during adversities.

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# Assessing Public Transport Policies for Driver Fitness in the South African Road Transport Context

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**Abstract:** This paper analyses the public transport policies with specific reference to driver fitness. The main purpose of this article is to sketch a holistic policy cycle through a historical overview of policy developments. The complexities of developing policy from the governmental to an operational level were attended to. Directions towards online booking systems and electronic drivers licence cards were established by identifying significant features in the formation of transport policy from the early 1800s to 2022. Primary information was acquired from licensing and road traffic legislation, policy circulars issued by the national Department of Transport as well as official eNaTIS guidelines. The literature found that: (1) the provision of driver fitness and related licensing and transport services remains a crucial challenge for the government, and (2) there is a need for online booking systems and digital driver's licences in all provinces. In essence, the literature review specifies how the history of public transport policies shaped the future of driver fitness in a predominantly new online environment. The primary limitation of this study was that it is a policy review, relying heavily on a document analysis to set the scene for future research. The research results are useful in the legislative environment, law enforcement practice fields, and in scientific research in this area.

**Keywords:** Driver fitness, Driving licence, eNaTIS, Public transport, NRTA

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## 1. Introduction

Lengthy queues, unjustifiable delays and incorrect details on driver's licence cards are all familiar sights at Driving Licence Testing Centres (DLTCs). Moreover, supervision and authorisation processes seem not to be optimised for the effective issuing of driver's licences. In addition, internal procedures are often not aligned with policy amendments. Although good legislation does not necessarily deliver good services, the question is how transport policies have contributed to the current challenges associated with issuing driver's licences in South Africa.

This paper presents a historical overview of how public transport and driver fitness policy developed in South Africa from 1843 until 2022. The historical overview includes international highlights before developments in South Africa and underscores significant periods in the development of driver licence related matters. The historical overview is presented in chronological order: the first commissions of inquiry in the transport environment; significant developments in the 1980s and 1990s; towards sophisticated transport and traffic information systems after 2000 including 2013 when customer and customer satisfaction became a point for concern at the DLTCs. Trivial matters that do not

necessarily affect political policy are embraced to present a holistic overview of operational issues at the selected case.

## 2. Research Methodology

The study adopted a non-empirical research methodology. The utilisation of documents as a data-collection technique included various written communications that contributed towards the study. From a qualitative perspective, legislation, relevant Acts, Regulations and Government Gazettes, official documents, such as eNaTIS policy documents and audit reports were consulted. Internet searches provided valuable information about the real-live context of driver fitness in South Africa. The content was verified against at least two other sources before it was acknowledged in the relevant context.

## 3. Global Overview (The Early Years)

The world's first license to drive a motor vehicle was issued in 1888 to Mr Karl Friedrich Benz upon his request after the residents complained about the noise and smell his motor vehicle emitted. Upon approving his request, Mr Benz, the inventor of the modern automobile, received written permission from the Grand Ducal authorities in

Germany to operate his vehicle on a public road. Karl Benz's request for a written driver's permit was the initial point for issuing driver's licences globally (Lutteroth, 2008).

In the years that followed, authorities globally required driver licenses for horseless carriages. In the United States of America (USA), the mayor of New York wrote a letter in 1899 granting permission to operate a horseless carriage up to 6mph on city streets. In the same year, Chicago required driver certification to operate vehicles powered by steam. In 1900 in Washington D.C., Ms Anne French claimed her early spot in the driver's seat when she became the first female driver to acquire a licence to operate a four-wheeled vehicle. In this period, licenses were required in most cities in the USA. In 1909, an age restriction to acquire a license was set at 18 years in Pennsylvania, while the city of New Jersey required a simple written examination and a road test for drivers from 1913. In 1954, South Dakota became the last city in the USA to require driver's licenses (Pirie, 2004:67). Photographs first appear on California's driver licenses in 1958 (Automobile, 2012; Tate, 2013).

Within the German Empire, Prussia introduced compulsory licensing in 1903 upon passing a test on mechanical fitness, and in 1910, the German Imperial Government mandated the licensing of drivers on a national scale and established requirements for yard tests and driver education. In the United Kingdom, mandatory licensing for drivers was legislated on 1 January 1904 with the implementation of the Motor Car Act of 1903. Every car owner in the United Kingdom had to register his vehicle and identify the driver of the vehicle at the Local Government Authority. Drivers needed to renew their licences annually. Compulsory testing was only introduced in 1934, with the passing of the Road Traffic Act of 1935 of the United Kingdom. Until the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, local authorities followed the practice of issuing licenses to drive motor vehicles on an *ad hoc* basis (Cerveroa & Golubb, 2007: 445-446).

#### **4. Early Road Management in South Africa**

In South Africa, the first road authority known as the Central Road Board, was established in 1843 under the chairmanship of Mr John Montagu. The Board was primarily concerned with the construction and

maintenance of rural roads, and one of the first tasks undertaken by the Board was the construction of a hard road over the Cape Flats, from Cape Town to Eerste River. The road was constructed and completed in 1845, and was named after the chair of the Board, Mr Montagu. The Montagu Pass was opened for traffic in December 1847, and in 1848 a tollgate was established. In 1902, the first motorcar driver drove through the pass (Lishman, 2013:11-12).

#### **4.1 Transportation in South Africa (1843 to 1948)**

During the early years from 1843 to 1925, limited attention, if any, was paid to driver fitness development. By the end of the nineteenth century, motor vehicles were hardly ever seen on the formerly rural roads, because railway transport dominated the transport scene. Before colonial conquest, indigenous peoples had developed their own independent culture and civilisation. Their transport system was well-suited to the type of country and tools at their disposal. Private property was unknown, and transport and travel opportunities were freely shared, even with strangers. But when the colonists began their ceaseless acts of aggression, the African people resisted bravely to defend their traditions and people from enslavement (SACP, 1989:13-14).

At the time of unification in 1910 when Britain ceded political power to the white minority, rail transport was the only effective means of public transportation (Pereira, 2021:60-61). To regulate the railways, the Interstate Commerce Act was passed in 1887 (Janse van Rensburg, 1996:1-8). Before 1910, most road links between towns catered for ox wagons and were comprised primarily of tracks. Between 1910 and the middle of the thirties, motorised vehicles started to replace ox wagons. With the growth in the motor vehicle population, the demand for blacktop surfaces on rural roads has become increasingly real. By late 1920, the great railway construction era in South Africa had reached its end. The rapid development of motor vehicles hurt the railways, making further construction of branch lines economically unviable. By 1925, it was accepted that road transport would be used as far as practically possible (Stander & Pienaar, 2002:2-4).

Following the increase in road transportation, a commission of inquiry, the Road Motor Competition Commission, was appointed by the then Minister of Transport, Mr FC Sturrock, on 21 January 1929 under

the chairmanship of Mr JC le Roux to inquire into and report on challenges relating to road transportation. Competition between road and railway transportation, and its effect on the road and rail services of the South African Railways Administration had to be investigated. Measures to be taken to improve road transportation regulation, coordination and control also had to be reported. The Commission reported to the Minister of Transport on 6 December 1929. It was revealed that road transportation was disordered, unrestricted and uncontrolled. The Commission recommended a fair degree of control over road transportation by proposing the creation of a National Roads Board (Buthelezi, 2014).

Based on the Motor Car Act of 1903 of the United Kingdom, the regulation of road motor transport and mandatory licensing came into being in South Africa with the implementation of the Motor Carrier Transportation Act 39 of 1930, a year after the Le Roux Commission Report. Under this Act, a Central Road Transportation Board and ten Local Road Transportation Boards were established in the then four Provinces of the Union to execute general administrative related matters. Before the Motor Carrier Transportation Act 39 of 1930, there was no control over the conveyance of persons and goods by road. Road transportation in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century was still in its infancy, and the primary objective of the Motor Carrier Transportation Act 39 of 1930 was to provide a system of control over the particular unauthorised road transportation. Regrettably, this legislation also banned many African bus companies and taxis in certain areas. This is how the indigenous people's entrepreneurship, transport and freedom were taken (Buthelezi, 2014).

In 1932, the Act was amended, and control was tightened. Although various amendments to the Motor Carrier Transportation Act 39 of 1930 had been made since 1930, the principles underlying the regulation and control of transportation remained unchanged. In summary, the transportation of persons and goods by a motor vehicle on a public road for reward was prohibited, unless the necessary authorisation had been obtained in the prescribed manner. In 1933 the Act was extended to the then South West Africa territory. By 1941, motor carrier transportation on all the roads was brought under the control of the Motor Carrier Transportation Act 39 of 1930, and more effective control of taxi operations was provided (Janse van Rensburg, 1996:10).

The Apartheid system got solid consolidation in the 1948 White-only general elections. Further developments in the early years included the Page Commission of 1945 and the acceptance of the Transport Coordination Act 44 of 1948. Although these two highlights affected the transport history of South Africa, they did not contribute meaningfully towards the nature and scope of driver fitness as currently outlined in the NRTA of 1996. The Page Commission of inquiry into road transportation conditions was appointed on 17 October 1945 under the chairmanship of Major SM Page to provide recommendations on the coordination and further regulation of transport operators. Following the Page Commission, the Transport Coordination Act 44 of 1948 was promulgated to stipulate the objectives and tasks of the National Transport Commission as mainly to promote and co-ordinate the development of transport in the Union (Pirie, 1993:70). By this time, Africans lost ownership and control of transport businesses to the white minority (Sekhonyane & Dugard, 2004:12).

#### **4.2 From No Competition to Deregulated Road Transportation (1960 to 1977)**

On 5 March 1965, yet another commission of inquiry, the Commission of Inquiry into the Coordination of Transport in South Africa was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr MD Marais to investigate and report on how the different modes of transport could promote the development of the national economy. The Commission published its report on 30 January 1969. During this period, spatial planning under the Apartheid laws impacted directly on the public transport provided by buses and trains. As a result, public transport became increasingly expensive for commuters (Buthelezi, 2014).

The commission under chairmanship of Mr A van Breda was appointed on 21 July 1975 to inquire into, consider and report upon the Road Transportation Bill that provided for a system of control for the so-called unauthorised taxi industry. The Van Breda Commission rejected free competition in the public transport arena on the grounds that it could lead to an oversupply of services in urban areas and an undersupply in outlying areas. The Van Breda Commission recommended a regulated competition. This led to the enactment of the Road Transportation Act 74 of 1977, which replaced the Motor Carrier Transportation Act 39 of 1930 (Sekhonyane & Dugard, 2004:14).

The Road Transportation Act 74 of 1977 was promulgated on 1 January 1978 to control certain forms of road transportation. Under the Road Transportation Act of 1977, concessions were made to achieve free competition within the road transportation industry. However, although the Act allowed more freedom, it also controlled what may be transported where, and by whom. A road carrier, or a person whose business it was to convey persons or goods for reward, had to apply for a permit at an applicable local road transportation board. A public, private or temporary permit was then issued to the road carrier to allow the transportation of goods on certain conditions (Road Transportation Act, 1977: Sections 1, 12 & 17).

The greatest impact on the history of how public transport and driver fitness policy developed in South Africa was made by European colonial influences like the United Kingdom's Motor Car Act of 1903. During the 1960s and 1970s, colonialism continued to interrupt the internally-driven advancement of indigenous South African communities. For example, the Road Transportation Act 74 of 1977 thus established the concept of 'public permit' that led to what is known today as professional driving permits, as defined in Section 32 of the NRTA of 1996. Hence, the Road Transportation Act 74 of 1977 provided the foundation for issuing professional driving permits to professional drivers as set in Chapter V (Regulations 115 to 127B) of the NRTRs of 2000 published under the NRTA of 1996.

### 4.3 Introducing a Road Transport Quality System (1980 to 1989)

According to Sohail, Maunder and Cavill (2006:179), deregulation in the 1980s was intended to improve access to transport by responding to consumer needs and by providing a variety of services. Meaningful to the historical development of driver fitness in South Africa, was the acceptance of the K53 test manuals in the early 1980s. Complementing the development and acceptance of the driver licence test manuals, the 1980s also rendered the Road Transport Quality System, the White Paper on National Transport Policy of 1986 and the Road Traffic Act 29 of 1989. These developments further laid down the foundation of the European dominated driver fitness scene in use in South Africa.

From 1979 to 1981, proposals for new driver test manuals were invited and assessed by the Department of Transport. The number K53 was

based on the number of proposals submitted and the total upgraded versions during this period. Test number K53, based on the United Kingdom system – known as the Highway Code, was finally accepted as the most suitable way to test aspirant drivers. The system was implemented in January 1992, but it was only later in 1998 that the K53 was officially published in Government Gazette 19571 on 8 December 1998. An amended version of the K53 practical drivers test was compiled in August 2005. The K53 manuals were amended in 2018 (Government Gazette 28446, 2006:1; Wheels24, 2016; Arrive Alive, 2022(a)).

Still in the 1980s, a National Transport Commission was established under the chairmanship of Mr RAF Smith, the then chief director of Land Transport at the Department of Transport, to investigate road, rail, sea and air transport. Realising the need to replace the permit system introduced by the Road Transportation Act 74 of 1977 in which a road carrier permit was required for the conveyance of goods in selected areas, it was decided to introduce a quality control system. The enquiry into the quality control system was done under the banner of the National Transport Policy Study, a sub-committee of the National Transport Commission. After many deliberations, recommendations to implement the Road Transport Quality System (RTQS) were submitted to the National Transport Commission and accepted by Government in 1986. As a result, Section 74 of the Road Traffic Act 29 of 1989 was amended, which required the owner of certain prescribed classes of motor vehicles to be registered as the operator of such a motor vehicle. This requirement was carried over to Section 45 of the NRTA of 1996 and Regulations 265 and 267 of the NRTRs of 2000 to prescribe that the registered owner of a goods vehicle above 3 500kg must be registered as the operator when licensing the vehicle. The RTQS thus sets a direct link between operators of heavy goods vehicles and professional drivers (Sohail, Maunder & Cavill, 2006:179-180). Consequently, DLTCs gained administrative control over the operators and professional drivers who needed to comply with predetermined minimum requirements (NRTA, 1989: Section 74; NRTA, 1996: Section 45; NRTR, 2000: Regulations 265-267; Webster, 2001).

The recommendations provided by the National Transport Policy Study that the National Transport Commission accepted, resulted in the White Paper on National Policy of 1986. Among various

formulated recommendations, the most notable recommendation relating to DLTCs, was the introduction of certain prerequisites for appropriate and sufficient infrastructure at DLTCs, such as driving licence yard test facilities. Government accepted these and other preconditions, and eventually included them in the then Road Traffic Act 29 of 1989 (White Paper on National Transport Policy, 1986: 3-4). The Road Traffic Act 29 of 1989 consolidated and repealed four provincial Road Traffic Ordinances, like the Road Traffic Ordinance of the Province of Transvaal of 1957, to achieve national uniformity within the transport environment. Under the Road Traffic Act 29 of 1989, regulating the registration and licensing of motor vehicles and the drivers thereof, as well as regulating traffic on the public roads, were simplified. Moreover, the economic regulation of the road transport industry was abolished and replaced by the technical regulation of operators and vehicles. The Road Traffic Act of 1989 was eventually repealed in 1996 by the NRTA of 1996.

#### **4.4 Setting the Scene for Driver Fitness (1990 to 1998)**

The Forum on National Transport Policy was established in 1992 and operated until 1995 when it was replaced by the National Transport Policy Review Panel established by the then Minister of Transport. Until the 1990s, various pieces of road transport legislation were a direct response to the resistance struggles of Black people. Therefore, the National Transport Policy Review was initiated as a consultative process to revisit transport policy and formulate a new policy, where needed. This resulted in the publication of the Green Paper on National Transport Policy. Following several consultative sessions and written submissions, the White Paper on National Transport Policy of 1996 was published in September 1996. The White Paper asserted the significance of road traffic and safety, and was used as a point of departure for any discussion on driver fitness. The National Transport Policy outlined the role and responsibilities of the Department of Transport and set out the vision for South African Transport as being to provide safe and fully integrated transport operations and infrastructure. The White Paper recognised the professional driver as at the core of public transport policy development. These elements of the White Paper eventually found expression in the NRTA of 1996 (South African Government, 1996; NRTA, 1996: Chapter IV).

Since the 1990s, a growing body of research has linked transportation to social and economic well-being (Lee & Sener, 2016:148). In line with this trend, the national Department of Transport established a new policy framework for transport in 1996. The foundation of the new policy approach was embedded in the White Paper on National Transport Policy of 1996. To manage driver and road traffic related matters in a responsible and accountable manner, reliable information and data on vehicles, owners, motor vehicle drivers and operators, are required. Information management, specifically the development and implementation of the NaTIS, has consequently been identified as critical to driver fitness. As far as road traffic as a key focus area of transport policy is concerned, the White Paper also recommended that NaTIS be made fully operational. NaTIS was rolled-out nationally during 1997/1998 and replaced the dated Motor Vehicle Registers (MVRs) previously utilised as data capturing and storage systems in the then four provinces, namely: Transvaal, the Cape Province, Natal and the Orange Free State (White Paper on National Transport Policy, 1996). NaTIS included, amongst other modules, a driver fitness module that controlled the management and administration of testing centres; from applications for learner's licences, driver licences and professional driving permits, to administering endorsement of licences. NaTIS was operational for ten years until the advanced electronic version thereof, eNaTIS, was introduced in 2007 (RTMC, 2020).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 was published in the same year the White Paper on National Transport Policy was accepted. The Constitution regulates transport service delivery as the primary pillar of the South African democracy and as the supreme authority in South Africa. Section 85(2)(b) of the Constitution of 1996 mandates the Department of Transport to develop and implement transport policy, including driver fitness and issuing of drivers licences. The mandate places a huge responsibility on the Department to ensure that transport policy development addresses driver fitness needs, such as timeous bookings for learner licence tests, speedy and accurate issuing of driver licence cards and maintaining a high standard of practical driving licence tests. Furthermore, the Constitution identifies transport as a function that is legislated and executed at all three spheres of government (Constitution, 1996: Schedules 4-5).

Following the policy developments, the AARTO Act 46 of 1998 was enacted in 1998 and a pilot phase was introduced in Pretoria in 2008 under the administration of the Tshwane Metropolitan Police Department. In November 2008, the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department also adopted AARTO to manage traffic offences. The AARTO Act 46 of 1998 allegedly aims to promote road traffic quality by providing a scheme to discourage road traffic contraventions, facilitate the adjudication of road traffic infringements and support the prosecution of offences. It is anticipated that should the demerit point system be implemented, the driver licences in question will be cancelled after it has been suspended for a third time, depending on the number of demerit points (AARTO Act, 1998: Section 2; AARTOfacts, 2021).

In South Africa, a driver's licence is an official document that authorises the holder to drive a motor vehicle of a specific class on a public road. Driver licences are issued by appropriately graded DLTCs, managed by municipalities in the local sphere of government under the supervision of the provincial and national Departments of Transport. Until 1997, driver licences were recorded by the Department of Home Affairs in identity documents. Close collaboration existed between the national Department of Transport, provincial Departments of Transport, the Department of Home Affairs and DLTCs to regulate and accurately record driver licences. It was only in 1998, when driver's licences were recorded and issued in a 'credit card' format, that DLTCs ordered driver licence cards directly from a drivers licence card production facility (NRTR, 2000: Regulations 101(2)(a) & 108(5)(a)).

#### 4.5 Minimum Requirements for DLTCs and the Launch of eNaTIS (2000 to 2009)

Minimum requirements for the registration and the grading for DLTCs were published as General Notice 735 on 27 May 2005 in Government Notice 27589 (Government Notice 27589, 2005:3). eNaTIS was officially launched on 17 April 2007. It is a vehicle used by DLTCs to, amongst other functions, record and manage applications for learners and drivers licences. The eNaTIS is a key driver and the operating system for issuing driver licences and recording drivers' road traffic offences (Tasima, 2011; RTMC, 2021). eNaTIS is currently (in 2022) the official national database for all vehicles and driver licences, and stores, records, manages and enforces the requirements

of the NRTA of 1996, the AARTO Act 46 of 1998 and the NRTRs of 2000, as amended. It provides vehicles registration and licensing, and manages and records applications for and authorisations of drivers and learner's licenses. The driver license module on eNaTIS validates the examiners for driving licences, testing centres' details and the appointments for written and practical tests (RTMC, 2020; Arrive Alive, 2022(b); SABS, 2022).

#### 4.6 The Period 2010 to 2019

The eNaTIS drivers licence appointment booking system was fully deployed in 2010 after its launch in 2007/2008 through various pilot project sites. Since the launch of the booking system, the manual recording of test appointments was phased out. All the appointments for driver's licence tests are subsequently recorded on eNaTIS. The electronic booking system was prompted by an increasing need for a standardised, uniform and secure learner and driver licence test appointment system (South African Government, 2022). The online booking system further ensures that the DLTC facilities and examiners are utilised optimally, thus alleviating delayed practical driver tests, which resulted in numerous advantages (Arrive Alive, 2022(c)).

In 2011, the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Transport launched the first computerised Learner's Licence Testing Centre in South Africa. The computer-based licence testing allows prospective candidates to complete their learners' licence tests electronically. The learners' licence tests are administered via computer touch screens which facilitate immediate capturing of the test results on eNaTIS (Tasima, 2013).

With the implementation of computerised learner licence testing in 2011, the learner licence application process was completely automated in selected DLTCs; from the online booking system, computerised completion of the test; and issuing learner licences on eNaTIS. In the same year, the National Planning Commission published the National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP is considered the highest level of summary of the government's overall strategic objectives. The NDP informs all the government departments' Medium Term Strategic Frameworks (MTSFs) and aims to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. Although driver fitness and the issuing of learner and driver licences are not explicitly mentioned in the NDP, the

development and maintenance of an efficient and competitive transport system are listed as one of the key objectives of the South African Government (NLTSF, 2015:5; Government of South Africa, 2022).

In 2013, a minimum service delivery standard for DLTCs was published for public comment in Government Gazette 36520 on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May. The focus of the standard is to prescribe minimum requirements for service delivery to the applicants for learner and driver's licences. The standard aims to streamline customer service that should be rendered in compliance with the *Batho Pele* principles. More significant requirements built into Government Gazette 36520 of 2013 included that DLTCs must sign service level agreements with their relevant provinces and implement complaints management processes (Government Gazette 36520, 2013:4-5).

Customer care at DLTCs is relationship-orientated in that it centres on the interaction between the applicants for driver's licences and the staff. Unfortunately, the provision of driver fitness and related licensing and transport services remains a key challenge for the government in the post-apartheid era. One of the reasons for the challenge is the result of dated and rejected apartheid practices that have led to the majority of the citizenry being placed in largely inaccessible areas. Consequently, DLTCs still reflect the disparities arising from previous patterns of spatial development created by apartheid. Although DLTCs are situated in urban areas, most are situated a distance from rural areas. A significant portion of the rural population is still affected by poor availability and accessibility to these Centres (Department of National Treasury, 2016:117-142).

The National Land Transport Strategic Framework (NLTSF) of 2015 is a legal requirement set by Section 34 of the National Land Transport Act 5 of 2009. It embodies the national five-year (2015 to 2020) land transport strategy. The purpose of the National Land Transport Act 5 of 2009 is to further the transformation and restructuring of the national land transport system. Within this context, the NLTSF guides transport planning and land transport delivery by delineating strategic priorities that include the management of transport information systems such as eNaTIS. More specifically, the NLTSF pointed out that eNaTIS needs to provide reliable and accessible driver related information. This aspect highlighted the need for accurate data capturing at DLTCs. With the acceptance of the NLTSF in 2015,

the trend towards more sophisticated transport and traffic information systems was reinforced (National Land Transport Act, 2009: Sections 1-2; NLTSF, 2015:i).

#### 4.7 Questions Raised and Promises Made (2020 to 2022)

A driver's licence card expires every five years after which it needs to be renewed. In contrast a driver's licence does not expire, meaning that when drivers renew their driver's licence card, they will not be expected to undergo a driver's license test. From 2020 to 2022, more and more motorists asked questions and raised their grievances about the renewal of driver's licence cards with the Transport Minister. It was announced early in 2022 that the driving licence system would be digitised to avoid backlogs. If promises are kept, driving licence cards will soon be phased out and upgraded (Masikane, 2022).

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper aimed to provide a historical overview of how public transport and driver fitness policy developed in South Africa from 1843 until 2022. It became clear that the greatest impact on the history of how public transport and driver fitness policy developed in South Africa was made by colonial influences like the United Kingdom's Motor Car Act of 1903. The historical developments highlighted in the article laid down the foundation of the European dominated driver fitness scene in use in South Africa.

Today, public transport policy-making is executed in various spheres of government. The cascading nature of the transport policy consequently leads to national government policy which is generally broad in nature to provide the reference framework within which additional detailed policy is formulated at the provincial and local government spheres. The responsibility for transport is divided between the three spheres of government. Yet, the colonial top-down policy-making approach in which end-users are excluded from the transport policy-making environment must be replaced by a high level of co-operation. Therefore, a much more responsive system of governance is required to ensure accountability, transparency and responsiveness to the needs of society. The relationship that government has with the citizens, stake-holders and public administrators must be placed at the core of future public transport policy developments.

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# Constructive Alignment in the Learning and Teaching of Economics at a Comprehensive University

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**Abstract:** There are challenges in the process of aligning teaching and learning with assessment methods available, especially in the transformation phase of South African universities. It is believed that there is either an improper implementation of the process of constructive alignment in the Economics modules or improper module design in aligning teaching with assessment. This paper intends to investigate if the lecturers complied with the principles of constructive alignment (CA) as a case study in Economics education at a comprehensive university in South Africa. A qualitative investigation of 13 out of 19 Economics lecturers from four campuses of the comprehensive university participated in three focus group discussions. To these focus groups discussions, an interview guide was designed based on the study. The instructional materials and assessment tasks designed by these lecturers were also analysed by means of a checklist containing important elements of CA. The major findings of the investigation included the following: In most of the Economics modules, objectives were still used; lecturers were not consciously working towards aligning the ILOs/objectives, TLAs and ATs but mostly relied on intuition and rather focused on prescribed content, textbooks and conventional TLAs as a basis for planning their teaching and assessment. Some of lecturers interviewed clearly did not think it was necessary to educate the students in terms of the relevant ILOs or objectives and did not use assessment criteria and rubrics for assessment, indicating a lack of transparency in the assessment process. The university also still uses a quantitative approach in assessing the knowledge and skills of students. It is advisable that Economics Lectures plan together and use common guides, teaching, and learning material for effective constructive alignment of the Economics subject.

**Keywords:** Constructive alignment, Teaching and learning activities, Assessment tasks, Quantitative approach, Instructional materials, Intended learning outcomes

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## 1. Introduction

University lecturers finding it difficult to design teaching/learning activities (TLAs) that are constructively aligned as a requirement for the implementation of constructive alignment. Many lecturers focus on the use of textbook when planning their teaching and assessment tasks (ATs). Outcomes based approach (OBE) advocates that there must be a strong relationship between teaching/learning activities and assessment tasks with intended learning outcomes. This alignment should take the centre stage as lecturers plan and design activities that would ensure that students achieve these outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2015). Biggs and Tang (2011) put more emphasis on the fact that there must be adherence with the principles of constructive alignment.

Chipere (2017) argued that outcomes base approach has limitations in terms of providing guidance regarding better instruction and curriculum; hence the emphasis is on a student-centred approach that

ensures that there is an alignment of constructive elements. Biggs and Tangs (2011) indicated that what the teacher does in class is less important that what the learner does. When lecturers design the curriculum, they must shift away from the old methods of curriculum design and focus on student-centred approach. The above information suggests the significance of the characteristics of constructively aligned curriculum. Stevler (2012) also alluded on the fact that faculty programmes should focus on the alignment between the content, assessment, and instructional activities to engage the students in a scholarly teaching.

Wang, Cheung, Wong and Kwong (2013) revealed that students are likely to achieve deep learning in a highly constructively aligned curriculum as compared to students in a low constructive alignment (CA) unit. The above information implies that the emphasis should be based on the student engagement activities which put the students at the centre of e education. This means that students

should construct their own knowledge and the process should be responsible for their own learning (Macht & Ball, 2016). This implies that the nature of economics tasks must be designed such that students must learn to discover new information on their own so that they can be responsible for their own learning. According to Bilgin, Karakuyu and Ay (2015), one of the benefits of constructively aligned curriculum includes related skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, management, and collaboration. According to Mor (2015), these skills are critical in the study of economics because Economics deals with the analysis of socio-economic issues. This implies that students should use their critical thinking skills to deal with socio economic issues such as economic growth, unemployment, and inflation.

## **2. Literature Review**

The literature review section comprises of theoretical literature and empirical literature debates chosen to form the bases of the study.

### **2.1 Theoretical Literature**

This study employed constructivist theory of learning where students should be engaged, and the previous experience of the students is taken into consideration (Biggs & Tang, 2007). This implies that the lecturers must decide what kind of knowledge the students should acquire in the lecture halls.

Sanchez and Martin (2016) emphasised that when the lecturers design a module, the prior knowledge of the students should be considered. It is critical that students should be equipped with the knowledge and the skill that they will be applied in different situations (Biggs & Tang, 2011). This implies students should be able to apply knowledge and the skills acquired in lecture halls to solve their own community problems.

### **2.2 Empirical Literature**

It is critical that the debates around the university curriculum should support the high-quality learning that will enable the university students to receive the relevant education. (Larkin & Richardson, 2013). Therefore, the university teaching should focus more on student engagement to achieve the deep learning. This implies that in the teaching of Economics students should be involved in the

learning process. The involvement of students will create the kind of students that are able to solve problems faced by their own communities using the knowledge and skills acquired in university lecture halls (Entwistle, 2018). This kind of an engagement will enable the students to attain high knowledge (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Curriculum alignment put more emphasis on student's active engagement as powerful way to achieve deep learning in the teaching of Economics (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Trigwell & Prosser, 2014). According to Hansen (2015) course projects can be vital to achieve deep learning in Economics education. Hansen (2015) further states that, the meeting of entry requirements in Economics by the students should not make them able to apply their knowledge beyond the lecture halls, it is only their engagement in the curriculum that will enable them to achieve the deep learning in the teaching of Economics. This implies that, for students to achieve deep learning in Economics education, they must be exposed to real life situations, for example students must be able to analyse economic journals, economic periodicals, and economics sections in the newspapers.

Alignment of the curriculum advocates the engagement of the students in the learning content whereby the students construct their own knowledge constructs their own knowledge (Nguyen, 2011). The engagement of students should lead in terms of how they should be assessed should lead to deep learning. This is the reason why is important that when the lecturers design assessment tasks in Economics education should make sure that it addresses the stated learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Akib and Martuty, in Abdul & Binti (2018), emphasised that assessment must be an integral part of teaching and learning. The idea of constructive alignment should be introduced by the top management of university and this should be guided by the strategic plan of the university (Deakin, 2017). It is also recommended that during the programme review there must be subject expertise to monitor the process of alignment so that the challenges regarding the implementation of constructive alignment can be identified. (Tokede & Tivendale, 2017).

The top-down approach should be employed so that there should be accountability around the issue of implementation (Fransson & Friberg, 2015). This approach is very critical if the university is committed to excellence of teaching and learning (McCoy &

Byrne, 2017). The University of Canberra was cited as evidence of successful implementation of constructive alignment, it was initiated at the top of the management and reflected in the strategic plan of the university (Canberra, 2013). The actual implementation is done at the faculty level. A small group of disciplined educators was selected by the faculty and this small group is one that is responsible for the implementation of constructive alignment to each discipline. This group is supported by the faculty management actual in terms of resources (Ruge & McCormack, 2017a). There were also some incentives that were provided so that the student could be given some opportunities by the industries to apply their knowledge and skills (Trigwell & Prosser, 2014).

One of the challenges highlighted with regard to implementation of CA includes the lack of support of the faculty and the co-coordinators of discipline as well as attitude of both internal and external stakeholders (Diseth, Pallesen, Brunborg & Larsen, 2010; Jackson, 2012a; Thota & Whitfield, 2010). The continued support and active engagement of these key stakeholders is critical for feedback and for the development of CA priority areas in terms of skills focus and improved alignment of unit learning context and assessment learning. There was also a unit that was established which was responsible for the approval of the programme and report directly to the faculty board meetings. It was also the same unit that was responsible for building the relationship between the university and the world of work so that students should be given some opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge in the world of work (Boud, 2010; Hughes & Barrie, 2010). There are several problems in implementing constructive alignment. For instance, one of the issues mentioned is the issue of finance and staff workloads. Despite criticisms such as these reported regarding the implementation of CA, the researcher has nevertheless become convinced that CA will assist in improving Economics education at a Comprehensive University. Without CA, students will continue to be engaged in surface learning. The researcher therefore firmly believes that emphasis on constructive alignment may be a good starting point for improving curriculum design.

### 3. Methodology

This section discusses the adopted methodology to achieve the set aim, which is to investigate the extent to which lecturers manage to implement constructive alignment in a comprehensive university.

#### 3.1 Research Approach

The study will follow use qualitative research methods since the study is qualitative in nature. In qualitative research, the approach to the subject matter is interpretative, naturalistic, and multimethod (Seal, 2015). Researchers should focus on their own environments for the interpretation of the meanings that people give to them. Therefore, through using this approach the researcher will be able to understand different ways used by the lecturers to implement constructive alignment in the teaching of Economics. This was achieved through using focus group interviews as a qualitative data collection method.

#### 3.2 Design of Methodology

A case study was used as a methodological design for this study. Therefore, a researcher focuses on his own environment to make full observation of what is happening. Therefore, the intervention will be informed by what is happening on the ground (Fick, 2014). Focus group interviews and document analysis was used as tools to investigate the proper implementation of constructive alignment. The experiences of the lecturers were served as powerful tools that the researcher relied on.

#### 3.3 Sampling

Sample is defined as the subgroup of the total population (Shukla, 2020). In choosing and selecting the study sample purposive sampling will be used. For this paper, four delivery sites were selected.

#### 3.4 Research Instruments

The researcher used focus group interviews and document analysis was used. The researcher had gathered documents such as study guides, projects, class tests, question papers, policies (Seal, 2015). Document analysis can help lecturers to improve the way they plan their teaching and learning because reading the material can help the lecturer to relate to some aspects of education.

#### 3.5 Data Treatment and Analysis

The data that is collected needs to be analysed to make sense. Responses of everyone were compared with a view to identifying trends, responses, and possible explanations. This provided a common

structure to compare the data (Boland, 2010). In analysing the instructional material, a checklist of requirements for proper CA implementation was compiled (Fick, 2014).

## 4. Results and Discussions

This investigation was done with the purpose of understanding the motive behind the introduction of constructive alignment and as well as the ways that can be used to enhance constructive alignment in the teaching of Economics. Arguments and comments were based on several sources such as document analysis of Economics lecturers' instructional material, followed by focus group discussions with Economics lecturers from each of the four campuses of the comprehensive university. The instructional material that was used to determine evidence of constructive alignment included study guides and assessment documents, tests and examinations over the past three years. In total, three focus group discussions were conducted, namely one on each of campus sites A and B, while sites C and D were combined because of their proximity. The discussions with lecturers were conducted at a time and a place convenient for them, i.e. during their lunch time, followed by one period after lunch. This provided a maximum time slot of two hours per focus group discussion. Thirteen lecturers ultimately take part in the discussions.

All the people participated in this study were assured of confidentiality and this study was purely for academic purposes. Participants were assured of the fact that their participation would remain confidential. All the discussions were audio taped in order to assist the researcher with the transcription. The interview guide was designed so that it can assist the flow of discussions. The interview guide consists of eleven questions. Lecturers were also encouraged to make up follow questions. A document analysis of Economics lecturers' instructional material was performed, followed by focus group discussions with Economics lecturers from each of the four campuses of the comprehensive university. The instructional material that was used to determine evidence of constructive alignment, included study guides and assessment documents, including tests and examinations over the past three years. In total, three focus group discussions were conducted, namely one on each of campus sites A and B, while sites C and D were combined because of their proximity.

### 4.1 Discussions from Documents

The factors that were considered to analyse the documents for evidence of constructive alignment were presented in checklist, which served as the research instrument.

#### 4.1.1 Intended Learning Outcomes/Objectives

The university still uses objectives and not learning outcomes in some modules, e.g. in Macroeconomics, Microeconomics and Development-Economics. In only one module offered in the third year, learning outcomes were used, e.g. Curriculum Studies in Economics. However, learning outcomes are often viewed as synonymous with objectives. Furthermore, there were neither objectives nor learning outcomes in some of the modules, e.g., Mathematical Economics and Introduction to Economics. In these two modules only the topics to be covered and so-called "assessment criteria" were listed. The "assessment criteria" included the following:

- 2 tests.
- 2 oral presentations.
- 1 assignment.
- A research project or case study.

The above-mentioned information clearly indicates that the lecturers did not understand the concept "assessment criteria". Therefore, the design of learning outcomes should formulate a number of assessment criteria (sometimes also referred to as assessment standards) which should serve as indicators of the achievement of the particular learning outcome and not merely the types and instruments of assessment to be used. The researcher also noted that the objectives in the learning materials were not stated clearly by making use of action verbs. In addition, the verbs included in the objectives were not always focused on appropriate levels of understanding. I also noted that the objectives in the learning materials were not stated clearly by making use of action verbs. In addition, the verbs included in the objectives were not always focused on appropriate levels of understanding. For example:

- In Macroeconomics, there is only one objective that says: "The students will able to reason accurately and objectively about Economic issues".
- In Development Economics, one of the objectives mentioned is to "offer a broad understanding" of the theoretical and practical issues attached

in development thinking, especially pertaining to developing countries.

In the latter objective the phrase "offer a broad understanding" is very vague and does not indicate an observable action. It is therefore very difficult to know exactly what the students would be required to do to demonstrate "a broad understanding". An outcomes-based programme should be built around clearly defined learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

#### **4.1.2 Teaching/Learning Activities (TLAs)**

Constructive alignment is described as a design for teaching and learning that is aimed at bringing about meaningful involvement of student participation. This is done by making sure students do comply with all the characteristics of constructively aligned curriculum. Students must be engaged such that they can construct their own knowledge through relevant TLAs by being actively engaged in constructing knowledge. Relevant TLAs should therefore be planned to address the action verbs in the ILOs. In doing so, a learning environment that is student-centred and likely to support the attainment of the learning outcomes will most probably be created. In analysing the documents, I found that it was not clear whether the TLAs used in Economics modules were appropriate for and addressed the stated learning outcomes or objectives because the TLAs were not reflected in the study material for any of the Economics modules. In addition, it is important to incorporate active and collaborative learning and dialogue with the lecturer into our modules. This should also be reflected in the study material. The dialogue between the students and lecturers will create the kind of students will be to discover new information on their own. This will encourage the students to acquire more information that will enable them to deal with all the challenges faced by their own communities. In the case of Economics education, students should be able to deal with socio economic issues such as inequality, poverty, and unemployment

#### **4.1.3 Assessment Tasks**

Assessment tasks should ideally contain the same action verbs as stated in the exit level of a module. The assessment tasks should also be aligned with the assessment criteria stated in the exit level of a module. Without this relationship, students are likely to achieve surface learning. The documents analysed indicated that some action verbs which did not appear in the relevant intended learning outcomes or

objectives were introduced for the first time in tests or examinations. Some "new" action verbs that were introduced were also not necessarily related to those used in the intended learning outcomes or objectives.

#### **4.1.4 Grading**

In an outcome or objectives-based system, criterion referenced assessment is preferred above a norm referenced system. This involves a qualitative way of assessing students (comparing student achievement with the achievement of assessment criteria at a particular level), as opposed to a norm-referenced method which is quantitative in nature because it depends on using marks as an indication of achievement. In a qualitative, criterion referenced assessment system, the grading of student achievement by means of rubrics containing relevant assessment criteria assists with determining how well the intended learning outcome or objective has been achieved by the student. Rubrics may also assist to maintain the consistency, reliability and validity of assessments made by lecturers regarding student' performances. On the other hand, conventional marking of assessment tasks by means of awarding marks for correct responses is typical of a quantitative system and is aimed at comparing student performance with a norm as established by the performance of a group of students.

The documents analysed indicated that the assessment of student performance in the different Economics modules was mainly done quantitatively by using marks and percentages. No rubrics were used at all. The document analysis revealed the lack of implementation of the principles of constructive. University uses a quantitative approach to assessment (i.e. a quantitative approach to arrive at the final grades of the students' performance).

### **4.2 Results of the Focus Group Discussions**

Focus group discussion provided significant information regarding the implementation of constructive alignment. Various challenges and problems were highlighted during the discussions. Different sites brought different strategies that can be employed to overcome the problems and challenges around the implementation of constructive alignment were discussed.

#### **4.2.1 Site 1**

Lecturers cited some negatives like staff workloads, shortage of teaching facilities, poor infrastructure,

and a shortage of tools, such as computers. Some cited shortage of offices, sometimes had to prepare lessons in their cars and that this had a negative impact in their performance as lecturers.

#### **4.2.2 Site 2**

The discussion was held during difficulty time where lecturers were busy with catch up plan because of the loss of teaching time by student unrest. They indicated that they struggled with large classes and the resultant existence of so many different academic abilities in one class. However, they coped with situations by using group work and peer assessment.

#### **4.2.3 Site 3 and 4**

Lecturers showed their commitments to provide whatever information was required. Participant C3 indicated, "Lecturers know in their heads what the end product must be and they teach to that". Participant D2 expressed frustration about the fact that "students are not interested in learning" and that the large classes made everything difficult. After conducting all focus group discussions, it was therefore finally becoming clear to me that the alignment of TLAs and ATs with ILOs is not at the predominant in the lecturers' minds and that the circumstances surrounding their teaching (such as large classes, staff teaching workloads, poorly equipped lecturer rooms) influenced them negatively. It can thus be concluded that lecturers were not always successful in aligning TLAs, ATs with ILOs. Lecturers were aware that TLAs and ATs should be aligned with ILOs, but this alignment occurs intuitively in teaching and is not necessarily deliberately planned.

Lecturers who participated in this research project did not all use strategies to align TLAs and ATs with ILOs. Their planning did not start with the formulation of ILOs and their teaching lacked clarity of focus; consequently, the ILOs were not the focus of the lecturers. In their planning of TLAs, lecturers should identify ILOs and from there plan backwards what TLAs will be and how learning will be assessed. Assessments were also not necessarily formative as the tasks were completed to comply with the requirements of examinations and not with the alignment of TLAs, ATs and ILOs

Although the participants generally agreed that it was their responsibility to align ILOs, content, TLAs and ATs, the researcher was not yet convinced that they understood the subject under investigation clearly. For example, the results from the

documents analysis indicated that the ILOs were not stated clearly by means of action verbs and did not clearly feature in the relevant TLAs and ATs.

Not all lecturers are consciously working towards the implementation of constructive alignment. Although all lecturers generally agreed that this is what should be done but they failed to elaborate on how they did this. This has serious implications for teaching and learning, pass rates and throughput rates. There was also no mention of teaching methodology as a vehicle for assisting students to achieve the ILOs, which, to me, is a telling indication that the approach to TLAs is in many instances not really CA compliant.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The paper aimed to investigate to what extent is constructive alignment implemented by the Department of Economics at the chosen institution and how can the implementation thereof be enhanced. The study adopted a case study qualitative methodology. The study found that the successful implementation of constructive alignment depends on the engagement of the students by the lecturers. The nature of the activities given to the students must allow the students to discover new information on their own. The implementation of constructive alignment encourages deep learning, and this can only be achieved if students are involved in the learning process. Additionally, it was evident from the documents analysed that the introduction of constructive alignment can play a vital role in overcoming all the challenges experienced by the lecturers regarding teaching and learning. It was recommended that the successful implementation of constructive alignment, lecturers should be kept abreast of all the new developments regarding the new methods of teaching. Benchmarking with other universities was also indicated as an important step for the implementation of constructive alignment. Some people had made mention of workshop as another intervention strategy. Staff should also be encouraged to register higher education studies so that they can be well equipped in terms of curriculum alignment. The establishment of a committee within the faculty was also recommended, and this committee should include students to conduct research on all aspects of teaching and learning. Dialogue between the students and lecturers was also encouraged so that there can be common understanding in terms of implementation of constructive alignment.

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# Reimagined Strategies: A Case of Face-to-Face to Remote Transformed Language Learning

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**Abstract:** For this investigation a qualitative research approach was followed. To identify the underlying challenges, this paper aimed at probing the extent at which remote transformed language learning had on language development. To produce in-depth understanding of factors regarded to be challenges in real life situations the investigation objectives were aimed at identifying whether transformed online learning had any significant importance towards language development. The main challenge that led to authors undertaking this study was emergent remote learning that swept away face-to-face collaborations thereby bringing some concerns in language learning. For some learners and teachers, necessary skills to embark on this journey were lacking, let alone limited availability to internet connectivity in most areas where learners are located. For the purposes of this investigation a case study was administered. Effects of language development in a remote manner as an emergent strategy were explored for study. Participants were purposefully selected from one university located in an Eastern Cape rural environment. These three English language teachers were nominated from the larger group of language teacher as they had experienced changes brought about by emergence of the pandemic era, as such had some not so appealing experiences when teaching an unfamiliar language during this period, yet, English is a medium for most subjects offered. Such teachers offered English language at year one of first entering learners (FTENS). For this qualitative study embedded in a case study design, data were collected through administration of semi structured interviews. As this type of instrument contained open-ended questions, it was divulged by the analysed data that intermediation strategies and restricted exposure to a wide range of digital teaching and learning platforms hence rurality of the environment where the research site was located, was found to be a major challenge in relation to language-learning aspects inclusive of reading, speaking and writing. From the findings of this study it emerged that reading comprehension as an essential language learning skill was being compromised by lack of access to eLearning resources. For enhanced language development, authors conclude that both teachers and learners as recipients to learning should develop positive learning and teaching attitude need to be developed among teachers and learners towards digital learning. Engaging in such platforms capacitate all for life-long learning. It is recommended by this study that libraries situated in institutions of higher learning together with those located in the districts need to prioritise on purchasing sufficient e-learning resources to accommodate a wide range of learners for an inculcated culture of language enhancement, likely to lead at improved academic attainment. Further than that, as scholars we have an urgent need to be well vexed of e-learning logistics, thereby safeguarded at being victims of digital divide.

**Keywords:** Reading, Online learning, Teaching, Language development, Strategies

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## 1. Introduction

Changes brought about by the heat wave of COVID-19 phase have led to transformed teaching approaches (Loades, Chatburn, Higson-Sweeney, Reynolds, Shafran, Brigden & Crawley, 2020). Transmission rate of language learning got affected by the sudden changes not only as a South African perspective, but to the entire countries of the universe. Emergence of digital learning strategies have now resulted at collaborative engagements between teachers and learners; with online learning making it possible to transfer knowledge and information across the world

within a specified time in seconds or minutes (Judith, 2019). This transformed learning in the current era has brought emergence of the prefix 'e'. Citing a few examples we can mention e-learning, e-business, e-commerce and a plethora of others, this signifying extensive electronic technology application (Aguilar, 2012).

Transitioning face-to-face language learning to suit remote strategies has real been a hassle due to a wide range of factors regarded as glitches specifically for learning administered in the so-called rural disadvantaged centres of learning (Osguthorpe &

Graham, 2003). When acquisition of language proficiency is distracted, it may raise proficiency learning alarm to language specialist envisaged school curriculum have texts to be comprehended, thus requiring language aspects like reading, speaking, reading, writing, punctuation, vocabulary and spelling, of which all these are somehow compromised by transformed remote learning (Kerr, 2015).

Technology and its mysterious ways of doing things is the act to be mastered through training, exposure and transformed attitudes by teachers and learners as recipients of teaching and learning (Alper, Meryl & Goggin, 2017). This became a significant initiative when universities during total shut down of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic era had no other choice than to embark on elearning, which was really a huge hassle. Mostly traditional face-to-face mode of engagements was a preferred recipe in the university investigated. It was therefore imperative for us to conduct an investigation to answer the question: To what extent does remote transformed language learning affect re-imagined teaching and learning strategies? Further than that, infused technology teaching and learning, not particularly in the schooling environment, but also in libraries and other communities of development, is a step worth to embark on as a way to capacitate future generation who would be able to compete globally in the digitally transformed innovations (Gillen, 2014).

## **2. Literature Review**

This is the section where a portion of previously published work is critically reviewed and analysed by comparing it with preceding research studies, thereby summarily refining it into own classifications as perceived by individual authors (Western Sydney University Library, 2017). Reviewing literature sources helps towards determination of existing resources whereby scholars critically analyse theories to identify gaps that would assist towards future research inquiries (University of Melbourne, 2013).

### **2.1 Empirical Literature**

#### **2.1.1 Infused Technology Learning**

As transformed teaching and learning has been brought to be a major concept in the schooling system since eruption of COVID-19, so have to teaching methodologies and strategies, as well as re-defined learning styles by university learners across the

spectrum (Blignaut, 2020). These emergent changes in the past few decades resulted to foremost transformations arising not within the education sector only, but in other sectors that necessitate growth and development for the human nature. Collaborative learning in the current era has brought about serious awareness for technology-driven interventions to people of all ages, hence the digital world. Thus, Gillett-Swan (2017) proposes for innovated remote learning or schooling paradigm.

However, recent changes of shifting from face-to-face to remote teaching and learning in some universities located in rural settings posed challenges encountered by both learners and teachers as recipients to learning, in a way, causing some digital divide. Such innovations are in line with Pegrum (2014) who advocates for universities to employ effective use of information computer technologies. On the other hand, Haight, Quan-Haase and Corbett (2014) argue for users who display reluctance towards transformation, yet, as authors we propose that such changes be adored by all as they provide consolidated skills that aid at attaining new, interesting, yet flexible prospects to learning. On attaining such computer skills as core to remote learning, learners get exposure to diverse life-long learning and positive anticipated future employability prospects.

#### **2.1.2 Resources as a Fundamental Requirement to Remote Learning**

In this new-fangled dispensation, tertiary institutions and schools are confronted with challenges of access to internet. Hockly and Dudeney (2014) contend that obstacles of connectivity lead to hassles at making institutions of higher learning to be full-blown elearning centres, specifically for those identified to be located in the historically disadvantaged rural environments. In addition to that, infrastructure, lack of expertise in computer literacy-related learning really poses challenges granting universities as far-flanged digital learning sites. As articulated by Zhu, Valcke and Schellens (2009), lack of infrastructure coupled with connectivity that is affordable poses great challenges for diverse sectors around the world. From a study conducted in Ghana (ICT and Global Education, 2008) Africa is a continent renown of its calamities. These include political inclination and insecurities, deprivation in services delivered, a literacy and inadequate infrastructure. Research also denotes that Africa, when compared to other developing versus developed states has the minimal internet infiltration.

Additionally, the above statements are supported by Beyene and Aasheim (2018) who argue on limited availability of e-learning gadgets in most institutions of learning. A study conducted by Jain (2013) in Delhi observed that a great number of schools had very limited numbers of e-learning related gadgets. For an institution of higher learning learning to have insufficient elearning gadgets really concerns us, as this inadequacy of tools of trade is tantamount to hindered transformation of language learning.

To mention, other institutions were reported to be using old computers not serviced timeously. In Western Sydney, for learning institutions to encounter limited and inappropriate eLearning material, such can be congruently measured to disturbed curriculum implementation, thus leading to the not so good attitudes and frustrations to language learning (Milton & Vozzo, 2013). Languages, with all compound and diverse aspects inclusive of listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and fluency are likely to be hindered when an institution lacks access to the necessary resources aimed towards enhancing learner language proficiency.

### 2.1.3 Intervention Strategies

Correspondingly, teaching-learning processes should be transformed from the previous normal face-to-face mode to suit the proposed remote learning. Transitioning efficiency solely depends on preparedness on all parties involved, technology equipment, as well as inclusive training and workshopping of both teachers and learners as recipients granted to be at the core of learning progressions (Ray, 2020). At a stage when learning remotely has been successfully invented, the intended educational curriculum administered either within the schooling environment or in a remote mode, would be enhanced through employed teaching and learning technologies.

On the main, it is worth to note that methodologies and strategies previously used when conducting face-to-face interventions might not be favourable enough for the currently transformed mode of schooling, especially in this transformed digital era. Both teachers and learners as they are not acquainted to administration of remote-distant mode of instruction, some intervention strategies like consistent trainings then become a vital instrument intended towards limiting inability attitudes for all. Furthermore, even at times when schools were forced to be on total shutdown due to extensive

spread of COVID-19 ailments, remote learning took over at providing connection prospects for both teachers and learners, thereby interacting and brainstorming on the content, with context, irrespective of non-contact sessions. This was an emergent situation, worth exploring. Favourable outcomes, as affirmed by Papouli, Chatzifotiou and Tsairidis (2020), were improved computer literate abilities previously regarded to be in very minimal percentages. Be that as it may, there are some attitudes of negativity still noted as a deficiency towards elearning capabilities (Ramrathan, 2017).

Consequently, in relation to experiences of learning remotely, as disputed by Palansamy (2020), it is how remote processes are structured that becomes a determinant for teacher and learner success. As scholars might recall that remote learning often arouses when the country is held tight by emergent crucial circumstances. It is worth to note that all stakeholders involved in the education sector at that point in time become fragile and vulnerable. With that being noted, it becomes advisable for teachers and learners not to be assigned new tasks. This, therefore, as outlined by Alper, Meryl and Goggin (2017) means that for effective and efficient remote learning, curriculum managers have a task to redesign a well demarcated and clearly defined plan of instruction. Substantial elements of such a plan might comprise taking serious considerations of technology equipment, time constraints and re-defined teaching-learning approaches, in so doing, learning anxieties may be minimal.

## 2.2 Theoretical Literature

Underpinning this paper is the Model of Teacher Change (Guskey, 1986). Emergent transformation in the schooling environment with COVID-19 regulations to be observed by all recipients to learning, led us to strengthen our investigation with this Model of Teacher Change. Looking at the previous teaching and learning collaborations, a greatest percentage was administered in a face-to-face mode of delivery, where the teacher or instructor would present the lesson in a venue-based setting, with sitting plans that catered for both pair and group engagements. Drastic changes in the rules governing the country affected the schooling logic as well, hence the investigation of this article.

As ecological changes, beliefs and attitudes deprived learning recipients of the old and previous norms of

doing things, changes led to education being conducted in a remote manner. These changes led to revisions, re-imagining, and thereby re-inventing teaching and learning strategies well aligned to cater shifting from face-to-face, to transformed remote strategies likely to enhance learner language proficiency. At the same time, one would raise a very serious concern. Despite rurality of some environments, are the situations accommodative enough to cater for such changes or are the poor of the poorest left to look for a needle in a haystack! Notwithstanding limited digital practises from some teachers, remote elearning has now come into existence, therefore, it becomes worthwhile to note that a huge number of recipients involved have buckled up to acquaint themselves with elearning logistics. As authors, on applauding such improvement and dedication, the country is never the same as it was before. Multitudes of people in the education sector have alarmingly improved their elearning and digital skills, an acceptable indication for growth, wealth and self-independency.

For enhanced language proficiency through shifting towards remote processes as opined by the objective of this paper, we, therefore, support the educational implication that both language teachers and learners, irrespective of rurality of environments they emanate from, may need to embark on practices to acquaint themselves in various digital e-learning platforms. Engaging in using e-Learning may not only anticipated to language learning, instead, to innovated reading and comprehension skills. As proposed by Guskey's theory, advancement in language skills is surely a gateway to excelled academic attainment as most subjects underpinning the institutions' curriculum compose of texts to comprehended (Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, 2017). When required comprehension skills are lacking, progression throughput rate may be hindered.

### **3. Methodology**

Research methodology refers to structuring processes when undertaking research. Varying types of research have specific and differing methodologies (Creswell, 2009). Commonly used methodologies normally comprise research design, data gathering as well as analysis. Methodology in research is intended to outline notifications on why an investigation has been conducted, how the problem investigated has been demarcated, data collection and data analysis

procedures (Sweetman, Badiee & Creswell, 2010). When these methodological logistics have been observed, the problem then becomes systematically unravelled. All these methods have an ultimate goal to collect data, evaluate that data already collected yet not sufficing enough to arrive at essential solution, towards determining some connections in-between gathered data and findings still to emerge, as well as evaluating accuracy from the findings divulged. This, therefore, means that research methodology is constituted by research methods.

#### **3.1 Approach**

In this inquiry authors have followed a qualitative research methodology embedded in a case study design. This approach has an objective to generate in-depth understanding for some real-life situation complexities (Denzin, 2018). For the purposes of this inquiry, we administered a case study with reasons to obtain deeper understanding of underlying factors with regards to sudden language learning transformations brought about by emergent prescribed regulations as emanated from COVID-19 restrictions. This re-imagining of teaching-learning strategies really needed one to undergo deep inquiry as some challenging factors to emergent remote elearning had to be examined as means to unfold some truths in relation to realities experiences by people around the world.

#### **3.2 Sampling**

Participants for this investigation were purposefully selected (Myers, 2020). These were participants amongst the plenty who offered English language in a rurally located varsity. These three teachers purposively accepted to be part of our investigation. What probed interest to take part is that they had experienced changes brought about by emergence of the pandemic era, as such had some not so appealing experiences when teaching an unfamiliar language during this period, yet, English is a medium for most subjects offered. These were teachers who offered English language at year one of first entering learners (FTENS). These three participants then became primary sources hence the investigation was rooted in a case study design.

#### **3.3 Research Instruments**

As articulated by Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley and McKenna (2017), this investigation administered

semi structured interviews as an instrument that helped at collecting data. Questions contained were open-ended, thereby allowing for robust discussions, engagements, and collaborations. The entire process led to us posing some follow up questions which were not primarily designed to reflect in the interview schedule. Due to work commitment by participants, time to meet and interview each independent participant had to be lengthened. All three participants willingly engaged in discussions solely because as authors we had assured them that ethical considerations were to be adhered to, with promises not to divulge their proper identities, as well as explanations that they were free to withdraw from the project at any given point if they would have feelings of intimidation or insecurity (Brinkman, 2013).

Engagements with participants commenced sometime around February 2022. Both interviewers and interviewees had challenging time constraints as the interview process had to be adjourned sometime in March 2022 since both parties were held up tight in administration of special examinations for some learners. Another factor that hindered progress was consistent training and workshops that had to be attended to put on board teaching logistics. As the process was undertaken, authors had confined themselves at a task to take some recordings of participant responses. The major aim for this activity was to ensure that not even a single response would be taken as minor or for granted, thus leading to obtaining rich data to assist during time of analysis. All questions asked revolved around teaching-learning strategies that had to be redefined as there was a shift from face-to-face to remote learning.

### 3.4 Method of Data Analysis

After those robust engagements between the two parties were over, authors gave themselves momentous time to interact with each recording. This process helped authors to transcribe all participant responses with great consideration. Those regarded as similar to each other were grouped under the same category. Lastly, codes were re-grouped, leading to formation of themes discussed as findings in the next section.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Intermediation Strategies

From the findings it was divulged that there was an

imperative to train teachers and learners. Some still have attitudes on e-learning and strongly believe on traditional teaching-learning methodologies. When questioned about level of knowledge regarding online learning, Participant S1 responded:

*Thanks to the arrival of the pandemic era in our country, if it was not for it, I would still be that teacher with lacking skills. I cannot pride myself, but at least I know the basics of interacting with online learning gadgets like computers. I am never the same person as I was before.*

Participant S2 had a similar response:

*As I had no knowledge whatsoever in the previous normal, I strongly believed in face-to-face collaborations. I am now proud to note that through workshops conducted by the departmental officials, my knowledge of using online teaching and learning resources has improved. Nonetheless, more still needs to be done. It is my wish that trainings should be conducted at least once monthly as transitioning is really not an easy task.*

Regarding mechanisms that are in a collaborative manner, strategic plans have to be put in place to accommodate training of teachers and learners towards attaining the necessary skills of tackling all the necessary language aspects by using digital technologies. One needs to consider that such a factor might be constrained by capabilities of human resource in the unit intended to conduct trainings. Akintunde (2007) contends that even at university level most learners have yet not being fully capacitated to interrogate elearning gadgets, thus denoting lack of skill in computer-related learning (Odame, Lois, Bertha Osei-Hwedie, Nketsia, Opoku & Arthur, 2019). This finding is in line with the previously discussed notion on human resource trainers, thus deliberately derailing eLearning interventions.

### 4.2 Lack of Access to Resources

The second finding observed that time constraints were a burning factor, allowing only a specific number of learners at a given time to access elearning gadgets due to lack of resources (Atinmo, 2000). Further than that, the least available gadgets at the school library has gadgets which are no longer in good working condition. This makes learners to suffer exposure to a wide range of digital teaching

and learning platforms. An alarming finding in this cohort is in line with limited network coverage/connectivity. In response to lack of access to resources, Participant S3 reported:

*With a limited number of computers in the school where I work, delays and quarrels have since emerged amongst all teachers offering computer-related subjects. As the period lapses for another group of learners to access the only available computer laboratory, time is spent as they run around chasing to arrive first in a properly functional laptop. By the time the period ends for the first group to leave the laboratory, learners start complaining with protests that much time was wasted whilst fighting over accessing the stated resources.*

In this regard, Participant S1 concurred when reporting that:

*Limitation in the number of available online learning material is worsened by non-functional resources stored in our library. If the management could take serious note of what we experience as teachers on the ground, they would not delay ensuring that repairs are a norm. This would increase the number of readily available online resources in our school.*

Participant S2 also alluded as previously indicated by others:

*Connectivity problems seem to cause great challenges for us. Whilst busy conducting an online class, some learners would report to be experiencing problems to log in due to network glitches. This is a situation that needs economic sustenance as most learners are deprived. For the learning institution to be located in a rural environment is associated with being deprived in WIFI connections.*

Technology learning as a valuable resource needs great consideration as this is a tool that draws lines of boundaries between traditional and remote elearning divide. Be that as it may, nature of the environments becomes problematic in this instance. In cases where an institution has plenty gadgets to suffice all learners, such resources should be dispatched for learners to take home with. At the same time, as this investigation was conducted in an institution of higher learning located in a vast rural learning environment, one would not wonder to learn that there are few elearning gadgets readily available for all (Beyene, 2016). This calls for positive

mind-sets to be ready to share the least available resources during and within the learning environment, to benefit all. Last but not least, glitches of network connectivity are a real hassle beyond explanation as most people around the suffer consequences. We do not know whether this challenge is caused by a huge number of users, or it is triggered by the rurality of the environment where the university is located (Mutual, 2008).

Findings that were discovered by this study are in line with the Model of Teacher Change (Guskey, 1986) that underpinned this paper. This model proposes for transformation in the schooling environment. Teaching and learning collaborations that were previously conducted in face-to-face venue-based collaborations were replaced by the now so-called vibrant online learning engagements. Although resolutions to engage in an online fashion came as some kind of enforcement due to school closer and social distancing parameters, online teaching and learning skills have been enhanced in most users. As ecological changes, beliefs and attitudes deprived learning recipients of the old and previous norms of doing things, changes led to education being conducted in a remote manner. These changes led to revisions, re-imagining, and thereby re-inventing teaching and learning strategies well aligned to cater shifting from face-to-face, to transformed remote strategies likely to enhance learner language proficiency.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

For this investigation a qualitative research approach was followed with specific reasons of having an advantage to produce in-depth understanding of the factors that are regarded to be challenges in real life situations. The main challenge that led to the authors undertaking this study was that emergent remote learning that swept away face-to-face collaborations had brought about some concerns in language learning. For some learners and teachers, necessary skills to embark on this journey were lacking, let alone limited availability of internet connectivity in most areas where learners are located. A case study was administered. Participants to this inquiry were three randomly selected English language teachers from an institution of higher learning located in the rural community of the Eastern Cape (EC) Province. For this qualitative study embedded in a case study design, data were collected through semi structured interviews. Findings to this

study divulged that intermediation strategies and restricted exposure to a wide range of digital teaching and learning platforms was found to be a major challenge. We conclude that teachers and learners should develop positivism towards digital learning. The study recommends that libraries situated in the institutions of higher learning should prioritise on purchasing sufficient e-learning resources.

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# The Development of a Model for Managing ICT for School Leaders

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to analyse literature relating to Information Communication Technology (ICT) model that is used by school leaders. Literature was derived from various data bases such as Scopus and Web of Science, and scholarly search engines. In the main, the literature review was on ICT tools to support e-leadership and communication, transformation of ICTs Schools in the Post-Pandemic Era, Managing ICTs in the school, and theoretical frameworks. In terms of ICT tools to support e-leadership and communication, literature revealed that work can now be done at any time, in any location, in real time or via technology, school principals adopt e-leadership skills. E-leadership is the effective use and combination of electronic and conventional methods of communication. In relation to the post-pandemic era, literature showed that weaknesses in available hardware were exposed. And the need to learn how to master virtual meetings became vital and key to ICT leadership and communication. Furthermore, post the pandemic, school leaders moved from face-to-face, mainly bilateral communication and adopted virtual meeting software, such as Teams and Zoom, live conferencing, groups of Facebook to the traditional ICTs tools before the pandemic such as phone calls, and e-mails. Literature review further revealed in terms of managing ICTs in the school that the management of the ICTs includes the security, and hardware and software, and that school leaders should apply ICT to daily personal and professional matters. In terms of the theoretical frameworks that support ICT enhanced school leadership, literature revealed the relevance of e-Leadership as it outlines five constructs relating to e-Leadership, Government ICT policy, ICT implementation in school, Teacher attitude towards ICT and Teachers' pedagogical change that could assist in the development an ICT model for school leaders.

**Keywords:** Information Communication Technology, e-leadership, Communication, School leadership, Government ICT policy

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## 1. Introduction

This conceptual paper describes the creation of a model for ICT management by school administrators. The study assesses the body of literature that is currently accessible on the subject and draws a conclusion from it. Literature was found using a variety of databases and academic search engines such as Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Center, ResearchGate, and Google Books. The literature review focused mostly on managing ICTs in schools, using ICT tools to enhance e-leadership and communication, ICT transformation in schools in the post-pandemic period, and theoretical frameworks.

Undoubtedly, educational technology has significantly transformed schooling (Al-Faki & Khamis, 2014). Information and communication technology has been adopted because it has been successful at communicating teaching and learning procedures (Abdullaeva, Babarakhimova & Pardayev, 2020).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has changed and been positively accepted in education over the years, with ICT now dominating not just the instructional space of the classroom but also the administration space of education (Albugami & Ahmed, 2015; Oluoch, 2016). In this light, school administrators should be viewed as ICT pioneers in their day-to-day management responsibilities (Apsorn, Sisan & Tungkunan, 2019). Strong technological leadership is required to promote increased Internet use, technology integration, and the use of digital tools by students and instructors in classrooms (A'mar & Eleyan, 2022).

School staff members use ICTs like computers and laptops for a variety of tasks related to administrative difficulties (Gondwe, 2020). It may still be difficult for school administrators to accept ICT because of the widespread resistance to using it as a teaching and communication tool as well as the fear of external elements like pornographic content and

religious contamination (Albugami & Ahmed, 2015; Goh & Sigala, 2020). In this instance, it is essential that the school administration play a significant part in choosing the Information and Communication Technology that may be adopted and employed. The type of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to be utilised in the school should be decided by the leadership of the institution (Mingaine, 2013). This is untrue, though, as the globalization-driven reform of the educational system has not prevented school administrators from implementing ICT in their institutions (Oluoch, 2016). According to A'mar and Eleyan (2022), administrators who can implement technology in their schools should take the lead in this area.

The role of school leadership, instructional methods, and school innovation changed in the industrial era 4.0 because of technological advancements like Artificial Intelligence and the internet (A'mar & Eleyan, 2022). These authors suggested that school administrators may affect teachers' attitudes toward technology and assist them in enhancing their ICT skills when they are ready for their new role as technology leaders and are aware of their duties. According to a study done in Malaysia (Leong, Chua & Kannan, 2017), school leaders are thought to be knowledgeable about new technologies and encourage efficient ICT-based communication and collaboration among school communities. According to this study's findings, school leaders were also thought to have advanced understanding of ICT use, but they lacked the necessary skills to take part in group decision-making.

As the epidemic is swiftly redefining leadership and education, leaders should lead adaptively, build organisational and individual resilience, and create distributed leadership frameworks (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021). As a result of the COVID-19, many educational institutions were caught off guard and had to quickly transition from face-to-face instruction to online learning (Ali, 2020; Arshad, 2020; König, Jäger-Biela & Glutsch, 2020). The use of technology in learning and teaching, however, has been strengthened by recent pandemic-related events, making it a necessary component of educational activities both inside and outside the classroom (Banoğlu & Gümüş, 2022). During the COVID-19 epidemic, it was crucial that the school administration engage families as equal partners in learning, keep giving students high-quality learning experiences, and make decisions that were coordinated and cohesive (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021).

ICT integration in schools has been the subject of numerous research with an emphasis on pedagogy, instructors, and students (Banoğlu & Gümüş, 2022; McLeod & Dulsky, 2021; Wu, Hu & Yu, 2019). But according to McLeod and Dulsky (2021), there is a dearth of and insufficient empirical research on the effects of main e-Leadership. Even though as a school leader, principals oversee systemic ICT transformations like the deployment of ICT infrastructure and the promotion of an innovative school culture. Few worldwide studies have examined this phenomenon (Banoğlu & Gümüş, 2022; McLeod & Dulsky, 2021; Wu, Hu & Yu, 2019).

## **2. Literature Review**

In this section existing literature is synthesized and evaluated to gain an insight into ICT tools that support e-leadership and communication, the transformation of ICTs in schools in the post-covid pandemic period and managing ICTs in schools. The literature section will further provide an overview of the theoretical frameworks and conceptual theories that underline the development of a model for managing ICT for school leaders. The literature review aims to provide an insight on prospective approaches in developing a model for managing ICT by school managers.

### **2.1 ICT Tools to Support E-Leadership and Communication**

School principals play a critical role in establishing the path for new technology and pedagogy when it comes to ICT-related educational transformation (Wu, Hu & Yu, 2019). In this case, ICT tools and applications can be used by leaders as a weapon to restrict or deny certain communities the opportunity to access information (Hussain, Safir, Sabie, Jahangir & Ahmed, 2020). e-Leadership support may be viewed as a new paradigm in which work can now be done at any time, in any location, in real time or via technology (DasGupta, 2011). It is noted that a strong leader is needed for effective e-leadership implementation (Yudha & Susanto, 2019). For school leaders to successfully apply ICT tools within their practices, it is imperative for them to adopt e-leadership skills. The concept of e-leadership is defined as the ability of leaders to conduct their leadership roles through digital technologies (Torre & Sarti, 2020). E-leadership is a combination of electronic and conventional methods of communication, and the effective use thereof (Van Wart, Roman, Wang

& Liu, 2019). It is further noted that e-leadership relies on virtual teams (Torre & Sarti, 2020). However, Van Wart *et al.* (2019) revealed the most common problems that could impede e-leadership relates to insufficient or poor communication, miscommunication, communication chaos, poor understanding of ICTs, weak security management, the instructor experiencing constant contact issues, and weak management of basic and auxiliary technology.

## 2.2 Transformation of ICTs in Schools in the Post-Pandemic Era

Among various other factors, school leadership has been identified as one of the essential stakeholder roles affecting ICT transformation in schools (Wu, Hu & Yu, 2019). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, different institutions – including the education sector – evaluated the quality of computer hardware and software used, and it was deemed as appropriately meeting the needs of the organizational performance at the time. However, the pandemic exposed weaknesses in available hardware, resulting in the subsequent need to learn how to master virtual meetings as a vital and key component for ICT leadership and communication (Toleikienė, Rybnikova & Juknevičienė, 2020). It is further highlighted that, before the COVID-19 lockdown pandemic, employees took advantage of available ICT opportunities once a month, while leaders and supervisors had no such opportunity, or rarely made use of such opportunities (Toleikienė *et al.*, 2020).

As referred to in literature, students were of the opinion that e-learning contributed positively to their learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. However, students also perceived that it increased their workload (Maatuk, Elberkawi, Aljarwarneh, Rashaideh & Alharbi, 2021). In a study conducted in Libya during COVID-19, it was found that poor-quality internet connections were the main barrier in achieving the effective integration of ICT into education (Maatuk *et al.*, 2021). It is further believed that due to COVID-19, e-learning could be the future of education (Kim, 2020). In a study conducted in Russia to explore the level of university teachers' readiness to employ e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the challenges they faced, the following challenges were identified: the electronic environment and support, academic staff readiness and student readiness for online learning, and the level of computer literacy (Almazova, Krylova, Rubtsova & Odinkaya, 2020).

Post-pandemic it was observed that various institutions, including the education sector, has moved away from face-to-face (mainly bilateral) communication, and adopted virtual meeting software such as Teams, Zoom, live conferencing, and Facebook Groups. Pre-pandemic, more traditional ICT tools such as phone calls, e-mails, and Messenger were employed (Toleikienė *et al.*, 2020). In the post-pandemic era, school principals should be more proactive in providing resources to teachers, as well as technical and emotional support (Banoğlu & Gümüş, 2022).

## 2.3 Managing ICTs in School

The management of ICTs in schools includes security, hardware and software, copyright, intellectual property and privacy, data usage, cleaning, and repairs thereof (GDE, 2011). In a study conducted in Nigeria, it was reported that inadequate funding of ICT education, inadequate ICT facilities in secondary schools, unstable power supplies, the high cost of ICT facilities, poor implementation of government policies on ICT, poor network service and coverage, as well as poor ICT literacy were the challenges experienced preventing the effective administration of ICT in secondary schools (Jacob, Jegede & Musa, 2020). For the successful pedagogical implementation of ICT in schools, it is essential for school principals and management teams to encourage and support the use of role modelling, teachers share best practices, teacher attend professional development as well as emphasis collaboration and network within the school (Banoğlu & Gümüş, 2022). In support of the idea Apsorn *et al.* (2019) further state that school leaders should act as a role model in applying ICT to their daily personal and professional matters. It is critical for school leaders to share knowledge, create opportunities, and render an ICT culture in schools whereby an e-learning community can be fully developed.

Apsorn *et al.* (2019) opined that school leaders should make concessions for developing a vision and formulating administrative plans for the use of ICT in schools. School leaders should establish safety and security measures relevant to the acquired ICT. They should establish strategies for promoting teachers' and students' use of technology in learning and teaching. It is critical that plans are developed to improve and support teachers' technological skills. It is also critical that school leaders manage, support and facilitate an atmosphere conducive to the use of ICT, and provide Information

Technology resources. School leaders should learn about meeting any ICT related challenges with prudence and care. They should oversee and follow-up on data storage as well as data updates for the benefit of decision-making and problem-solving (Apsorn *et al.*, 2019). The identified aspect by Apsorn *et al.* is reported to be hindered by the absence of professional development for principals, as well as documented research (A'mar & Eleyan, 2022).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

In this paper, two theories and a model will assume the rationale for the investigation of the model for managing ICT. These theories include constructivism (Piaget & Vygotsky), connectivism (Siemens) and e-Leadership (Wu, Yu & Hu). These theoretical frameworks will be discussed to draw and generate a suitable model for school leaders. Henning, Van Rensburg and Smith (2004) define a theoretical framework as a frame or design which guides and allows the researcher to consider his or her attitudes to study and places the researcher's investigation in the subject discipline within which he or she is engaged. Merriam (1998) stated that a theoretical framework is the viewpoint concerning the work of others that the researcher brings into his or her study, to inform him or her regarding the known and the unknown. The goal of this paper's exploration of several theories is to make an argument about their theoretical and practical implications for the current post-pandemic school management practise. The purpose of this article is also to identify the source of information about how school leaders use ICT.

#### 3.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a method of instruction that encourages students to create their own information by combining it with existing knowledge to create novel experiences (Akpomi & Kayii, 2022). In this context, the individuals' ability to generate knowledge independently rather than from the instructor is the focus of training (Suhendi, Purwarno & Chairani, 2021). These authors go on to elaborate that constructivism is a philosophy that contends that each person produces knowledge on an individual and social level. Krishnamoorthy, Prelatha, David and Manikam (2021) posits that constructivism recognises an individual's active role in the process of creating their own knowledge, the value of experience in this process, and the fact that the degree

to which the information developed is correct in representing reality will vary.

Some of the proponents of the constructivism theory include the likes of Jerome Bruner, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey (Adom, Yeboah & Ankrah, 2016). The construction of knowledge is achieved either by way of accommodation or assimilation. This implies that an individual can learn new information by accommodating the new knowledge in their mind, or they can assimilate new information. This means that the individual retains the old knowledge and may choose to use or ignore new information (Adom *et al.*, 2016). The relevance of the constructivism philosophical paradigm to this study is based on the core meaning and purpose of this philosophical paradigm; the assertion that knowledge is constructed through interactions with a phenomenon, and meanings are concluded after the experience (Adom *et al.*, 2016). Here, the relevance of the constructivism theory is because this study seeks to establish the influence of ICT and the practices of leaders within the management space. The subsequent findings should allow the researcher to construct an ICT approach or conclusion for school leaders. The view of the researcher is supported by Wang, Chen, & Anderson (2014), who argue that in social constructivism, a network is a social media for interaction. This assertion implies that ICT in schools could be utilised as a means of communicating between different stakeholders.

#### 3.2 Connectivism

Literature reveals that the connectivism paradigm is suggested to be a more acceptable theory for this digital age (Mattar, 2018). The argument here lies in the understanding that information is no longer held by an individual, but that other people or databases can spread the information by means of more efficient devices (Mattar, 2018). Connectivism posits that knowledge can be inherent in non-human objects and in networks. It distinctly identifies the existence of groups and networks (Bell, 2011). Within the school environment, groups exist among different levels of stakeholders, school leaders, teachers, learners, parents, and other external groups. Consequently, these groups are linked through the ICT networks available in schools. Furthermore, connectivism assumes that knowledge is a structured network (AlDahdouh, Osório & Caires, 2015). This network is based on sets of nodes connected through relationships with each other. Thus, technology has actors and connectors. In this case,

smart phone devices, electronic books and websites are the actors, while social networks, the internet and intranet are as the connectors (AlDahdouh *et al.*, 2015). In a school situation, a school would be placed as a node or network consisting of different stakeholders such as teachers, students, administrators, and parents. Connectivism places emphasis on the interaction with and between people, media, and places, distributing knowledge across networks. Therefore, a network is viewed as an extension of the mind (Wang *et al.*, 2014).

### 3.3 E-Leadership

Adaptive Structural Theory (AST) serves as the foundation for the E-leadership paradigm (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). AST was conceived to assist in describing the way people incorporate AIT into their work (Avolio *et al.*, 2000). Through its interaction with organisations, AST highlights that AIT may influence leadership, and such interactions could lead to transformation (Avolio *et al.*, 2000).

DeSanctis and Poole (1994) define AIT 'as tools, techniques, and knowledge that enable multiparty participation in organizational and inter-organizational activities through sophisticated collection, processing, management, retrieval, transmission, and display of data and knowledge. These include e-mail systems, message boards, groupware, Group Support Systems, knowledge management systems, executive information systems, and collaborative customer relationship management and supply-chain management systems. These technologies can help leaders scan, plan, decide, disseminate, and control information'. This definition of AIT will assist the researcher in this study to ascertain the foundation of and subsequent link to e-Leadership. According to Avolio *et al.* (2000), e-leadership refers to a social influence process interceded by AIT to produce a shift in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behaviour and/or performance with individuals, groups, and/or organizations. Wu, Yu and Hu (2019) identify e-leadership of school principals as the basis of ICT transformation in a school setting.

The deployment of ICT in schools, e-leadership, and teacher attitudes toward ICT are significant drivers of ICT transformation in schools, according to recent literature (Wu, Yu & Hu, 2019). Aspects of e-leadership, which are leadership strategies and practises aimed at achieving the vision and

objectives of e-learning, have also been studied (Chen, Ho & Ng, 2013; Tan, 2010). As a result, the National Educational Technology Standards for Educational Leaders (NETS-EL) were published by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE, 2018). They include the following attributes: advocate for equity and citizenship, visionary planner, empowering leader, systems designer, and connected learner. Even though several studies have examined the leadership styles and traits of school principals in relation to ICT use in schools (Chen *et al.*, 2013), research into the effects of e-leadership on lagging factors like school level ICT application and variations in teaching and learning is still lacking.

Five concepts related to e-Leadership, including teacher attitudes toward ICT, ICT implementation in schools, government ICT policy, and teachers' pedagogical transformation, make up e-leadership. In this study, an ICT culture management model for school leaders was established and developed using an adaptation of the e-leadership paradigm to fit the South African setting.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The aim of this conceptual paper was to analyse literature relating to ICT tools to support e-leadership and communication, transformation of ICTs in schools in the post-pandemic era and managing ICTs in schools. The findings and discussions in this paper are based on literature reviewed. In terms of ICT tools to support e-leadership and communication, literature findings revealed that the successful deployment of e-leadership requires a strong leader (Yudha & Susanto, 2019). Furthermore, research revealed that the most frequent problems that could obstruct e-leadership were inadequate and poor communication, miscommunication, communication chaos, a lack of understanding of ICTs, poor security management, issues with the instructor's constant contact, and poor management of the basic and auxiliary technology, according to Van Wart *et al.* (2019).

Findings relating to the post-pandemic age, revealed that hardware flaws were uncovered, necessitating the need to master virtual meetings, which became crucial to ICT leadership and communication (Toleikienė *et al.*, 2020). The typical ICTs methods used by school leaders prior to the pandemic, such as phone calls and emails, were replaced with virtual

meeting software, such as Teams and Zoom, live conferencing, and groups on Facebook after the pandemic (Toleikienė *et al.*, 2020). Hardware defects were discovered in the post-pandemic era, according to literature, necessitating the mastery of virtual meetings, which became essential to ICT leadership and communication. Prior to the pandemic, school administrators often communicated by phone calls and emails. After the pandemic, they switched to live conferencing, Facebook groups, and virtual meeting tools like Teams and Zoom (Toleikienė *et al.*, 2020).

The literature findings on managing ICTs in schools demonstrated that maintaining ICT entails several concerns, including upkeep, cleaning, and software and hardware repairs, among others (GDE, 2011). The management of ICT in schools presents additional obstacles, according to the literature. The most frequent issues are a lack of money for ICT education, inadequate ICT infrastructure, unstable power sources, excessive ICT facility expenses, inadequate ICT facility implementation, poor network service and coverage, and low ICT literacy. Additionally, the literature offered potential approaches to manage ICTs in schools, such as promoting and supporting role modelling, exchanging best practises, and participating in professional development (Banoğlu & Gümüş, 2022; A'mar & Eleyan, 2022).

In terms of the theoretical framework, literature findings has shown that both connectivism and constructivism theories serve as a foundation for the adoption and creation of an ICT model that school administrators may use. Constructivism emphasises how new knowledge must be integrated or adjusted to fit into a person's conceptual framework. It also argues that ICT in schools could be used as a channel for communication between diverse parties (Wang *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, literature findings show that knowledge is no longer the sole property of a single individual because it can now be shared via databases or other users of more advanced technology. In this way, networks and non-human objects can both contain knowledge (Bell, 2011; Mattar, 2018).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, it is vital to unequivocally acknowledge the presence of networks and groups as knowledge hubs. The e-leadership model discussed in this paper is further highlighted as essential and as having the potential to support the creation of a

model for school leaders to manage ICT. Teachers' pedagogical reform, government ICT policies, school ICT implementation, and teacher attitudes toward ICT are among the five themes in e-leaderships that literature highlighted has been related to e-Leadership. It is recommended that an ICT model relevant to the South African context be developed to assist school leaders in their communication and management roles. It is further recommended that ICT professional development should be provided to stakeholders involved in the education sector.

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# Language Development Engulfed Within Social Distancing Proprieties

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**Abstract:** This paper reasons that language learning for most secondary school learners post COVID-19 pandemic era was submerged by of social distancing emergent procedures. These were restrictions people from all spheres were expected to observe and adhere to. This has resulted in becoming a difficult exploration for language teachers as learners have been noted to perform better in relation to language development when they learn as both pair and groups. For learners to be held up in predicaments of abruptly distancing themselves from peers, guardians, or teachers, really raises some alarm bells as language with its expanded aspects need collaborative engagements. Authors conducted a survey in a nominated school in an Eastern Cape Education District. The identified district formed part of a community where high death toll from COVID-19 statistics was reported. The investigated school emanates from a society that was forced to abide by the restrictions brought about by the pandemic era. Investigation conducted aimed at identifying whether social distancing proprieties have any significant influence on language development, thereby imparting also in learner academic attainment. Semi-structured interviews as data collection tools were administered to five purposefully selected participants who offered English as First Additional Language (FAL) in the nominated school. The interview schedule contained open-ended questions that allowed robust and lengthy discussions. Findings to this investigation disclosed that language proficiencies in learners have been noted to deteriorate due to the methods of teaching that have since emerged, as well as declining relations among school stakeholders. Human relations in any sector, either governmental or non-governmental, when not nurtured, could lead to a decline in the throughput rate. For purposes of this investigation, it became eminent for a firm sustenance with regards to human relations within all school stakeholders. Considering re-aligned teaching methods, coupled with maintained relations, is recommended. In conclusion, proficiency in a language as a collective advantage leads to improved communication and excellence in academic attainment as most subjects underpinning the curriculum in the investigated schools are offered in the English medium.

**Keywords:** Development, Language, Academic attainment, Social distancing, Proficiency

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## 1. Introduction

For an envisaged and efficient language proficiency aptitudes it has been proved vital that learners work collaboratively as peers, through academic guidance from their teachers in line with subject specific (Emmanuel, Adom, Josephine & Solomon, 2014). At the same time, when parents are at the core, proficiency in all subjects offered by the school curriculum, together with improved academic attainment, become the best and delicious fruit ever anticipated by all stakeholders involved in the schooling system (Jagero, 2011). Strengthened collaborations, energetic engagements, especially within a specified schooling environment, results of information being shared and skills-transfer, become the basis of maintained improvement cherished by all (Benthall, 2019). As English language is foreign and unfamiliar for most learners in the school where this inquiry was conducted, teachers

are faced with a huge challenge to trans-pursue varieties of teaching approaches to cater for diverse learners (Chand & Das, 2022). Further than that, collaborative engagements within learners, teachers and parents have been noted to promote augmented social skills, thereby leading to improved communication abilities, fluency, and adequate abilities to comprehend with text (Naz & Murad, 2017).

Accordingly, for the entire countries of the world to be attacked by COVID-19 pandemic era, there emanated newly designed policies for all organisations (Saavedra, 2020). These changes greatly affected the schooling norm as there were school closures, social distancing protocols, non-collaboration within individuals from the very same household, let alone shaking of human relations as community members were barred from commonly-known collaborative gatherings. Such procedures to be observed by all proved to have negatively impacted not only on

learner language enhancement but a decline in academic throughput rate became the talk of the day (Consilz, 2020). It is for this reason that authors of this paper embarked to undertake an investigation where a question had to be answered: How has language development been affected by social distancing?

Although studies have been conducted in relation to social distancing logistics that have affected schooling processes, this paper has identified a gap that no studies have been made in relation to effects of social distancing on language development. It is for this reason that we were probed to undertake this investigation. As articulated by Meeter, Bele, Den Hartogh, Bakker, De Vries & Plak (2020), such emergent changes leading to teaching and learning processes being revised, leave us as authors with no room but to acknowledge that indeed social distancing logistics have somehow hindered learner language proficiencies, yet, success and effectiveness for all subjects underpinning the curriculum need learners who display mastery across all language aspects like listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, fluency and text comprehension.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Empirical Literature**

Fatima (2020) argues that language development has been reported to be deteriorating as language teachers narrated sad stories that they no longer had freedom as per their anticipation because they recently could not freely move very closer to learners to assist those who seemed to have barriers in learning. In the same view, learners identified as introverts have lately found themselves in a condition that they never predicted. Such cohort of learners seemed to be really enduring stress hence conveying reports that they were struggling to collaborate with either their peers or teachers for the purposes of sharing information (Bin Dahmash, 2020).

For an enhanced language proficiency, information sharing through group learning and teaching engagements, as supported by Rifiyanti (2020) is a remedy that assists learners to voice out own opinions through group participation, yet protocols on social distancing limit learners to unite and form groups in a classroom setting. For each learner to be expected to learn an unfamiliar language by

own self really raises some alarm bells to us as the authors of this manuscript, yet on the other side the greatest percentage of subjects in the school where this enquiry was made, practise English language as the medium of instruction (Chambers & Schilling, 2013).

In relation to language proficiency, social collaboration as opined by Racine, Birken & Madigan (2020) is proved to be an essential strategy. Despite that, measures and constraints on social distancing for large groups are declared to have affected learning in schools (Glass, Glass, Beyeler & Min, 2006). For realistic language development, peer grouping is renowned as a crucial element for its inclusion of conversational skills as learners obtain platforms for exchanged and shared learning coupled with understanding the implicit meaning behind a speaker's words (Hopman, Tick, Ende, Wubbels, Verhulst, Maras & Lier, 2018).

Astuti and Solikhah (2021) believe that the current state of affairs seems to have an effect on the methods of teaching used by language teachers. Teachers in one study that was undertaken contended that they experienced some hindrances of not conducting lessons the way they had planned (Barker, Semenov, Michaelson, Provan, Snyder & Munakata, 2014). For them to be found disbanding group learning started to be imparting negatively in their teaching methods. This was made evident as the study divulged that ever since schools started to adhere on social distancing regulations, learners' academic attainment in languages, specifically reading and writing scores, were reported to show some decline when compared to the period prior the pandemic era (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020).

Furthermore, Köylü (2021) is of the opinion that as learners have varying learning styles, some learn quicker when they engage in pair or group discussion with their peers. On the same vein, teachers reported being caught up at using more or less the same teaching methods time and gain (Llanes & Serrano, 2017). For instance, in cases where debating activities were performed for language enhancement, only a limited number of learners were permitted to partake as there had to be a measurable distance in between them. In addition to that, teachers are faced with a situation where they find themselves disadvantaged in engaging learners in group discussion method as learner groupings had to be disbanded, this method also limiting

sharing of teaching and learning material as learners are expected not to share, instead to use own material as a way of avoidance to spread the deadly COVID-19-related sicknesses (MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2020; Salas-Pilco, Yang & Zhang, 2022).

On the same judgment, Sawchuk (2020) and Patrick, Henkhaus, Zickafoose, Lovell, Halvorson, Loch, Letterie and Davis (2020) echo a similar view. They declare that lately some attitudes from learners were observed. Such attitudes include displaying tenseness regarding drastic emergent changes as they swept over the previous norms and values of the schooling context. As sudden changes brought about by COVID-19 social distancing proprieties had begun to emerge, fear could be written all over learner faces as learners endured hard time meeting others to pursue school matters.

Additionally, interaction between learners and teachers was no longer the same as before due to social distance limitations (Holger & Dieter, 2020). This action has proved to cause lots of strain for both teachers and learners as recipients for learning. On a different scenario, Kumar and Chacko (2010) argue that some learners had continuity at displaying positiveness in learning. This was evident as learners showed indications that, for a new lesson implemented, learners proved to be somehow ahead of their teachers as they demonstrated fluency and better text comprehension when compared to previously conducted lessons.

## 2.2 Theoretical Literature

Underpinning this paper is the Model of Teacher Change by Guskey (1986). This framework portrays teaching-learning beliefs and attitudes in a schooling environment as a focal point. Teachers have beliefs that in the previous era implemented strategies of grouping learners were seen to be yielding better progression results when analysis was tabled, as against the current learning situation where close interaction is permitted for either stakeholder. Educational implications for this model are that for enhancing language development in these destabilising current times, it is therefore vested upon language teachers to regularly assign reading texts to learners, whether in singles, pairs or groups; yet, either out-of-school or within the learning environment itself, for prompt monitoring and rendering all the necessary assistance required (Cave, 2021). It became imperative to use such a model as

it relates to the schooling emergent changes in the entire sector of the education system, the underlying effects being aligned to COVID-19 protocols and regulations (Akram & Qureshi, 2017).

It is needless to mention that there was an imperious need for this study to be conducted to examine the possible impact of social distancing proprieties towards language development more so that language learning is a fundamental aspect intertwining all subjects offered by a specific curriculum because for ease of access to communicate whether locally, nationally or internationally, one needs to have language command.

## 3. Methodology

This is the segment where methodology undertaken to arrive at the objectives of this investigation is discussed. Justifications on why a specific type of research methodology has been chosen, has also been appropriately clarified. As opined by Goundar (2012), numerous research methodologies often provide an all-inclusive introduction to the topic under investigation. Methodologies adopted for this investigation rotated around evaluating social distancing proprieties towards language development. Accordingly, research methods are strategies of inquiry that move from the inherent theoretical expectations to research design and data gathering.

### 3.1 Approach

This paper administered a qualitative approach. This approach was relevant because of its characteristic of giving access to examine both cultural and social phenomena of the problem under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There was motivation to undertake this qualitative investigation upon observing that was an interest to understand people better, thereby getting a closer understanding on how social distancing proprieties affected language learning as such regulations were not a normalcy in the previous learning environment.

### 3.2 Research Design

Embedded in this qualitative investigation is action research. This research design, as opined by Strauss and Corbin (2015) is an acknowledged yet a logical investigative method normally employed in sectors like organisation improvement and education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Action research design also

aims at examining persons' real-world immediate challenging concerns coupled with social science goals within an adequate ethical basis (Rapoport, 1970). This design was perceived a valuable research design for use at investigating social distancing protocols towards language development.

### 3.3 Sampling

Creswell and Poth (2018) acknowledge that sampling has an objective to identify population descriptions through observing a specified percentage of the population. It was for this reason that this paper conveniently selected participants that would serve as agents to collect data more so because of their relevancy as they were language teachers who offered tuition in a schooling environment where there had previously been a whale of bereavements from COVID-19 deaths, as such social distancing logistics remained under contingent observation in most schools around. Henceforth, results to this enquiry could not be generalized. Five English language senior secondary school teachers were identified as participants as they were the relevant cohort with easy access to information, as well, with observance of ethical considerations to acknowledge participant rights as elements of research data gathering (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### 3.4 Research Instruments

Research instrument as a data collection tool necessitates measurement and analysis of data from, moving in-between subjects and the topic being investigated (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). The instrument for use is determined by the approach administered, either qualitative or quantitative or mixed. For this investigation, efficacy was on administering semi structured interviews. When this process was conducted, interviewers verbally engaged by asking questions from the interviewees. As the interview schedule composed of open-ended questions, the order of questions changed time and again in their specific ways. Open-ended responses resulted at interviewees probing follow up questions.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a critical aspect of action research, Gass and Mackey (2011) declare that this process includes categorizing and interpreting gathered data into valuable evidence, thereby forming themes as

findings for the topic under investigation. This entire process started by encoding, thus, classifying the context with its plethora of responses that later formulated the basis of thematic opinions. For purposes of this investigation authors analysed social distancing proprieties brought about by COVID-19 regulations towards language development for senior secondary school learning as compared to previous moments where merging of learners was regarded a vibrant approach during processes of teaching and learning. Participant responses were transcribed and grouped as per their similarities. This led to identification of themes discussed in the next section as findings of the study.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This unit is where authors have presented a contention of findings as emanated from participants responses. Focal point for discussion rotates around proprieties of social distancing intertwined with effects towards language development and academic attainment. During data analysis similar or relevant responses were grouped together, as such, codes were formed. Two codes that came up were teaching tactics and relationships. Coding led to formation of themes. Two themes that frame the discussion as divulged by findings are: approaches to teaching and stakeholder relations. In conclusion, the authors outline recommendations as means to address the identified challenge.

### 4.1 Approaches to Teaching

In response to teaching approaches participant S1 responded that:

*As a teacher who has long been teaching English subject in different classes, I really got overwhelmed that my previously used tactics of grouping learners seemed to be no longer viable.*

In line with the response above, participant anonymously coded as S4 had a similar response:

*For me, it usually works to my advantage when learners undergo language activities like comprehending texts, together, at the same time, be it as pairs or as groups. Be that as it may, governmental regulations on social distancing had resulted at me having to throw away my preferred teaching strategies as learners had to work independently, away from each other.*

These responses are comprehended by S2 who commented that:

*Closure of schools whilst countries around the world were held tight by pandemic bereavements really resulted at a very huge decline in relation to learner language proficiencies. Actually, the fact of the matter is that learners come into close and serious encounter with English language only at school, specifically during English periods. For learners to have stayed at their homes for prolonged periods affected language development as learners had got exposed to their background/cultural communities held up with varying linguistic complexities coupled with linguistic constituencies.*

From the findings of this paper, it emerged as a major challenge that learner language proficiencies were observed to have deteriorated ever since the sudden changes of teaching methods that overtook the eruption of COVID-19 pandemic (Aji, Ardin & Arifin, 2020). Despite restrictions brought by emergent changes in the education system, language proficiency remains with all its aspects like listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and fluency, meaning, as these are fundamentals towards academic attainment, language teachers continue to be faced with a burden to revitalise existing teaching methods. It then becomes the task of teachers to invent strategies and approaches that have an ultimate goal of evolving learner competency (Mahmood, 2020).

In addition, teachers can devise strategies that allow, accept and respect individual learner submissions, these being tasks compiled outside the schooling environment, yet, in the absence of the teacher (Hopp & Thoma, 2020). As observance of social distancing remains a challenge (Akban, Rathert & Agcam, 2021), teachers, without diverting from the intended work schedules, need to allow for robust discussions about learnt experiences, thereby enhancing language development by clarifying and extracting identified language errors. As these engagements go on and on, teachers should then ensure they afford consistent opportunities for learner-teacher interaction, taking into cognisance that as learners perceive things differently, so are their dissimilar learning styles. Teaching approaches and learning styles are inseparable.

## 4.2 Stakeholder Relations

Positive relations among parents, teachers and learners are renown of their characteristic to reap

satisfactory throughput regarding academic attainment. As soon as such relations thereof, begin to be shaken by either environmental or societal influences, decline in learner performance is well-noted (Rifiyanti, 2020). It is for this reason that participant S2 relayed a very sad story to us as authors when interviews were administered:

*When I re-look at how the school year plan would be designed by us a languages department, I become so saddened to observe that the so called 'open-learning days' are no longer the talk ever since the eruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. Gone are those days when parents would be timeously invited to schools to observe, applaud and motivate both their children and teachers on the appealing work displayed. Such an event used to be solely organised for learners to compete and engage at a circuit or district level, where skills like reading, speaking, debating, writing, text comprehension, were groomed and developed. Top achievers would be handed some awards. Events of this nature encouraged and stimulated also those learners who were lazy or had difficulties in learning.*

In congruency to S2, another participant coded as S5, responded:

*For us as teachers to attend to learners in a one-on-one fashion as we are forced to observe social distancing protocols, is really a strain as it affects human relations between teachers and learners. Additionally, as it has become to clomp learners as pairs or groups, peer-learning relations are somehow hindered.*

This is supported by S3 who accords that:

*As learners have varying learning styles coupled with learning abilities, some perform better when working as pairs or groups. For learners to be suddenly divorced from sharing information among themselves is tantamount to a decline in learner language proficiency, likely to impart in negativism when academic attainment is looked over at a broader spectrum because for learning to be granted effective, yet efficient, there is a dire need for learners to have holistic grasp of language aspects as all subjects underpinning the prescribed curriculum have texts to be comprehended.*

Another finding to this investigation was the decline in stakeholder relations. Relations among

all persons involved in the schooling environment were influenced by the sudden change in governmental restrictions after the entire countries of the universe got affected by COVID-19 ailments. In-between teachers and learners as recipients to teaching and learning, declining relations were eminent due to school closure impacts, more especially towards language learning as most subjects offered by the curriculum centre around languages because of texts to be comprehended (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020). During this disturbing transition to learning, most learners were reported to have lost relationships with peers as communication vibes had been lowered as most schools had opted to session-schooling attendance, surely to lose bonding of the previously constructed concrete relationships. This situation really raises some anxieties to the most vulnerable, likely to endure additional learning barriers.

In line with vulnerability, Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) opine that protocols of social distancing have brought about concerns to discourage sharing and caring among human nature as compared to the previous ways of teacher-parent-learner engagements. On the other side, Ariyanti (2020) argues that learners have begun to display some negativity as they seem not to take anything seriously, thus continuing sharing everything. Additionally, social distancing protocols have been reported to limit effective and efficient relations that were previously perceived by teachers to be having a satisfactory effect on learner academic attainment. When the processes of teaching and learning are held in predicaments of attitudes by either of the stakeholders, the probable outcome is downgraded language proficiency, thereby hindering learner academic performance.

As broader curriculum objectives are addressed by the content of the subject learnt, learning outcomes for English language learning describe actual examples and specifications of enhanced language proficiency with descriptions of possible strategies that can aid language learning, also intended to cater for improved academic attainment despite diverse learning and teaching approaches. Findings of this paper are in line with Guskey's (1986) Model of Teacher Change as this theory focuses on emergent changes in the schooling environment thereby having an educational implication that teachers should regularly dispense texts to be comprehended to, irrespective of the modes that have been recently noted to disband pair or group learning.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Encounters experienced by English language teachers due to social distancing proprietaries' effects on language development, were examined. To teach and learn an unfamiliar language, yet, within constraints to communicate and engage frequency, is a real test. We, therefore, conclude that for learners to become proficient in language learning, there would be improvement also in text comprehension and fluency, thus serving as drivers for quality in academic attainment as the subjects for the offered curriculum in the studied school has an English medium base. In addition, we recommend revamping in language teaching methodologies to cater for the global emergent changes, be it technologically, policy-related, or otherwise. There is a direct need for maintained relations within the schools' stake holders. We therefore propose for unity among recipients in any organisation of learning, surely to erupt to excellence in academic attainment, not only for languages, but cutting across all subjects reinforcing the curriculum of that institution. Competency in language learning is tantamount to outshined learner throughput rates.

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# Implementation of the Revised Electrical Technology Curriculum in Selected South African Secondary Schools

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**Abstract:** Curriculum revision has always been a continuous feature in the South African educational system for the past two decades. This was intended to address the issue of scarce skills shortages in key secondary school areas for the development of the curriculum, one of which is Electrical Technology. The study investigated the effectiveness of the revised Electrical Technology curriculum and how it is implemented, with the goal of determining the successes and challenges encountered by teachers during the process. The interpretivist case study with a narrative review and data were gathered using the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews. Four Electrical Technology subject teachers from four geographically linked case study schools were chosen as a pragmatic sample. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interviews, which were conducted in accordance with the study objectives. Inadequate teacher training on curriculum implementation and a lack of relevant teaching and learning support material are among the findings. The study concludes that teachers should be given opportunities for continuing professional development as well as the chance to further their education studies in order to improve their content knowledge. The provision of adequate teaching and learning support material, as well as well-equipped infrastructure, will fundamentally play a critical role in the effective teaching and learning of Electrical Technology subjects in schools.

**Keywords:** Electrical Technology, Technology subjects, Revised curriculum, Curriculum implementation, experiences

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## 1. Introduction

Most African countries began the process of curriculum revision as soon as they gained sovereignty and independence from colonial masters. They modified their school curriculum to decolonize the previous curricula in order to accommodate the increasing expectations of their communities and focus on promoting their cultural identities. South African Education Departments (Higher and Basic) initiated a curriculum reform and restructuring as an effective means of meeting the citizens' and society's needs for rapid economic growth (Molapo, 2016; Kokela, 2017). This restructuring was meant to make the curriculum more impactful and able to respond to social and economic needs by providing learners with actual knowledge, expertise, and meaningful competencies (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019).

In South Africa, all curriculum reforms since the advent of democracy have been taken as disastrous because teachers frequently feel unsupported or undertrained to meet the demands of the revised curriculum and lack the necessary content knowledge to carry out their teaching duties (Lidegran, Hultqvist, Bertilsson & Börjesson, 2021). Teachers

lack pedagogical content knowledge and familiarity with philosophies that inform the implementation of curriculum change. Despite extensive research on national curriculum reform, understanding the way in which South African teachers have been supported in adapting and adjusting to curriculum change remains a question (Themane & Thobejane, 2019). Complicating the implementation of the revised Electrical Technology curriculum, there has been a shortage of subject education specialists who specialize in Electrical Technology so that they can give support to ET teachers in schools during curriculum implementation (National Planning Commission, 2012). A change in curriculum necessitates a change in the function of the teacher (Van der Nest, 2012).

Electrical Technology (ET) is one of the technology subjects that was revised in 2013 and that put more emphasis on the application and comprehension of electronic and electrical concepts (Department of Basic Education, 2014a). As a revised subject, ET focuses on three major areas of specialization that are: Power Systems, Electronic Systems, and Digital Electronics and this affects the current teacher's pedagogical content knowledge. The revised curriculum is based on NATED 550 subjects that were

implemented prior National Curriculum Statement's (NCS) inception in 2004. There were several systems in place to support the revised curriculum's implementation. First, there were trainings for teachers and subject education specialists on the revised curriculum before it was implemented. Other district personnel were keeping an eye on the implementation procedures to make sure the curriculum was being implemented correctly. In addition, policy documents, textbooks and other materials were offered without regard for the state of the schools.

Many researchers (Eytayo, 2021; Mpungose, 2021; Nkosi & Adebayo, 2021; Willemse, Venketsamy & Swanepoel, 2022) concentrated on the successful implementation and implications of the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for classroom instruction rather than the difficulties involved with it. However, beyond the opportunities and challenges of implementing the CAPS curriculum, the researcher in this study observed ways that can be flexible for the teaching process while meeting the goals of the revised Electrical Technology curriculum. The study's goal was to examine the effects of implementing the revised ET curriculum across a number of schools in the Alfred Nzo East area and the main goal of the South African DBE is to achieve the necessary objectives and outcomes in order to provide quality education (Seme, Gamede & Uleanya, 2021).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Literature

The study views the constructivist theory of teaching and learning as the fundamental perspective through which the revised curriculum should be examined. To improve teachers' expertise and engagement, the constructivist theory of teaching and learning theory in this study focuses on naturally incremental teaching by establishing special relevance through authentic interactions that focus on hands-on and active learning engagements. It is a theory that is thought to place a strong emphasis on ET learners' naturally cumulative learning by establishing personal relevance through their inquiry-based learning, with an emphasis on interactive involvement and exposure to new discoveries so that it boosts engagement and learning retention. Constructivism, according to Kayii and Akpomi (2022), is a learning theory that suggests unique knowledge construction through the engagement and interaction of background experience to establish new knowledge and it

is cutting-edge in the teaching of technology subjects at all educational levels. Constructivist theory assists teachers in transitioning from highly dependent on developing performance and computational skills in learners to more challenging twenty-first-century skills that necessitate high levels of competence but within the context of a more well-rounded skill that encourages critical reasoning, problem-solving, effective communication, and perceptiveness. While Technology subject teachers can use this approach to promote higher-order thinking skills, the theory also assists learners to acquire these skills in a progressive process as they are given an opportunity to develop meaning and also help each other. Technology subject teachers experienced in teaching Technology are able to administer learning and their learners as they cooperate in their groups in order to achieve higher-order thinking skills.

### 2.2 Empirical Literature

#### 2.2.1 *Electrical Technology as a Curriculum*

Electrical technology (ET) is one of the subjects that intend to provide learners with a solid understanding of electrical, electronics and digital principles. This is a learning program that aims at the knowledge and implementation of electrical and electronic concepts, preparing learners to demonstrate the technological skills and knowledge required to set up, manage, sustain, and restore electrical and electronic equipment. (Department of Basic Education, 2014b). The subject covers safe work practices and first aid, workshop practices, analyzing circuit diagrams, purchasing circuit components and assembling circuits, testing, installation, and circuits troubleshooting. In this study, ET is construed as a curriculum that can contribute to enhancing learners' competencies at the school level (Grade 10-12), designed to allow them to choose a future career when entering institutions of higher learning (Further Education and Training College or a university), as well as preparing other learners to enter apprenticeship programs for a trade (Department of Basic Education, 2014c). It gives access to specialized employment or occupational workplace-based learning and lays the groundwork for high-quality, systematic education that fulfills the needs of learners and prepares them for future occupations.

#### 2.2.2 *Understanding the Curriculum and its Implementation*

In various studies (Aronsson, 2022; Englund & Stockhult, 2022; Licaros, 2022; Rosvall & Nylund, 2022), the idea of curriculum and how it relates to

education are closely intertwined. Likewise, education is regarded as an essential basic right to humans and is a valuable legacy that a nation leaves to its citizens. A curriculum is a collection of productive assets used by teachers to apply a set of content (Madondo, 2021). The curriculum implementation includes a proper meaning of what is in the approved curriculum content and everyone is responsible for ensuring that it is effectively put into practice. Many researchers (Little & Paul, 2021; Madondo, 2021; Manyage, Sithubi, Mudau & Ravhuhali, 2022) expressed the need to monitor and support the revised curriculum implementation where program policy designers and Subject Education Specialists (SES) design the curriculum at the macro-level and the implementers (teachers) incorporate it at the micro-level. Teachers must be fully involved in curriculum planning and design in order for it to be properly implemented, as their participation can bring them ownership, which is viewed as a critical source of legitimacy for policy decisions. Mbongwe (2018) believes that teachers may exhibit a variety of characteristics, opinions, and perspectives as a result of their particular subject, experience, previous knowledge, interactions, as well as other aspects discussed in previous studies. If teachers perceive curriculum development as something beyond their control due to a lack of resources, even if they have positive attitudes, they may not be able to incorporate it (Park & Sung, 2013). The curriculum is made up of details that provide the necessary instructional equipment and classrooms that are frequently conducive to learning. It includes the learner-teacher relationship as well as other work experiences related to school.

### **2.2.3 Teacher Support for Curriculum Change**

Curriculum change necessitates the implementation of new teaching and learning regulations, showing that all steps involved must demonstrate sound rules and processes for dealing with all emerging threats (Law, 2022). Curriculum change may impact teaching and learning negatively or positively depending on how teachers perceive it, and many teachers appear to be unsure and confused about the curriculum change (Loo & Sairattanain, 2022). According to Attia (2017), curriculum developers' curricula and innovations are frequently required to be implemented by teachers. Quality education, technology integration, personal accountability, personal consciousness, dealing with uncertainty, creativity and innovation, pedagogical knowledge, and practice orientation are critical goals of the curriculum change. Teachers react in different ways

to curriculum change, which is greatly determined by their teaching methods; in other words, they do not simply apply the change; rather, they perceive and adjust it based on their various frames of expertise (Phakathi, 2018). The success of the curriculum changes and revision requires teachers to have more background in curriculum and instruction practices.

It is acceptable to assume that how teachers implement a curriculum will correspond to how they measure it, as well as the effectiveness of training assistance and development courses they receive (Foulger, Wetzel & Buss, 2019). Curriculum developers may not always be acquainted with teachers' views and perspectives, and even the actual classroom situation in which all the invention is to be incorporated and if teachers' perspectives are not adequately considered, the already difficult aspect of adapting to new changes can be adversely affected (Mathura, 2019). The School Management Team (SMT) as the curriculum leader is responsible for monitoring and supporting curriculum implementation and change.

### **2.2.4 Infrastructural Resources and Material**

Technology education is a method that includes the expertise and study of learner efforts in constructing including using tools, methods, materials, and processes to control man-made and natural settings with the goal of enhancing human ability and learners' interactions with the community (Baharin, Kamarudin & Manaf, 2018). According to Barret, Treves, Shmis, Ambasz and Ustinova (2019), technology education is important in the education system, however, the structures chosen must be appropriate for each specific school's pedagogical approach and learning process, and additional study is required to match technology use with educational needs including not only learning environments but also school planning and construction. The resources necessary for successful implementation of the school curriculum include basic infrastructure which is regarded as the foundation of academic institutions without which it is impossible to accomplish the academic goals at all levels (Ogunode & Hadi, 2021). Structures, practical facilities and educational equipment are critical components of educational spaces in schools hence there is strong research that suggests relevant infrastructure to facilitate better instruction and improve learner attainment and other benefits (Barrett *et al.*, 2019).

### 3. Research Methodology

This study used an interpretive qualitative research design, and the four secondary schools (Technical High Schools) in the Alfred Nzo East District of the Eastern Cape were selected for the study. The study used the purposive sampling method to select four Electrical Technology teachers who could best meet the objectives of the study and achieved several desired criteria for the required knowledge (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The researcher made certain that teachers taught Electrical Technology from grade 10 to grade 12 and were part of implementing the revised curriculum.

A case study design was chosen to obtain detailed knowledge and discover more about the teachers' opinions and experiences in implementing the revised ET curriculum, as well as the kind guidance and support to assist with curriculum implementation. The researcher used audio-taped semi-structured interviews with four teachers to collect qualitative data, and diary notes were taken to supplement the information. The classroom observation was then conducted to learn more about how teachers view the revised ET curriculum. During the observation, diary notes were also used. Classroom observation was useful in gathering data because, as stated in the review of literature, resources are the most important factors in the implementation of curriculum changes. This is known as data triangulation, and it is used for cross-validation of data sources and data gathering methods. The goal of data triangulation was to obtain multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon while increasing the amount of information in the data. For the reasons stated above, the study agrees with Yin (2011) that data should be used as the foundation for any research study.

On the day of the interview, each teacher was reminded of the study's purpose and their voluntary role in helping with the data. They were made aware of their research rights as well as how their responses would be used. Before beginning the semi-structured interview, permission was obtained to record the session so that the researcher could review the recorded information over and over again and jot down the taped interview into textual content for data interpretation and discussion. Each interview process lasted from 40 to 60 minutes. The information was then transcribed verbatim and was then segmented and sorted according to

relating ideas in organized themes, allowing it to make sense of qualitative data in a systematic and flexible manner. Pseudonyms are used to protect teachers' and schools' identities. PL1-PL4 are used as pseudonyms to describe the names of the teachers. In addition, minor editing of grammatical errors in interview transcripts was performed, but without compromising the teachers' original comments.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The study's conclusions identify three main challenges that could delay or hold back the revised ET curriculum from being successfully implemented. These findings came from interviews and classroom observations conducted to learn more about how teachers perceive the revised ET curriculum.

#### 4.1 Educational and Professional Development for Teachers

The first theme from the findings was the need for teachers to receive training and professional development in order to apply the revised ET curriculum. The majority of teachers expressed their displeasure with the quantity and caliber of workshops offered by the DBE to complement the redesigned ET curriculum. For instance, one teacher (PL1) indicated that:

*"The Department can make so many adjustments to the curriculum, and we are not prepared because we are still adapting to the changes brought about by the implementation of CAPS, now this one. These changes really confuse us, we need time to adjust and adapt, and we need help in the form of workshops and training to do this. We were only trained for three days per year per class for the content that required us to deliver this content for the whole year. The workshops were not enough at all. I still need more assistance in some areas of the subject".*

The following teacher's response exemplifies the frustration felt by many teachers:

*"The Department of Education should have spent more time training and preparing us by allowing us to thoroughly digest and comprehend the material. We needed more time for longer and more effective training. We only had three days, which was insufficient. The amount of content could not have been covered in the required timeframe. Many of*

*us returned to school without understanding some of the new topics included in the curriculum. I'm still perplexed. We weren't even convinced of the importance of learning more about the subject. For me, the shortness of the training created a negative attitude toward this revised curriculum, and I'm better off with the old Electrical Technology curriculum" (PL3).*

*"The workshops did not adequately prepare us to implement the changes in the Electrical Technology curriculum; a three-day session is insufficient, but we also do not properly understand some of the adjustments we must now make in our lessons" (PL4).*

The above statements show that the duration of the training workshop was believed to be insufficient to cover all aspects of a revised curriculum. As a result, according to the teachers as study participants, the training was rushed. They believed that the training had raised more questions than answers, which is why they continued to refer to the workshops as complicated. Most of them during the follow-up questions also expressed concerns about the training's quality, claiming that the trainers themselves were unfamiliar with some of the content revised curriculum. These comments lend weight to numerous previous studies (Molapo & Pillay, 2018; Adewumi & Mosito, 2019; Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Jojo, 2019), that have demonstrated problems in curriculum renewal and implementation due to curriculum leaders' inadequate provision of chances for teachers to engage in professional development.

## 4.2 Teaching and Learning Support Material

It can be deduced from the transcripts that teachers revealed the teaching and learning support material as inadequate in their schools for the ET curriculum to be implemented successfully. The following are teachers' comments regarding the state of teaching equipment and material available at their schools were as follows:

*"I take my learners to the other school for the practical activities and demonstrations because we do not have enough equipment and space at my school" (PL1).*

*"I usually go to another school because we don't have laboratories to do practicals at my school,*

*there are no resources at all even the tools and other equipment that need us to do projects and practical activities are not provided" (PL2).*

*"We do have some practical resources and equipment though they are not enough. We are not able to test some practicals because our workshop does not have the three-phase supply; we only have single-phase supply and that makes me feel uncomfortable because I will be seen as someone who is incompetent" (PL3).*

Some teachers indicated that they usually go to other schools for assistance especially since they were required to do projects and simulations that contribute to the marks of the learners at the end of the year. Electrical Technology is a subject that requires a hands-on application and does not consist of only the theory part but also the practical component. That is why teachers have to make sure that they make plans to support their learners to achieve the practical part of learning, especially the Practical Assessment Tasks (PAT). Problems that have been noted in all schools were that there were inadequate or no resources at all. Other resources were said to be in bad condition, and that means teachers were unable to use them as they mostly require an electricity supply.

## 4.3 Curriculum Support and the Content Gap

The researcher saw it necessary to determine the views of teachers concerning content gap challenges they face in implementing the revised curriculum. It was also noted that PL2's school does not have HOD for technology subjects. The data shows that support from that school is minimum.

PL3 and PL4 articulated their views by saying:

*"I can say that in grade twelve there is a chapter on PLCs and it was termed the other way in the old Electrical Technology. It was the chapter on Logics, which did not have practical. Then for this one, we are doing the PLCs on the computers and laptops. Then for that practical, we need software to be able to teach and demonstrate it but we do not have anything to show our learners. How are we going to set questions yet they do not have a clue of the lesson itself? How will they perform during their examinations when we as teachers do not have the required information? This makes me frustrated really." (PL3).*

Teachers need financial support in order to have the software purchased.

*"There are topics that are yet not clear to me, as I have never attended any workshop or training concerning the content gap or some of the practical activities, for example, the chapter on PLCs. Even in our WhatsApp group, teachers are having the same concerns, but they help us where they can. Here at school, we do not have a three-phase supply of electricity and that makes it difficult for me to do some of the practicals that require a three-phase supply. I only rely on the videos just for demonstration purposes" (PL4).*

This shows that there is a content gap that needs immediate attention from the DBE and the school management. Teachers expressed views of being unhappy about the chapter on the Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) that was added to the content of specialisation subjects in the revised curriculum and also need software to be able to cover it. They indicated that it was difficult to teach it as they do not have a clue on how to teach it. This shortfall seems to be common among all teachers and needs to be resolved for better implementation of the subject.

Teachers also indicated that they did not get any content-based training. According to Bantwini (2019), one of the issues facing the South African education system, in general, is the failure to successfully translate new curriculum reform from theory into the teaching process. Krulatz and Christison's (2022) study revealed that content-based knowledge enables teachers to teach more effectively. Teachers' lack of subject knowledge indicates that the Department of Education should intervene and organize content-based workshops.

Electricity supply was one of the concerns of PL1, as his community does not have an electricity supply. He responded by saying:

*"There is no electricity in the community and it's really hard to teach the chapter on PLCs and we do not have a HOD for technology subjects and that makes it difficult for us technology teachers to get the help that we need".*

This concern is very important, as electricity supply is one of the basic resources for effective implementation of specialisation subjects, as teachers need

demonstrations and practical activities (simulations). This also denotes that teachers may either be implementing the curriculum incorrectly or have reverted to traditional methods of teaching as they do not have managerial support. This can make it more difficult to successfully apply the revised curriculum.

## 5. Discussion of the Findings

The study looked into teachers' experiences with implementing the revised Electrical Technology curriculum, with the view to ascertaining the successes and challenges they faced. The findings confirm the important challenges proposed by Ankiewicz (2021) and Banks and Williams (2013) in their analysis of the curriculum documents for Technology education. Teachers are critical to the success of DBE policies, especially when implementing new or revised curricula. From the interviews and the classroom observations, it became clear that most of the teachers attended the teacher trainings and workshops but they were not satisfied with the time and days that were allocated for these workshops. Teacher professional development is totally necessary if the revised curriculum is to be implemented so that schools can set appropriate plans for their implementation for enhanced productivity (Jenkins, 2020).

Although teachers received some form of training, this was generally inadequate and sometimes inappropriate with little or no follow-ups from DBE for upgrading. It was stated that the inappropriate workshops did not address the implementation of the revised curriculum (teachers only attended practical workshop since the commencement of the revised curriculum). The study showed that teachers have confidence in implementing the Electrical Technology revised curriculum. However, this would be strengthened if the DBE takes the necessary steps to fulfil its obligation and responsibility of providing adequate formal training to teachers, especially on challenging topics that are newly introduced into the curriculum.

The study revealed that adequate teacher training, ongoing DBE support, and the availability of materials and resources are critical to the successful functioning of the schools offering the revised curriculum. Subject specialists and advisors must facilitate regular workshops and lead the trainings. Not only are teachers expected to work tirelessly, but every stakeholder is expected to actively participate in every learner's education. According to the study,

curriculum revision in South Africa is a versatile as well as a difficult process. All involved parties must actively engage on an equal footing. It also emerged that teachers do not have enough relevant resources for demonstrations or practical activities as required for effective teaching of the revised curriculum. Electrical Technology requires hands-on application, visual representations, simulations and video clips to improve learners' understanding. Curriculum restructuring implementation is seen as lacking in some schools due to the absence of facilities like laboratories, workshops, and an insufficient supply of resources and materials.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The researcher suggests that the Department of Basic Education, as the main stakeholder, take the following recommendations into consideration before and during the revised curriculum implementation based on the findings of this study into teachers' experiences with implementing the revised Electrical Technology curriculum in selected Secondary Schools in Alfred Nzo East District.

Provision for continuous in-service training for teachers: Teachers should be encouraged to have discussion meetings on a fortnight basis to discuss the different strands of the revised curriculum in order to help those who may have a gap in content knowledge. Teachers need continuous support from different levels to grow professionally. Senior Education Specialists (SES) and SMT need to identify content knowledge gaps in teachers in order to develop and provide training that aims at the issues and requirements of the teachers. Support to Electrical Technology teachers is needed to help facilitate the transition to the revised curriculum. This will also help enhance their pedagogical content knowledge in the said areas – content, methods and instruction.

The SMT is in charge of making sure that teaching and learning take place in a secure atmosphere. Therefore, relevant resources and infrastructure need urgent improvement in accordance with the revised curriculum needs. The availability of instructional resources, such as practical material and tools is believed to enhance content comprehension. It is recommended that in addition to the teacher exploring alternative resources such as teaching and learning software and internet material, instead of relying solely on management to provide resources,

management itself must raise additional funds or allocate a budget from the departments' funds for Technology subjects. The researcher encourages the school management to prioritise Technology classrooms and laboratories.

If the revised curriculum is well executed and everyone is actively engaged, the benefits will be seen in teachers' and learners' performance. Furthermore, if district officials, particularly Subject Education Specialists and school authorities, get involved, the revised curriculum implementation is believed and bound to improve. A significant improvement is possible if the officials involved are assertive in their operation, while the necessary support is provided and prioritized among the underprivileged schools. This suggests that effective strategic implementation intended to improve teachers' experiences with the revised curriculum will necessitate a collaborative effort from all stakeholders.

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# Effectiveness of Quality Review of the Online Modules Used During Emergency Multi-Modal Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

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**Abstract:** The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has accelerated the need to be resilient, and to adopt a student-centered approach to learning for our survival. Globally, a majority of higher education institutions adopted online teaching and learning during the pandemic. At the study university, lecturers were provided with emergency remote support for designing learning material for delivery within a remote online environment by means of the IMFUNDO learning management system. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of quality reviews for online modules used during emergency multi-modal teaching and learning. Participants were 67% female, and 33% male lecturers from the Faculty of Science. A mixed-method approach was used. Data were collected by means of IMFUNDO Module Quality Review Instrument open-ended questionnaires, as well as individual interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS frequency distribution. Atlas.ti was used to analyze the qualitative data. The results showed that 261 modules were quality assured and used IMFUNDO year template. In terms of the basis for the storyboard relating to the design of IMFUNDO modules, it was determined that most lecturers used the approved HEQSF curriculum documents relating to the module descriptors and study guide. The planning, design, and implementation of theory modules were effective. However, the practical modules and quality of assessments remain a challenge. It is recommended that lecturers attend technology-enhanced professional development programs to improve their digital skills, competency, and pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Quality review, Learning management system, Online learning material, Multimodal teaching and learning, Higher education

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## 1. Introduction

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic accelerated the need to be resilient, and to adopt a student-centered approach to learning for our survival (Radwan, 2022). Globally, the majority of higher education institutions adopted online teaching and learning during the pandemic. Hafeez, Naureen and Sultan (2022), indicated that in uncertain times, the quality of online learning was regarded to be a challenge amongst the institutions of higher learning. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic raised the need for high-quality online education (Zimmerman, 2020). The challenge in this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the quality review standards of online modules developed on the IMFUNDO. The IMFUNDO is the pseudonym for the learning management system used for the purpose of this study, by lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. This study was motivated by Simelane-Mnisi's (2022) recommendation with regards to investigating the quality of the IMFUNDO modules during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The study conducted by Al-Amrani (2021) on the development of frameworks for reviewing and designing courses in higher education, revealed that module has significant problems with its learning objectives, rationale, delivery strategy, learning material and resources, as well as assessments. Lack of quality control, development of e-resources, and delivery of e-content standards were observed as hinderances during uncertain times (Dhawan, 2020). Research shows that the review and design processes should be based on the module design framework (Volungeviciene *et al.*, 2014).

The instructional designer developed a quality review checklist based on redesigned module templates. The module templates assisted lecturers with the constructive alignment, scaffolding and chunking of learning material, resources, and activities. To further ensure the quality of developed modules in the training framework, the Faculty of Science module offering templates were designed. The framework for the design of online modules were grounded by the arena blended connected

learning design, Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge, flipped learning approach, Revised Community of Inquiry, and the constructivism theory (Simelane-Mnisi & Mji, 2020b). It may be argued in this study that these theoretical frameworks and models assisted the instructional designer and lecturers to ensure that online modules provided quality in the online delivery of learning, considering the socio-economic backgrounds of the study University's students.

At the study university, the emergency multi-modal teaching, learning and assessment strategy was adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (Simelane-Mnisi & Mji, 2020b). Lecturers were provided with Emergency Remote Support for designing learning material for delivery within a remote online environment by means of IMFUNDO (Simelane-Mnisi, 2020). This is supported in by Law (2022), who argued that it is necessary for lecturers to undergo regular training to ensure a more effective delivery process.

In this study, the quality review focused on the developed and implemented modules during 2021. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of quality reviews relating to online modules used during emergency multi-modal teaching and learning. To accomplish this, the IMFUNDO Module Quality Review Instrument was used to determine the quality of online implemented modules. Survey questionnaires with open-ended questions were used to establish the lecturers' perception concerning learning material and activities, as well as the quality of the IMFUNDO modules. Individual interviews were also used to verify the data from other instruments.

## 2. Literature

### 2.1 Emergency Remote Support

At the study university, lecturers were provided with Emergency Remote Support for designing the learning material for delivery within a remote online environment by means of the IMFUNDO learning management system (Simelane-Mnisi, 2020). This is supported by Law (2022), who argued that it is necessary for lecturers to undergo regular training to ensure the delivery process is more effective. Sumer, Douglas and Sim, (2021) argued that formal training on the learning management system (LMS) operation and what online teaching looks like, should be

organized, and customizable frameworks should be supplied. To reinforce the view of Sumer, Douglas and Sim, the researcher utilized the IMFUNDO teaching and empowerment [training] framework (ITEF), presenting lecturers with the necessary skills for the planning, design, and development of the IMFUNDO modules (Simelane-Mnisi, 2022). Considering that the university adopted a 'one instructional designer per faculty' strategy, the Do-It-Yourself approach was used. The Do-It-Yourself (DIY) strategy means that lecturers created their online modules under the guidance of the Instructional Designer. Since technology alone cannot provide a positive or successful learning experience, the instructional designers ensured that pedagogy received a higher priority status (Vlachopoulos, 2020).

### 2.2 Quality Standards of Online Learning Material

Quality Matters (2022) emphasizes that, when designing an online or remote module, it is critical to consider the eight general standards of quality relating to course overview and introduction: learning objectives (competencies), assessment and measurement, instructional materials, learning activities and learner interaction, course technology, learner support, accessibility and usability. The course quality review process is aimed at improving course quality (Al-Amrani, 2021). In this study, when preparing online or remote teaching, it was critical not to compromise the quality of online material (Simelane-Mnisi, 2020; Simelane-Mnisi & Mji, 2020b). The authorized Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQSF) curriculum was established – with the concept of constructive alignment in mind – to assist lecturers in their preparedness for the online-learning (Simelane-Mnisi, 2022). The module descriptor and study guide were the relevant documents supporting the planning and development phase of the story board. Constructive alignment assisted to focus on the learning outcomes, assessment criteria, learning material (content), learning activities, interactions (collaborations) and feedback, as well as course technology.

### 2.3 Online Modules Quality Measures

An institution's quality assurance processes involve educating lecturers about the criteria for course design and mandating them to use such criteria, as well as assessing the quality of courses offered (Zimmerman, 2020). For higher education institutions

to achieve excellent results in online learning, various researchers and instructors have suggested numerous quality assurance indicators (Hafeez *et al.*, 2022). A number of models for quality assurance in online learning have been identified by Hafeez *et al.* (2022), including the Comprehensive Approach to Program Evaluation in Open and Distributed Learning Model (CAPEODL), the E-Learning Maturity Model, and the Evaluation and Assessment Logic Model. Planning, Development, Process and Product Evaluation (PDPP), a conceptual framework for quality assurance of online learning, a conceptual model for online learning quality assessment, and a conceptual model for online learning quality assessment, are a few examples of conceptual models for determining the quality assurance of online learning. Zimmerman's (2020) study context was provided by Quality Matters course reviews, offering lecturers peer evaluation of online course design since 2005. During the initial review, approximately 591 (39.7%) of the 1,487 courses were not particularly designed to adhere to Quality Matters course design standards. In this study, principles of Quality Matters as well as the IMFUNDO system tools assisted the researcher to support the lecturers in reviewing the quality of the online modules.

### 3. Methods and Material

A mixed-method approach was used. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested that a mixed-method approach involves combining or integrating data to provide a deeper understanding of the problem or question at hand. The triangulation design's

convergence model was used, as the researcher collected and examined qualitative and quantitative data separately on the same phenomena before converging the results during the interpretation phase (by contrasting and comparing the results) (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017). Hence in this study, the IMFUNDO Quality Review Instrument (IQRI), survey questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions, and interviews were applied to collect data. Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences frequency distribution. Atlas.ti was used to analyze the qualitative data. Ethics clearance was obtained from the study university to collect data from participants in the Faculty of Science.

#### 3.1 Participants

In selecting the participants, the study employed stratified purposive and convenient sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The researcher draws the convenient sample population from the Faculty of Science lecturers at the study university, as they were easily accessible, and the researcher is the instructional designer assigned to the faculty. The participants were also involved in the quality review process of IMFUNDO. This implies that 116 participants (67% female and 33% male lecturers) from the Faculty of Science responded to the online survey. Table 1 shows the biographical data (gender and age) of the participants in a cross-tabulation format according to the IMFUNDO Module. The results revealed that 114 of the participants indicated their modules were active on IMFUNDO. Of

**Table 1: Cross-Tabulation of Participants' Biographical Data**

		IMFUNDO Module		
		Yes	No	Total
Gender	Female	75	2	77
	Male	39	0	39
Total		114	2	116
Age	25 – 35	26	0	26
	36 – 45	25	0	25
	46 – 55	36	1	37
	56 – 65	22	1	23
	66 and above	5	0	5
Total		114	2	116

Source: Author

these participants, 75 females indicated their modules were on IMFUNDO. The results also showed that approximately 36 participants, average age group range between 46-55, revealed their modules were active on IMFUNDO.

### 3.2 Instruments

The IMFUNDO Module Quality Review Instrument (IMQRI), survey questionnaire with closed-ended questions, and individual semi-structured interviews were used. The IMQRI and closed-ended questions from the survey were analyzed using SPSS. Data from the open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews were analyzed by means of Atlas.ti software.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 IMFUNDO Quality Review Instrument

It was established that the Faculty of Science had 1389 active modules on IMFUNDO during 2021. The first semester consisted of 333 modules, second Semester comprised of 263, Year modules totaled 525, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) comprised of 114 modules, and 154 other modules were also included. It may be argued that less than a quarter of the modules were evaluated for quality assurance in 2021. The reason for so few modules to be evaluated can be attributed to the fact that a self-evaluation method was used, and not all lecturers evaluated their modules. Table 2 shows the quality review per module offering. It may be observed from the table that 261 modules were evaluated. The LMS common template/structure was proven to be effective in the Cho et al. (2021) study, where 100% teacher usage and student participation have been observed. Of these modules, the majority (166) were Year/Semester modules.

According to Dhawan (2020), it is essential for lecturers to consider the improvement and development of the quality of virtual courses offered in time of crises. The results of the Year/Semester with practical component self-evaluation quality review are presented.

### 4.2 Year/Semester Modules with Practical Component

The results of the Year/Semester modules with Practical component frequency distribution are presented. In terms of Course Home Page [CHP], it was found that 94.6% of the modules created learning content widgets (CHP5). It may be argued that lecturers built this element and chunked the learning material and activities with each unit. This was expected to curb the cognitive load, and promote participation and engagement from the students; even during self-study. This finding is reinforced in literature by (Chen, 2021), who revealed that scaffolding and chunking increase opportunities for engagement by presenting the information in a variety of methods and modalities. This was followed by 90.5% of the modules that updated Lecturer user profiles (CHP2) and created a welcome and introduction widget (CHP4). The results suggested that the majority of lecturers uploaded their picture and a short biography for students to identify and or recognize their lecturers online.

### 4.3 Module Information

Regarding welcome and introduction [WI], the results indicated that 94.6% of the modules customized and updated the study guide (WI9). It was found that 91.9% of the modules customized and updated the Welcome Statement (WI1) and added Lecturer details and consultation times (WI3). It may

**Table 2: Quality Review per Module Offering**

Module Offering	Modules Evaluated
Year/Semester	166
Year/Semester module with practical	74
Block	7
Problem Based Learning	7
WIL	7
Total	261

Source: Author

be argued that the majority of lecturers uploaded a study guide and ensured their personal identity and teaching presence in an online environment.

#### **4.4 Learning Content**

Concerning learning content [LC], the results revealed that 90,5% of the lecturers populated topic, description, learning outcomes and assessment criteria (LC4). This suggests that the constructive alignment was maintained online. It was also found that the majority 93.2% of lecturers added New Units/Chapters/Topics to modules under learning content (level 1) using new unit element. (LC1) showed that most 85.1% of the lecturers added Unit/Chapter/Topic short introduction and outline of learning material, created HTML document for learning material [Notes in PDF, PPT, PPT with audio etc.] (LC5) and provided clear instructions to the students as well as created links for live classes with MS Teams. It was found that the IMFUNDO modules developed online adhered to the required design. This suggests that the constructive alignment was maintained online.

#### **4.5 IMFUNDO Tools to Engage the Students**

The quality furthermore evaluated the use of IMFUNDO tools to engage the students. In this case and in terms of Gradebook [GB], the results showed that more than half (54.1%) of the lecturers built a module gradebook (GB1), 51.4% added all required grade items (GB2), and 50% ensured that the final calculated grade sums to 100% (GB3). These results suggested that the gradebook contributed to student engagement, as it was critical for students in an online platform to continuously be presented with the results of their online activities in order to monitor their academic performance. The results indicated that more than half (59.5%) of the lecturers did not use group (G1) activities online. This suggests that lecturers were not familiar with the formulation and utilization of online groups to enhance students' collaboration, teamwork, and communication skills.

Regarding Formal Tests (FT), it was found that most (82.4%) lecturers provided clear instructions for online quizzes/tests (FT1) and students knew exactly what was expected from them. The results showed that 62.2% of the lecturers did not add digital badges (awards) associated with quizzes/tests (FT3). This suggests that the lecturers did not know

how to use the badges functionality available on IMFUNDO. In terms of Formative Assessments (FA), the results revealed that less than three quarters (74.3%) of the lecturers provided the students with clear instructions on quizzes/tests (FA1). The results indicated that 71.6% of the lecturers stated and calculated the correct marks for all quizzes/tests (FT2). The results showed that more than half (58.1%) of the lecturers did not add the digital badges (awards) associated with quizzes/test (FT4). Furthermore, the results revealed that more than half (55.4%) of the lecturers did not activate the intelligent agent for tracking and monitoring the student-at-risk.

Concerning the Discussion Forum [DF], the results indicated that more than half (55.4%) of the lecturers did not use the scoring discussion topics (DF1). The results also showed that 50% of the lecturers did not provide marks for discussion topics (DF3). This suggests that lecturers were not familiar with the use of the discussion forum or how it can be used to promote student engagement while learning online.

Regarding the Assignments [A], the results showed that more than half (59.5%) of the lecturers provided marks and clear instructions to the students (A2). The results also indicated that more than half (51.4%) of the lecturers provided stated and calculated correct marks for all assignments (A3). The results suggest that more than half of the lecturers were able to use and provide assignments to students in an online platform. The results indicated that 56.8% of the lecturers did not use the digital badges (awards) associated with assignments (A4). The results also showed that 51.4% of the lecturers did not activate the intelligent agent for tracking and monitoring the student-at-risk (A5).

#### **4.6 Practical Component**

In the Faculty of Science, most modules have a practical component requiring students to be equipped on laboratory skills. In terms of the Practical on IMFUNDO, a Practical Component [PC] was created. The results indicated that 64.9% of the lecturers added new units to create practical components for a module (PC1). The results showed that 63.5% of the lecturers added a brief practical overview (PC2). The results revealed that 66.2% of the lecturers created HTML documents for experimental material [Notes in PDF, PPT, PPT with audio etcetera] (PC7) and provided students with clear guiding

instructions. In terms of the Practical Component Gradebook [GPC], the results indicated that less than half (44.6%) of the lecturers built a module gradebook (GPC1) and added all required grade items (GPC2). The results also revealed that less than half (40.5%) of the lecturers ensured that the final calculated grade sums to 100% (GPC3) and that the total weight of all categories and items amount to 100% (GPC4).

More than half (52.7%) of the lecturers did not use online group (PGG1) activities. In terms of pre & post-laboratory tests [PPLT], the results showed that less than half (44.6%) of the lecturers stated and calculated marks correctly for all quizzes/tests (PPLT2). The results also indicated that less than half (40.5%) of the lecturers included clear instructions on quizzes/tests to offer guidance to the students (PPLT1). The results also revealed that less than half (41.9%) of the lecturers did not use digital badges (awards) associated with quizzes/tests (PPLT3).

## 5. Quality of IMFUNDO Learning Material and Activities

With the use of Atlas.ti, Saldana's thematic method was used to analyze the qualitative data and identify meaningful patterns (themes) in codes (Saldana, 2021:177). The two themes generated were quality and suggestions of IMFUNDO learning material and activities. The names used in the qualitative findings are pseudonyms. The lecturers had to indicate the warranty of not compromising the standard of learning material and activities on IMFUNDO, and the speedy instructional design of their modules for remote or online teaching in uncertain times. It was found that most of the lecturers used the approved HEQSF curriculum documents (relating to the module descriptor and study guide) as the basis for the development of their online module. This was to emphasize the constructive alignment in an online environment so as not to deviate from what the module requires within a qualification. Dr Pillay mentioned that *she tried to keep everything on IMFUNDO as per Institution standards guided by the module descriptor and study guide*. Dr Dlamini, a Head of Department, indicated that *she ensured that lecturers in her department utilized study guides to maintain standards, more especially the learning outcomes and assessment criteria*. Ms. Lebo indicated that *she covered everything as it was stipulated in the study guide, as she designed IMFUNDO module*. In an online environment, constructive

alignment ensures that students achieve the learning outcomes they desire, enhances learning and retention rates, and improves student engagement (Quality Matter, 2022).

It was further established that the lecturers maintained the standard on IMFUNDO by using the prescribed template according to the module offering. Mr Mphahlele revealed that *he tried to keep to the prescribed layout of the learning content and activities of IMFUNDO*. Dr Mahaye, the Head of Department (HoD), also indicated that *she confidently believed that none of the lecturers deviated from what was supposed to be taught for the students or left out sections or study units, because the module template provided guidance on the development of the study material online*. At the College of the Mainland in Texas City, Texas, the adoption of a standard "master" template in an LMS was observed in order to promote best practices for employing technology for developmental education (Goomas & Czupryn, 2021).

The results showed that the quality of IMFUNDO was accomplished at various levels such as HoDs, lecturers, and students. In term of HoD, Mr Mahlangu mentioned that *he requested observer access to all the IMFUNDO modules so that he could view all the modules in his department to do a spot check of quality*. He verified the learning material and activities. Mrs Mayburg revealed that *she attempted to maintain a higher quality online as she normally maintained in the face-to-face environment*. Mr Lugweju indicated that *he asked the students for frequent feedback to ensure that the learning material and activities engage them, and are of a high quality*. Zimmerman (2020) argued that online instructional design and delivery enable lecturers to empower online students to manage their own learning experience through time and energy management.

It was found that IMFUNDO quality was assured by the lecturers' exposure to the application of course design. In this case, the HoD, Mr Maluleke said that *he ensured IMFUNDO quality by engaging the staff in the department internal show and tell type of meeting*. In this meeting they discussed online practices on IMFUNDO to help everybody, and to indicate on what levels of content is uploaded. This was to ensure that all the lecturers worked fine on IMFUNDO, and the level of content and activities uploaded was not compromised online as opposed to face-to-face. Research has demonstrated that lecturers' perception of the influence of course design in online learning are



improved by their exposure to a collaborative evaluation of course quality (Zimmerman, 2020).

Some of the lecturers felt that Covid did not affect the quality of material, as they were equipped during the planning phase on how to prepare the material for online presentation. Dr Chauke indicated that *she was not sure how Covid could affect the quality of anything on IMFUNDO, because it was online – not like face to face where the pandemic affected heavily*. Mr Mafiq indicated that *they worked as a team of six in their module, and before they upload anything on IMFUNDO, they circulate amongst themselves so as to ensure quality*. Mr Samiya mentioned that *the feedback from team members assisted in improving and making changes on the IMFUNDO module*.

It was further established that the new approach to teaching during uncertain times improved the quality of teaching. Mrs Nhlengethwa said that *this new approach to teaching forced them to improve the quality of teaching, because it allowed them to evaluate the content*. For example, *the module that she taught for more than seven years which she did the same thing in the face-to-face classes, she was forced to revise and offer it in a better way using IMFUNDO tools*.

## 6. Suggestions on Quality Review of IMFUNDO Modules

Lecturers were conflicted in their comments as provided after reviewing the 2021 Year/Semester modules. Some lecturers were satisfied and succeeded in designing and developing their modules using the Year/Semester Faculty Template. In this case, Mr Van Brink said *he is happy with design*. Dr Mooi said *IMFUNDO is a very user-friendly tool*. Dr Ndlela mentioned that *IMFUNDO functions very well for her*. It was also found that some of the lecturers attended the training, which assisted them in building the modules on IMFUNDO. Mr Makhubele revealed that *the training was fantastic*. It has been demonstrated that using a standard, pre-built template effectively reduces lecturer frustrations (Simelane-Mnisi & Mokgalaka-Fleischmann, 2022).

It was further determined that some lecturers still need to be empowered in utilizing the advanced tools available on IMFUNDO. In this regard, Prof Mamaki mentioned that *he needs to do more training on badges and intelligent agent*. Dr Leeroy revealed that *IMFUNDO should have a calendar that they can customize themselves to put on dates of special activities*

*such as test dates, due dates, and others*. Mr Nkomo indicated that *he wanted to import content from previous year IMFUNDO module to current year for quick update or editing, not start afresh construction content areas every year*. Ms. Mahlangu said *she would like to explore IMFUNDO more for assessment purposes*. Ms. Khoza said *refresher workshops for users of IMFUNDO are needed probably once a year*. It may be argued that even though the Emergency Remote Support was provided (Simelane-Mnisi, 2020), it was not sufficient for other lecturers.

It was found that the quality review checklist was easy and helpful. Mrs Mbele said *the quality checklist helps a lot too! Thank you*. It was also found that lecturers would prefer to review all the modules on one checklist. Here, Mr Nkuna indicated that *it would be better to do the review for all modules on one form*. Various models for quality assurance in online learning have been identified by Hafeez et al. (2022). Furthermore, the QM module review process provided a detailed official review process for online modules quality (Quality Matters, 2022).

In terms of Block module, it was found that some lecturers were able to design according to the module template, whilst others faced difficulties. Ms. Coetzee indicated that *all the required materials uploaded under a block module were well organized into different categories to make it easily accessible for students(users)*. On the other hand, Mr Mafa revealed that *the nature of Block module is not linked to many of the requirements of the template*. It may be argued that not all departments were involved in the development of the Block module template, therefore could not provide the necessary and relevant information to the instructional designer responsible for developing the Block template.

For the Problem-based Learning (PBL) module, it was found from the comments that one lecturer who provided inputs for the PBL module, did not evaluate 2021. However, the 2022 module was still a work in progress. Regarding the WIL module template, it was found that the template did not cover the aspect required for WIL. Mr Nhlanhla said *the template used for WIL is not applicable to all aspects entailed in WIL. This occurs in industry, and students work under supervisors. Supervisors do not have access to IMFUNDO. This template could be verified*. It may be argued that providing different IMFUNDO templates – according to the module offering – proved successful. I may strongly argue that a one-size-fit-all

IMFUNDO template is not conducive to different module offerings. It is critical that instructional designers work collaboratively with subject matter experts to ensure the support provided and the selection of the appropriate IMFUNDO tools, cover the scope of the module.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

From this study, it can be concluded that the study University made an effort to ensure lecturers were supported during the designing phase of the IMFUNDO module. A multimodal teaching, learning, and assessment strategy was implemented during the pandemic crises. To support the strategy, the Emergency Remote Support provided to lecturers allowed them to create their own online modules on IMFUNDO – under the guidance of the instructional designer. It was noted in this study that the instructional designer placed more emphasis on the constructive alignment, the use of HEQSF approved documents relating to the module descriptor, and the study guide. This was accomplished to assure that quality standards of teaching and learning in an online environment are fulfilled. Furthermore, during uncertain times, lecturers were offered the appropriate guidance to design IMFUNDO modules.

As a one-size-fits-all template proved ineffective, the quality measuring instruments in this study were developed depending on the types of modules available in the Faculty of Science. The quality measurement instruments were established using Quality Matters, with a stronger emphasis on the IMFUNDO LMS. Additionally, it was discovered through this study that the quality checklist assessed the elements within module information, learning content, students' engagement tools and assessment tools, as well as the practical component encouraging student engagement. Proper guidance, scaffolding and chunking of learning material proved successful to manage cognitive overload and promote participation. The quality reviews of online modules used in this study proved to be successful, as it assisted both the instructional designer and subject matter expert to improve on their practice based on what produced results, and what did not offer a desired result during implementation. The study therefore recommend as follow:

High academic standards are necessary for a university to provide high-quality research and teaching outcomes, which ultimately results in the production

of high-quality graduates. It is critical that higher education institutions emphasize quality standards when subject matter experts design online modules, even in times of crises. Best practices for online learning across the institutions – and among peers – should be practiced. Institutions of higher learning should strive to establish internal online modules quality measurement instruments catering to LMS (emphasizing student engagement), and consider other awarding bodies. It is recommended that lecturers attend technology-enhanced professional development programs to improve their digital skills, competency, and pedagogy. A further study could be conducted with a larger sample in a different context. Further studies relating to the quality of online modules could be conducted with other module offerings, as identified in this study.

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# The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Opportunity Recognition: Testing the Mediation Role of Entrepreneurial Culture

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**Abstract:** Entrepreneurial culture and its role in entrepreneurial opportunity discovery among individuals who received entrepreneurship education is somehow ambiguous. This study sought to clarify this uncertainty. The study, therefore sought to establish whether entrepreneurship education predicts opportunity recognition. Further, the study investigated whether entrepreneurial culture mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition. A quantitative research methodology as guided by the positivist paradigm was adopted. An explanatory research design was followed. A survey was used to collect primary data. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 170 respondents who were purposefully sampled. Two hypotheses were formulated and simple linear regression analysis was performed with respect to H1. Hierarchical regression analysis was performed with respect to H2. Results reveal that entrepreneurship education predicts opportunity recognition while entrepreneurial culture partially mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition. From the findings, we can learn that entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial culture are variables that academics, practitioners, and policymakers can rely on to promote opportunity recognition. With this in mind, the study concludes that important steps can be taken to develop a quality entrepreneurship curriculum that responds to the needs of South African students who prefer self-employment as a career.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship education, Entrepreneurial culture, Opportunity recognition, Curriculum, Mediation

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## 1. Introduction

The role of entrepreneurship in global economic growth is not to be underestimated. In emerging economies like South Africa, entrepreneurship is expected to create jobs, reduce poverty and enhance business skills for entrepreneurs. It is widely believed that entrepreneurship is a skill and therefore it can be taught to anyone willing to learn. Across the globe, institutions of higher learning have responded to the demand for entrepreneurship education and designed entrepreneurship courses to accommodate those in need. Seemingly, the demand for entrepreneurship education is increasing globally. In response, Almahry, Sarea and Hamdan (2018) emphasized that entrepreneurship education enables individuals to beware of the link between entrepreneurship and economic growth. This is critical to individuals who are not aware of this link but have the desire to contribute towards economic growth. In other words, entrepreneurship education empowers people to kick start entrepreneurial initiatives resulting in a vibrant entrepreneurship culture in a society.

Wei, Liu and Sha (2019) argued that most student entrepreneurs have unleashed entrepreneurial resources through entrepreneurship studies. In addition, they are better able to gather critical information for decision making, designing new product development processes, forge new partnerships and maintaining them, resulting in sustained entrepreneurial success. In the South African context, entrepreneurship education is identified as an uncultivated field where business training is prioritised to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) success rates (Price & Ronnie, 2021). Entrepreneurship education is encouraged to unveil entrepreneurial opportunities to students and graduates (Sierlkhatim & Gangi, 2015). When students and graduates recognize and exploit these opportunities, they somehow condition their mindset to a life and career in entrepreneurship. This mindset is critical to a sustained entrepreneurship culture (Krauss *et al.*, 2005; Shepherd *et al.*, 2010).

The concept of entrepreneurial culture in organisations and communities has been a subject of research in the past years (Shava, 2022). More

studies have focused on the role of innovation and creativity leading to growth of entrepreneurial culture at organisational level (Danish, Asghar, Ahmad & Ali, 2019). However, significant research work exploring the relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial culture, leading to opportunity recognition is lacking. Entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial culture are two key variables concerning economic growth and that is why research investigating the relationship between these variables and their role concerning opportunity recognition is critical. This is more importantly so in the South African context where an entrepreneurship career has been identified as a key mitigating factor to unemployment challenges that South Africa is facing. This study will contribute to the literature by investigating whether entrepreneurship education predicts opportunity recognition, and by determining whether entrepreneurial culture is a mediator between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition. The thinking is that as much as entrepreneurship is highly encouraged in South Africa, there is no clear model for promoting entrepreneurial success and this study will develop one. The structure of the study is as follows: literature review, research methodology, results, discussion and the study's conclusion.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Foundation**

Two schools of thought regarding opportunity recognition exist and both of them have their roots in evolutionary economics. One school of thought emphasizes on active search for information in the external environment while the other advocates for individual alertness in identifying entrepreneurial opportunities. According to Schumpeter (1942), the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities is a result of the active search for information in the external environment. In other words, Schumpeter (1942) dismissed the argument that opportunities sometimes accidentally emerge, as others would argue. Stevenson and Gumpert (1985) concurred and pointed out that the external environment presents abundant entrepreneurial opportunities. Kaish and Gilad (1991) added that since entrepreneurial opportunities exist in the external environment, an individual must scan the environment to single out the unfulfilled needs, which can be exploited profitably.

To exploit opportunities that readily exist in the environment, the entrepreneur needs to be creative and innovative. Through creativity and innovativeness, the entrepreneur brings to the market new organisational processes, products, and services, among others, with the goal of exploiting the identified entrepreneurial opportunity. Therefore, entrepreneurial opportunities are determined by the environment (McMullan & Long, 1990), but can only be identified by entrepreneurs who actively engage in information search (Busenitz & Barney, 1996). The second school of thought (Austrian School of thought) argues that opportunity recognition is a critical aspect of the entrepreneurial activity and that in a competitive market, there are no limitations to access to knowledge. However, the value of information differs across individuals depending on the type of information they possess (Hayek, 1945; Kirzner, 1973). Timmons (1999) concurred and added that only individuals who stand out in search of resources are most likely to recognise entrepreneurial opportunities with little difficulties.

### **2.2 Entrepreneurship Education**

Entrepreneurship education has become a very important tool that industries around the world are counting on to be more competitive (Liguori & Winkler, 2020). Businesses that survived the COVID-19 lockdown owe a great deal to entrepreneurship education. According to Jardim, Bártolo and Pinho (2021), entrepreneurship education is perceived to be a highly impactful discipline. Thus, when implemented correctly can, it yields positive outcomes on issues related to economic growth, income inequality, collaborations, organizational competitiveness and individual fulfilment. To ensure that entrepreneurship education plays a more advantageous role among students, for example, developing their competencies and the capacity to alter to rising technologies, entrepreneurs tend to pursue possibilities within the market (Beynon *et al.*, 2016). Higher education needs to enforce entrepreneurial skills courses in universities as a mandatory tool or programme to equip student graduates with entrepreneurial dispositions and qualities, knowledge, and business skills. Ratten (2020) affirmed that a well-formulated and implemented entrepreneurship curriculum practically empowers students to participate in entrepreneurship endeavours. Consequently, a particular need has been identified to improve the impact of entrepreneurship training. Therefore,

awareness of entrepreneurship programs offered by public and private institutions may be useful. Furthermore, entrepreneurship education should be able to identify students who can and who cannot pursue a career in entrepreneurship successfully. This will help effectively allocate scarce entrepreneurial resources necessary to start and sustain entrepreneurial careers (Boldureanu, Ionescu, Bercu, Bedrule-Grigorut & Boldureanu, 2020).

Chang *et al.* (2014) noted that well-designed EE programmes enhance problem-solving and team-building skill ability, which assists the students in recognition and disclosure of business knowledge and current trend information. According to Barnett (2009), individual skills and knowledge require continuous improvement to ensure their relevance in a fast-paced world. Improving attitudes, behaviours, and capacities at the individual level is perceived as a primary purpose of entrepreneurship education (Boubker, Arroud & Ouajdouni, 2021).

### 2.3 Entrepreneurial Opportunity Recognition

Manesh and Rialp-Criado (2019) contended that higher education enhances entrepreneurship education with the influence of opportunity recognition on entrepreneurial intention. Hayton, Chandler and Detienne (2011) posited that the opportunity recognition process is considered the main element of the entrepreneurship process. In a study by Bint Hashim (2017), it was found that the recognition of opportunities should be integrated as part of the curriculum, and it should form the core of programmes/training geared toward potential entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial opportunity recognition (EOR) is an essential constituent of foundational entrepreneurship and has emerged as a key subject matter within the current entrepreneurship literature (George, Parida, Lahti & Wincent, 2016). Moreover, different scholars (see Sambasivan, Abdul & Yusop, 2009) raised a concern highlighting that the role of EOR in SMEs is a challenging issue that requires profound consideration.

### 2.4 Entrepreneurship Culture

Different authors perceive entrepreneurship culture (EC) as a theoretical construct that encompasses all three views of entrepreneurship (organisational, behavioural, and performance) (Stuetzer, Audretsch, Obschonka, Gosling, Rentfrow & Potter, 2018). An entrepreneurship culture is viewed as an informal

institution determining the legitimacy of entrepreneurship and informing the economic behaviour (Kibler, Kautonen & Fink, 2014). Entrepreneurial culture defines commonly accepted practices within each community. These practices encourage collaboration and capitalises on entrepreneurship opportunities, creating jobs for many years to come (Fritsch & Wyrwich, 2016).

## 2.5 Hypotheses Development

### 2.5.1 *The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Opportunity Recognition*

Entrepreneurship education is defined as a learning programme designed to instil, stimulate and sustain individual entrepreneurial behaviour (Fayolle, Gailly & Lassas-Clerc, 2006). Research points out the importance of entrepreneurship education, for example its key role in the development of entrepreneurial intentions among students (Anwar & Saleem, 2019), the role it plays in enhancing the influence of attitude and self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intentions (Bazan *et al.*, 2019), including the potential to increase an individual entrepreneurial intention by 1.3 times (Dehghanpour Farashah, 2013).

Entrepreneurial intentions are critical in the entrepreneurship equation as they drive an individual to seek entrepreneurial opportunities for exploitation. This is important because the individual in question will have been empowered with the knowledge and understanding of how to differentiate a feasible and viable entrepreneurial opportunity from those that are not (Hassan, Saleem, Anwar & Hussain, 2020). In other words, there is direct link between entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial opportunity recognition. Given this discussion, the study hypothesises that:

*H1: Entrepreneurship education predicts opportunity recognition*

### 2.5.2 *Entrepreneurial Culture, Entrepreneurship Education and Opportunity Recognition*

Although research points out that entrepreneurial culture affects the entity's existing approach towards supporting and engaging in activities earmarked for prolonging entrepreneurship (Zahra, Hayton & Salvato, 2004), there is also consensus that entrepreneurial culture promotes continuous opportunity recognition and exploitation (Cruz, Hamilton & Jack, 2012). Entrepreneurial culture is affected by many factors, for example entrepreneurial education

(Altinay, 2008). The primary goal of entrepreneurship education is to develop and prepare future entrepreneurs (Vanevenhoven, 2013). On the contrary, research further indicates that entrepreneurial education is not a pre-requisite to becoming an entrepreneur. However, educated individuals who opt for entrepreneurship careers may see their careers outlasting those of individuals who did not receive entrepreneurial education (Altinay & Altinay, 2006; Basu & Altinay, 2002; Casson, 1991). It could be that after receiving entrepreneurial education, an individual is able to carry out a feasibility and viability study of the opportunity recognised with the skills at their disposal. In other words, entrepreneurship education has the potential of enhancing a culture of entrepreneurial success.

Entrepreneurial education also promotes entrepreneurial culture but the degree to which its influence will matter lies in the design of entrepreneurship modules and teaching strategies in place. According to Bell and Bell (2020), an impactful entrepreneurship education must empower students with entrepreneurship theory and the practical component to be an entrepreneur. The experience of being an entrepreneur is essential as it sharpens other entrepreneurial competencies already possessed by the student. Lackéus (2020) concurred and pointed out that entrepreneurship education practical skills aiming at creating values can enhance students to identify entrepreneurial opportunities. Esmi, Marzoughi and Torkzadeh (2015) heeded the call for effective entrepreneurship education and successfully designed a widely accepted entrepreneurship course that educators have relied on to enhance students' entrepreneurial skills. Various teaching strategies were infused together to accommodate the needs of all stakeholders. However, Heinrichs (2016) designed an entrepreneurship course dominated by entrepreneurship cases resulting in the curriculum being theoretically sound rather than practical. Based on this discussion the study hypothesises that:

*H2: Entrepreneurial culture mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial education and opportunity recognition.*

### **3. Research Methodology**

The study was quantitative in nature and the positivist research paradigm was adopted. An explanatory research design was followed. Data was collected

once implying that the study was cross sectional. Primary data was gathered through a survey. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 170 respondents. Primary data was gathered from individuals who flocked wholesalers that specialised in selling bulk products to individuals who run their own entrepreneurial ventures across the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. Most of these enterprise owners are highly visible when it is time to restock inventory and the entities they often visit are those that cater for their bulky inventory needs. Thus, the mall intercept technique was employed. This technique was preferred because collecting data from entrepreneurs who are scattered around the Eastern Cape Province as opposed to being populated in one area is too costly. Therefore, the researcher purposefully sampled the respondents who were also asked to indicate if they had received entrepreneurship education during their college or university period. This was an important criterion for an individual to participate in this study. Therefore, qualifying and consenting respondents completed the pen-to-paper questionnaire in the presence of the fieldworker. The pen-to-paper questionnaire used was comprised of closed-ended questions divided into demographic, entrepreneurial education, entrepreneurial culture, and recognition sections.

#### **3.1 Data Analysis, Measures and the Outcome of Reliability Tests**

The study made use of measures that have been utilised by some scholars; however, their internal consistency levels were verified through the Cronbach alpha coefficient. To measure entrepreneurial education, the entrepreneurial education (learning) subscale with three items and the entrepreneurship education (inspiration) subscale with three items were used. Souitaris, Zerbinati and Al-Laham (2006) originally designed the mentioned scales but these were modified to suit the context of this study. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the entrepreneurship education (learning) subscale was derived as .959. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the entrepreneurship education (inspiration) subscale was derived as .930. A five point Likert scale was used to measure the two subscales.

To measure entrepreneurial culture, three dimensions were used, namely perceived appropriateness, perceived consistence, and perceived effectiveness. The mentioned scales were adopted from Adekiya and Ibrahim (2016) who also modified the scales

originally designed by De-Pillis and Reardon (2001) and de Pillis and DeWitt (2008). However, the scale items were modified to suit the South African context. The derived Cronbach alpha coefficient for the perceived appropriateness scale is .979. The perceived consistence subscale had six items and the Cronbach alpha coefficient equal to .990. The perceived effectiveness subscale had eight items and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was derived as .985. The perception of entrepreneurial success subscale had four scale items and the Cronbach alpha coefficient for the subscale was derived as .969.

To measure entrepreneurial recognition, a scale with five items was used and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was derived as .964. The scales used in this study all achieved a Cronbach alpha coefficient of above .70 implying that their internal consistency scores were within the accepted threshold. To draw meaning from the data, simple linear regression and hierarchical regression analysis were performed with respect to H1 and H2 respectively.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Hypotheses Testing

The hypothesis stating that entrepreneurship education predicts opportunity recognition was tested through simple linear regression. Bootstrapped coefficients and their significance levels were requested as both the independent variable (IV) and the dependent variable (DV) data did not conform to the assumption of normality. The findings reveal that there is a strong positive correlation between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition ( $r = .830$ ). In addition, the results reveal

that entrepreneurship education accounted for approximately 69% of the variance in opportunity recognition ( $R^2 = .689$ ). To determine whether we can rely on the model in predicting entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, the  $F$ -ratio was observed and it was found to be significant,  $F = 371.712$ ,  $p = .000$ . This result indicates that we can successfully depend on the model if we are to predict opportunity recognition as opposed to the use of the mean value. The results are summarised in Table 1.

The parameter estimates of the model show  $b_0 = .631$ , and  $b_1 = .847$ . The result implies that given a one unit change in entrepreneurship education will result in a corresponding positive increase in opportunity recognition equivalent to .847 units, more importantly, it is significant given  $p = 0.001$ . Given this result, the study's findings therefore provide sufficient evidence supporting the hypothesis stating that entrepreneurship education predicts opportunity recognition. The discussed results are outlined in Table 2.

### 4.2 The Mediating Role of Entrepreneurial Culture in the Relationship Between Entrepreneurship Education and Opportunity Recognition

Hierarchical regression analysis was performed and the Hayes Process Macro procedure of performing hierarchical regression was followed. The mentioned procedure was undertaken to test the hypothesis stating that entrepreneurial culture mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition. The results of the first output where entrepreneurial culture is depicted as the outcome variable reveal

**Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Model Fit and Summary for Entrepreneurship Education on Opportunity Recognition**

Source	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Pr > F	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Estimated Standard Error
Model summary	-	-	-	-	-	.830	.689	.687	.48726
Regression	1	88.254	88.254	371.712	0.000*	-	-	-	-
Residual	168	39.888	.237	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	169	128.142	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Predictors: Entrepreneurship education. Outcome variable: Opportunity recognition; \*, significant at  $p < 0.05$

Source: Authors



**Table 2: Parameter Estimates for Entrepreneurship Education on Opportunity Recognition**

Parameter	Unstandardised Co-efficient			95.0%CI for B:LB & UB
	B	Standard Error	Significance	
Constant	.631	.154	.001*	[0.364 - 0.963]
*Entrepreneurship education	.847	.038	.001*	[0.762 - 0.915]

Note: Predictors: \*Entrepreneurship education. Outcome variable: Opportunity recognition. LB = lower bound, UP = Upper bound. \*, significant at  $p < 0.05$

Source: Authors

that entrepreneurship education accounts for approximately 73% of the variance in entrepreneurial culture ( $R^2 = .7282$ ). The results also indicate that entrepreneurship education has a positive impact on entrepreneurial culture, and the effect is significant,  $b = .833$  [.7558, .9109],  $t = 21.689$ ,  $p = .000$ . This result is denoted in Figure 1 as path "a".

The second mediation analysis output portrays opportunity recognition as the outcome variable and the impact of entrepreneurship education on opportunity recognition is measured in the presence of the mediating variable (entrepreneurial culture). In statistical terms, the direct effect is depicted by c' in Figure 2. The results show that in the presence of entrepreneurial culture, entrepreneurship education has a positive and significant impact on opportunity recognition,  $b = .4099$  [.2624, .5573],  $t = 5.4884$ ,  $p = .000$ . In addition, both entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial culture account for approximately 76% of the variance in opportunity recognition ( $R^2 = .7573$ ). The results further reveal that entrepreneurial culture has a positive and significant impact on opportunity recognition,  $b = .5251$  [.3741, .6760],  $t = 6.8661$ ,  $p = .000$ , the path denoted by letter "b" in Figure 2.

The results shown so far and summarised in Figures 1 and 2 enable the researcher to determine the indirect effect of entrepreneurship education on opportunity recognition in the presence of entrepreneurial culture. That is, path "a" in Figure 1, multiplied by path "b" in Figure, ( $.833 * .525 = .4373$ ). Having derived the indirect effect, that is, .4373, and also having identified the direct effect,  $b = .4099$ , the model's total effect is therefore the sum of the direct and indirect effect,  $.4374 + .4099 = .8473$ . Figure 3 summarises the total effect model results.

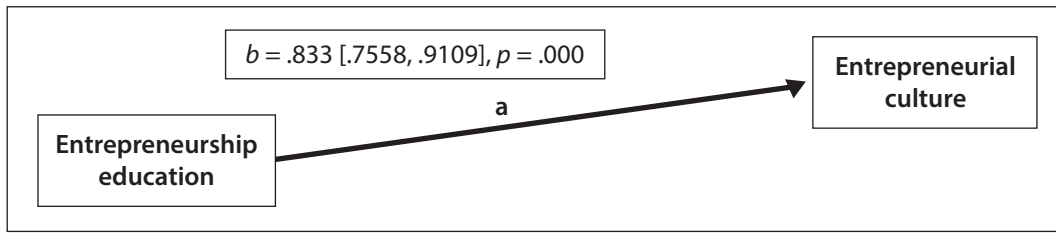
To determine whether entrepreneurial culture mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship

education and opportunity recognition, and also to establish the nature of mediation that exists, both the direct and indirect effects were examined to determine if they were significant. The direct effect was found to be significant,  $b = .4099$  [.2624, .5573],  $t = 5.4884$ ,  $p = .000$ . The indirect effect was also found to be significant where  $b = .4375$  [.2551, .6560]. Given this result, the study provides evidence that entrepreneurial culture partially mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition. To sum up the hierarchical regression analysis results in relation to the formulated hypothesis, this study sought to assess whether entrepreneurial culture mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition and the results revealed a significant indirect effect of impact of entrepreneurship education on opportunity recognition ( $b = .438$ ,  $t = 4.231$ ). Therefore, with this result, the study's hypothesis stating that entrepreneurial culture mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition is supported. In addition, the direct effect of entrepreneurship education on opportunity recognition in the presence of the mediating variable was found to be significant ( $b = .4099$ ,  $t = 5.488$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Therefore, it was found that entrepreneurial culture partially mediated the relationship between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition. Table 3 summarises the discussed results.

## 5. Discussion

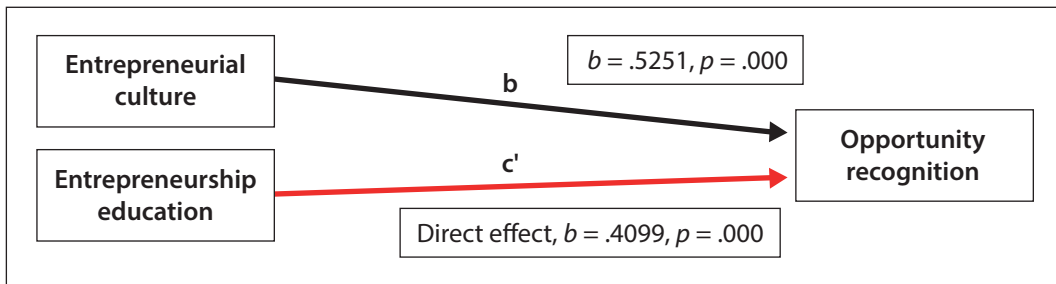
The study provided evidence that entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in opportunity recognition. As evident, entrepreneurship education accounts for approximately 69% of the variance in opportunity recognition, leaving just 31% to be accounted for by other variables not investigated in this study. More importantly, a one-unit increase in entrepreneurship education leads to a significant

**Figure 1: Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurial Culture**



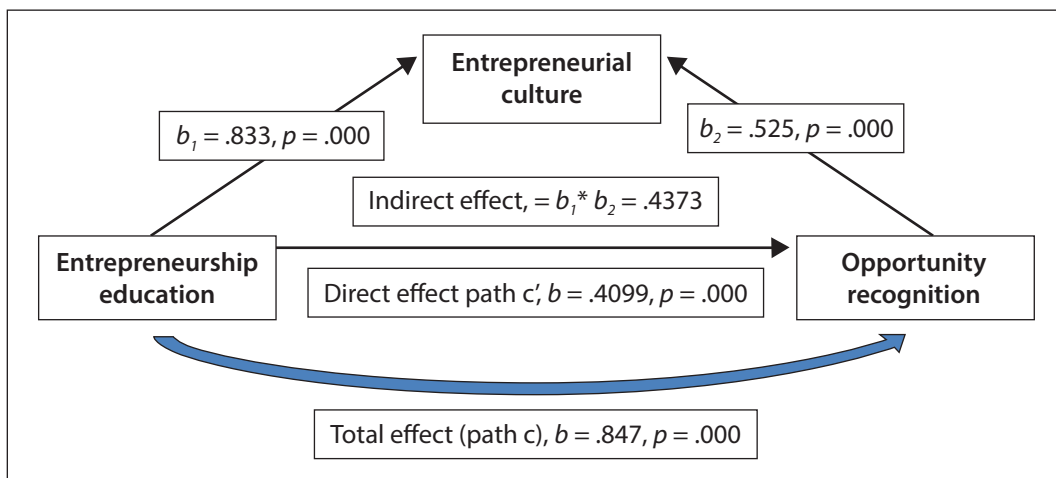
Source: Authors

**Figure 2: The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Opportunity Recognition in the Presence of Entrepreneurial Culture (The Direct Effect)**



Source: Authors

**Figure 3: The Total Effect Model**



Source: Authors

**Table 3: Linear Predictors of Opportunity Recognition**

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t-statistics	Conclusion
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
EEd* > EntC** > OpRec***	.847 (.000)	.4099 (.000)	.438	.2551	.6560	4.231	Partial mediation

\*EEd= entrepreneurship education, \*\*EntC = Entrepreneurial culture, \*\*\*OpRec = Opportunity recognition.

Source: Authors

positive increase equivalent to .847 units in the recognition of entrepreneurial opportunities. The study's findings are in line with empirical evidence which pointed out that individuals who have had effective entrepreneurship education are more likely to have a significant entrepreneurship career (Henderson & Robertson, 2000). By so doing, the study provides valuable evidence that entrepreneurship education can be relied on when designing intervention mechanisms earmarked to promote opportunity recognition and entrepreneurial success. More importantly, entrepreneurship education was found to account for approximately 73% of the variance in entrepreneurial culture. This result is critical as it shows that for society to have a positive and meaningful entrepreneurial culture, entrepreneurship education is one factor playing a leading role, and therefore, intervention mechanisms must revolve around it. However, both entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial culture account for 76% of the variance in opportunity recognition, meaning that both entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial culture are important variables, which can play a prominent role when policies and strategies earmarked to promote opportunity recognition are being designed. This is in line with Fritsch and Wyrwich (2016) who pointed out that entrepreneurial culture sets to identify "norms, values, and codes of conduct that promote social acceptance and approval of entrepreneurial activities resulting in high self-employment rates which persist over time" (pp. 1-2).

### **5.1 Implications to Theory**

The study provided evidence suggesting that entrepreneurial education predicts opportunity recognition. Theoretical findings pointed out that entrepreneurial opportunities exist in the external environment and can only be identified by individuals who actively scan the environment for information which can direct them towards such opportunities (Schumpeter, 1942; Busenitz & Barney, 1996). Since the evidence in this study indicates that entrepreneurial education predicts opportunity recognition, the entrepreneurial courses must emphasise the subject of environmental scanning to equip learners with information search skills and enhance their chances of discovering entrepreneurial opportunities for exploitation. In addition, the results of the study reveal that entrepreneurial culture partially mediates the relationship between entrepreneurship education and

opportunity recognition. In other words, the study successfully designed a model that can be relied on to enhance opportunity recognition and sustain a culture of entrepreneurial success through effective entrepreneurship education.

### **5.2 Implications to Managerial Practice**

Entrepreneurship education has the potential to mitigate social challenges and possibly leverage the South African economy from recurring social unrest because of unemployment challenges. According to Ozgen and Minsky (2007), for a person to recognise an entrepreneurial opportunity in a given sector, that person must first have the knowledge of the domain and be able to implement it. Entrepreneurship education provides that key knowledge to kick-start a successful entrepreneurial career. Therefore, there is a need to promote widespread quality entrepreneurship education to empower individuals, especially in the rural areas where unemployment rates and income inequality gaps are high. To mitigate these challenges, quality entrepreneurship education must be promoted. Quality entrepreneurship education refers to a curriculum that fosters human development and promotes economic growth at national level (Li, Shen & Lv, 2020). Therefore, the curriculum must not lack the practical component, as applicability in real life may be impossible (Azila-Gbetor & Harrison, 2013). In other words, when the curriculum lacks applicability by being too theoretical, it fails to respond to the needs of the students who prefer self-employment as a career. Institutions of higher learning must therefore ensure that students enrolled for entrepreneurship courses accumulate both theoretical and practical experience. Having a resourceful entrepreneurship hub on site could be an answer to the problem of poor quality entrepreneurship education. In addition, through entrepreneurship hubs, extracurricular campus activities such as innovation and creativity competitions where prizes such as prototype development expenses, initial start-up sponsorships and mentorship from established entrepreneurs can promote the entrepreneurial culture at campus level and society at large (Li *et al.*, 2020).

### **5.3 Areas for Further Research and Limitations**

Research can be undertaken to investigate the performance of entrepreneurial entities in various sectors of the economy that are owned by individuals

who actually received entrepreneurship education during their college or university training. To a certain degree, this will help evaluate the quality of entrepreneurship education being offered by South African institutions of higher learning. The limitations of the study are that a nationwide scale of the study could not be pursued owing to resource limitations. Therefore, the reader must exercise caution in generalising the results of the study to the entire nation.

## 6. Conclusion

The study designed a model with the goal of promoting opportunity recognition, and entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial culture were the factors identified as those that could take a prominent role in ensuring that this materialises. Empirical literature supported this view and primary data gathered also supported the notion as entrepreneurship education was found to predict opportunity recognition and entrepreneurial culture was found to partially mediate the relationship between entrepreneurship education and opportunity recognition. Based on these findings, the study concludes that both entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial culture are linear predictors of opportunity recognition.

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# Challenges and Prospects of Effective Communication Among Senior Managers at Institutions of Higher Learning

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to evaluate the challenges and prospects of effective communication among senior managers at higher education institutions. The participants sample of 523 was identified for the purpose of representing the staff, students, alumni, and council members. The methods used to collect data entailed interviews and questionnaires with selected service staff and council members as well as alumni. The data from students was collected through questionnaire. The study revealed that internal and external systems of communication of an institution play an important role in addressing challenges of effective communication among senior managers which leads to improved system of governance and effective management within an institution. The study further revealed that poor vertical communication can result in stakeholders failing to understand their respective roles which could eventually lead to a communication void.

**Keywords:** Effective communication, Vertical communication, Institutional productivity, Governance

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## 1. Introduction

Communication is critical for the success of any institution. Institutions struggle to achieve their pre-determined goals due to ineffective communication. Despite the availability of a variety of tools of communication, institutions struggle to communicate with their respective stakeholders effectively (Darawshen *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017). The key challenges experienced by the higher education institutions include the lack of mechanisms of identifying appropriate tools of communication, ineffective communication about the institutional strategy and failure to convene meetings for updating and involving key stakeholders the strategic direction of the institution. The stakeholders who are not well informed, would hardly support the vision and mission of the institution, which could lead to poor performance of the entire institution (Darawshen *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017). When communication within the institution is ineffective, staff members would not understand what is expected of them and as a result there will be a vacuum in communication. This will lead to a situation where the gaps of communication would be filled by speculations. Unavailability of effective tools of communication could lead to a situation where the management, structures, and processes, provide irrelevant service to the stakeholders. In a situation where there are no relevant tools of communication, the process of identifying the stakeholders' needs would be negatively affected.

Unavailability of the tools of communication could result in a situation where the consultation process and dialogue between the stakeholders and institution become ineffective (Darawshen *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Implications of Tools of Communication on Governance and Management at Higher Education Institutions

Communication at institutions of higher learning is inevitable. Several researchers have confirmed that institutions of higher learning cannot perform effectively without having identified communication tools for sharing valuable information with various stakeholders (Hajir *et al.*, 2015; Amajah *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017). According to Stephen (2011), communication is essential for the purpose of mobilising the workforce for the accomplishment of institutional objectives hence effective management and governance. For employees to perform effectively, it is important to have communication tools that the stakeholders can easily access. Most researchers maintain that communication for any institution is like the flow of blood in the human body. Communication coordinates factors of governance and management at institutions of higher learning. Institutions have a role of training the internal stakeholders to use available communication tools effectively. Poor

usage of tools of communication at higher education institutions could lead to poor governance and management (McKinney, Barker, Smith & Davies, 2004; Williams, 2007; Stephen, 2011; Tronconi, Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017).

The management, including communication practitioners at institutions of higher learning, have a role of ensuring that communication tools used to communicate with various stakeholders are known and accessible. In most institutions of higher learning, managers spend most of their time communicating through various tools of communication including face to face meetings (Hajir *et al.*, 2015; Amajah *et al.*, 2016; Darawshen *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016; Tronconi, 2016; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017). This could also be confirmed by the fact that basic management process which entails planning, organising, leading, and controlling cannot be achieved without proper communication tools to communicate effectively. Effective communication at higher education institutions leads to effective governance and management. It is however important for the higher education institutions to ensure that the tools of communication identified could effectively transmit the messages to relevant stakeholders (Lee, 2003; Scott, 2004; Okoye, 2004; Peter, Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017).

Since communication is also referred to as the process of change to a system, it is important to always develop or identify communication tools to communicate the changes. Resistance to change is one of the barriers to effective communication. It is therefore important to participate in the reorientation of communication tools to be used at institutions of higher learning. The performance of higher education institutions becomes effective when the communication tools available make provision for feedback (Husain, 2013; Kibe, 2014; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017).

## 2.2 Problems and Prospects of Effective Communication Among Senior Managers to Institutions of Higher Learning

The skills and experience of senior managers in communication influence the performance of institutions of higher learning. Some of the contributing factors could be poor reading habits of the senior managers. When senior managers have poor reading habits, it could be exceedingly difficult to use e-mail or newsletter to communicate with various

stakeholders within the institution. Unfamiliar words and phrases are adopted on a regular basis to provide explanation on technological developments. The same applies to the young generations (Hajir *et al.*, 2015; Amajah *et al.*, 2016; Darawshen *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017). They invent and add their linguistic items in the process of communicating with various stakeholders. The media also play a vital role in the use of various tools of communication. Some of the challenges of communication by senior managers is their tight schedule, they hardly have time to read and respond to messages. It is of immense importance for communicators to read more than they write (Miller, 2003; Hajir *et al.*, 2015; Amajah *et al.*, 2016; Darawshen *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017). Effective communication skills and use of accessible communication tools is important to institutional communication. One of the challenges in the effective use of communication tools at the higher education institutions is that most of the communication practitioners are youths who like to experiment innovative ideas. Using proper communication tools, communication practitioners must be effective listeners who can take appropriate actions (Darawshen *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017). It is therefore of immense importance for the institutions of higher learning to use communication tools that enable them to enhance their listening, speaking, and writing skills. When communication practitioners and senior managers at higher education institutions cultivate and maintain effective use of communication tools, the institutions would attain greater academic, management and governance and the stakeholders as well as the public would derive full benefits from the institutions of higher learning (Okoye, 2004; Haiemann, 2011; Chichi-Oji, 2013; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

## 2.3 Improving Effective Management and Governance Through Internal Communication

Every successful institution of higher learning is perceived to have effective communication practices which include the tools used to communicate with both internal and external stakeholders. Effective communication with internal stakeholders is intended to disseminate essential information for



superior performance (Hajir *et al.*, 2015; Amajah *et al.*, 2016; Darawshen *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016). It is also through effective communication and use of appropriate and relevant tools that relationships of trust and commitment are built. This implies that for higher education institutions to be productive and effective, there should be healthy internal communication. It entails ensuring that internal stakeholders are provided with communication tools that would enable them to communicate effectively (Smith, 2002; Scott, 2005; Marks, 2009; Randall, 2010; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017).

Where internal stakeholders do not have appropriate communication tools to communicate among themselves, the governance and management of the higher education institution will be negatively affected. For instance, if there is tension between two or more employees within a division or department, the level of communication would be negatively affected. This will in turn affect the governance and management of the institution, which would eventually lead to deficient performance of the institution (Miller, 2003; Hajir *et al.*, 2015; Amajah *et al.*, 2016; Darawshen *et al.*, 2016; Tarhini *et al.*, 2016). In a situation where employees do not speak to each other, some decisions could not be communicated to relevant personnel who should ensure effective implementation of such decisions. This could also lead to a situation where valuable information is withheld and as such the performance of the entire institution will be negatively affected. As a result, the effective governance and management of the institution will be negatively affected (Smith, 2002; Scott, 2005; Marks, 2009; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

#### **2.4 Internal Communication Can Increase Job Satisfaction**

Employees become demotivated when they struggle to communicate due to several reasons including unavailability of communication tools. For example, employees who spend most of their time away from the institution due to the nature of their job could struggle to perform their duties if they are not provided with communication tools (Scott, 2005; Randall, 2010; Faith Baris & Tosun, 2013; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017). Employees responsible for marketing the institution can struggle to perform their

duties when they are away from the institution if they do not have communication tools that would enable them to communicate with both internal and external stakeholders irrespective of their location. Employees feel satisfied and happy if there is provision for upward communication and feedback. This implies that employees feel happy if they receive feedback from their line managers and when line managers listen to their views and suggestions (Scott, 2005; Marks, 2009; Randall, 2010; Tronconi, 2016; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

#### **2.5 Effect of Communication Tools in Customer Service**

Communication tools influence the provision of service, which leads to customer service. Poor communication with internal stakeholders and unavailability of accessible and appropriate communication tools can negatively affect the satisfaction of customers. In an institution of higher learning environment, it is critical to identify relevant communication tools to communicate with various stakeholders including prospective students (Scott, 2005; Randall, 2010; Faith Baris & Tosun, 2013; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017). Institutions are gradually moving away from traditional tools of communication like applying for admission as well as providing feedback to applicants through online communication tools instead of sending letters. However, to avoid excluding other prospective students who do not have access to these tools, there should be provision for traditional tools of submitting applications to the institutions of higher learning as well as communicating the outcome of applications through the post office with such students (Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

### **3. The Role of Tools of Communication in the Enhancement of Effective Governance and Management**

Management activities entail the role of communication in enhancing good governance. Managers in institutions of higher learning spend most of their time communicating using various tools of communication. Good governance is manifested by available effective communication tools (Scott, 2005; Randall, 2010; Faith Baris & Tosun, 2013). Institutions cannot achieve their respective strategic

goals without effectively sharing the strategic goal and vision of the institution with all relevant stakeholders. This could only be possible through identifying communication tools relevant to various stakeholders (Luthans & Larsen, 1986; Sims & Lorenzi, 1992; Russu, 2001; Nicube, 2006; Hargie & Tourish, 2009; Tronconi, 2016; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

The efficiency and effectiveness of the institution depends on the ability of the manager to communicate effectively with both internal and external stakeholders using appropriate and relevant communication tools. There is a need to demonstrate maximum efficiency when communicating. This could be achieved if relevant tools are identified for various stakeholders. In a departmental environment, managers should ensure that departmental meetings are convened on a regular basis to ensure that the vision and strategic goals of the institution are shared with internal stakeholders (Sims & Lorenzi, 1992; Russu, 2001; Nicube, 2006; Hargie & Tourish, 2009; Tronconi, 2016; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

#### **4. Effect of Communication Tools in Keeping Stakeholders Updated**

Due to the changing technological situations or environments, it has become evident that life will not be the same without the availability of various communication tools which includes social media. Institutions of higher learning are expected to provide the necessary training to the community even beyond the institution to make use of communication tools like computers, laptops, and cellphones. Some people believe that with the use of technology, several problems will be easy to deal with. In an endeavor to stay connected with various communities and provide the necessary training, institutions of higher learning have community engagement directorates (Franklin & Peat, 2001; Chrisdede, 2005; Garrison & Vaughn, 2008; Tapschoh, 2009; Kurtz & Sponder, 2010; Tronconi, 2016; Nakayama, 2017). Continuous use of information technology tools at higher education institutions is imperative for the purpose of providing latest information to various stakeholders. At the higher education institutions, the use of information technology tools provides students with interactive and engaged environment. This will hopefully add value to the quality of education provided. Use of mobile technological devices plays a pivotal role in ensuring that

stakeholders are kept updated. However, when using these technological tools, it is important to guard against information overload (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Richardson, 2008; Poole, 2009; Mcrill, 2011; Tronconi, 2016; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

Garrison and Vaughan (2008) challenge higher education institutions to actively engage communities for the purpose of helping these communities, including students to address their respective challenges, which include training on the use of communication tools. This could only be possible if these communities have access to communication tools. As the custodians of knowledge, higher education institutions should play a leading role to educate communities to use the latest communication technologies to communicate valuable information (Scott, 2005; Randall, 2010; Faith Baris & Tosun, 2013; Tronconi, 2016; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017). For instance, because community members cannot always carry some of the equipment that they could use to receive information like through Radio, they can be encouraged to tune to their mobile cellphones and listen to the Radio station of their choice. By doing this, they will be up to date with activities taking place in their respective communities. The same applies to students at the institutions of higher learning, they can use their mobile phones to tune to the Campus Radio stations (Wilson, 2000; Machnarik, 2002; Jonassen, 2002; Burgess, 2004; Kim & Reeves, 2007; Richardson, 2008; Poole, 2009; Tronconi, 2016; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017). Institutions of higher learning should play a leading role by using communication tools that are easily accessible by all internal stakeholders. According to Hume (2010), when institutions communicate effectively with their internal stakeholders, they tend to create a cohesive culture where there is buy-in by all internal stakeholders which leads to a situation where everyone within the institution will be focused on the same goals and objectives as well as understanding. It also becomes easy for internal stakeholders to make informed decisions (Hume, 2010; Mcrill, 2011; Kazmi, 2011; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017).

#### **5. Importance of Relevant Communication Tools**

Pirani and Sheenah (2009), maintain the importance of ensuring that communicators are familiar with the

communication tools preferred by the various target audience. It is critical to ensure that communicators understand the communication preferences of their respective constituencies and target audience. The information that is electronically disseminated is perceived to be timely and that it reaches the intended target audience effectively and promptly (Manda, 2006; Harrison, 2006; Pirani & Sheenah, 2009; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017). There are also instances where communication tools should be identified in accordance with the target audience. Some tools that play a vital role in improving internal communication include telephones, e-mails, memorandums, letters as well as meetings. According to Harrison (2006), employees are motivated and become more productive when the communication environment is healthy and when they have access to available and relevant communication tools. When employees are happy, the complaints from clients tend to be minimal. This implies that making employees happy leads to a situation where the clients will receive satisfactory and quality service (Harrison, 2006; Pirani & Sheenah, 2009; Macrill, 2011; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

## **6. The Effect of Internal Communication in Effective Governance and Management at Higher Education Institutions**

According to Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2014), strategic internal communication refers to the process of crafting messages for meeting the internal stakeholders' needs. There is a perception that line managers are the main reason that internal communication suffers. Although effective communication is the responsibility of all internal stakeholders, in most situations, managers are expected to ensure that institutions do experience effective communication. The tools of communication become more effective when they are used in consultation with relevant stakeholders. It is therefore always important to involve relevant stakeholders in the crafting of communication strategies as well as identification of communication tools to be used for various stakeholders (van Staden *et al.*, 2004; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014; Bode, 2016; Bright, 2016). Effective management and productivity in institutions of higher learning increases when employees are satisfied and happy with their jobs and the level of communication, they receive from management is

effective. The use of relevant communication tools and effective communication has serious positive impact on employee's morale which affects institutional productivity. When employees are kept updated on the developments taking place within the institution, including provision of feedback on their performance, they tend to perform hard and more efficiently and this leads to effective management and governance (Harris, 1993; van Staden *et al.*, 2004; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014; Tronconi, 2016; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017; van Aelst *et al.*, 2017).

## **7. Importance of Evaluating the Effectiveness of Communication Tools**

The process of evaluating the effectiveness of communication tools should be considered by institutions of higher learning as a vital aspect of communication. Institutions of higher learning should have a way of evaluating how their communication tools are, in ensuring that they achieve effective management and governance. This will also help the institutions to establish how informed their stakeholders are (Dinnicco *et al.*, 2008; Brozozowski *et al.*, 2009; Wilson, 2009). This is mainly because effective communication requires a particularly good process of evaluation. Without evaluations, institutions would not know the impact of their communication tools. Diverse tools of communication should be evaluated (Seitel, 2007; Dinnicco *et al.*, 2008; Brozozowski *et al.*, 2009; Wilson, 2009; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017).

Institutions of higher learning should ensure that they segment their audiences for the purpose of using appropriate communication tools of communications when communicating with various stakeholders. This is due to that fact that one tool of communication may not necessarily be relevant to another group of stakeholders. Some institutions make mistakes by using communication tools that are intended to target everybody (Dinnicco *et al.*, 2008; Brozozowski *et al.*, 2009; Wilson, 2009; Walker, 2015; Bright, 2016; Kapur *et al.*, 2017; Scott, 2017). Doing this leads to a situation where some categories of stakeholders feel that they are being neglected. A practical example is when institutions of higher learning develop their strategic plans. All stakeholders should be involved in the process of crafting such strategic plans (Seitel, 2007; Dinnicco *et al.*, 2008; Brozozowski *et al.*, 2009; Wilson, 2009; Tronconi, 2016; Dimarco, 2017; Gottfried *et al.*, 2017; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017;

van Aelst *et al.*, 2017). These are some of the questions that institutions should ask themselves. The frequency of evaluating communication tools is of vital importance. Most institutions do evaluate their impact through media monitoring instruments as well as websites through Google analytics. But other tools like meetings, telephones, emails, newsletters, and social media are not evaluated. When evaluating communication tools, it is of primary importance to consider amongst others the credibility of the author and the tone of the message. The identification and use of communication tools should not be based on what has been working before, it is important to identify and use communication tools in accordance with current and most suitable circumstances (Seitel, 2007; Dinnicco *et al.*, 2008; Brozozowski *et al.*, 2009; Wilson, 2009; Tronconi, 2016; Nakayama, 2017; Scott, 2017; Stromback, 2017).

## 8. Results, Recommendations and Conclusion

The study revealed that transparency and trust play a critical role in the promotion of effective and healthy communication among senior managers and other stakeholders within institutions of higher learning. Through this study, it was made explicit that regular engagement on all important matters promotes positive work culture and encouragement of adherence to ethical standards within the institutions of higher learning. According to the study, healthy communication among senior managers promotes healthy working relationship among subordinates which in turn leads to productivity. The study further revealed that senior managers should be available to provide the necessary support, including making available the tools of trade to the subordinates. The study also revealed that poor reading habits by senior managers could negatively affect the performance of institutions of higher learning.

The study strived to outline the role that senior managers play in the promotion of internal and external communication in management and governance of institutions of higher learning. Amongst others, the study indicated that the art of internal communication is dependent on the knowledge of effectively identifying appropriate and relevant communication tools.

The study recommends the importance of healthy communication among senior managers and

Effective selection of communication tool for the purpose of providing internal stakeholders with relevant and appropriate information needed for them to perform their jobs in an effective manner.

As a result of this study, it has been made clear that regular communication with stakeholders leads to a situation where they become familiar with all the relevant and necessary information about their respective institutions. Internal communication is considered by some authors as the glue that binds an institution together. This is possible by ensuring that there is provision for feedback and that employees are provided with clear standards and expectations of their work. The benefits of using social media were also outlined. However, although social network is widely used in institutions of higher learning, some challenges were also identified and as such policies should be developed to ensure proper use of social media platforms. The importance of evaluating communication tools should also be considered.

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# The Impact of Accountability Mechanisms in Enhancing Municipal Water Service Delivery: A Case of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Mpumalanga Province

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**Abstract:** The study is investigated the impact of accountability mechanisms in enhancing municipal water service delivery at Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in Mpumalanga province. The issue of accountability and the supply of water services has been a major concern for more than two decades in the Bushbuckridge local municipality. Despite the fact that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) provided the majority of South Africans optimism for a better life, the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality has been receiving orders from community members demanding adequate water delivery. The continual demonstrations protest by the community members shows that the municipality is failing to meet the demands of the communities. To this end, the study uses qualitative method to collect data for better understanding for the historical and current concerns about water scarcity in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality. Data collection was gathered from internal stakeholders that are municipal officials and external stakeholders which are BLM community members, ward committee members, ward councilors in ward 18 and 20. The researcher used face-to-face interviews, focus groups and semi structured questionnaires. This investigation could lead to future water-related solutions in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality.

**Keywords:** Accountability, Water Service Delivery, Corruption, Municipality, Community Members

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## 1. Introduction

There is not a universal definition of the concept "public accountability," this concept has been defined differently by different scholars, however, Turrin and Tullia (2020) defined "public accountability" as an umbrella of all the features that are connected for providing good public service, good conduct and responsible to their actions. Despite the unsatisfactory or rhetoric, public accountability remains an obscure concept and a difficult undertaking for bureaucrats, politicians and citizens in particular. It is a paramount democratic tool for ensuring that public needs and wants legitimate demands, and entitlements are pleased." Mogakana (2018:1) argues that "providing communities with sustainable water is currently a major purpose of the South African Constitution." In most rural places in Bushbuckridge where water is available, the quality of drinking water is typically low and cannot be considered safe.

Ruth *et al.* (2020) assert that water is essential for humans to drink, cooking, bathing and other families' necessities, however, above 1 billion societies still lack safe drinking water, and there is still above

2.4 billion that do not have a satisfactory sanitation in South Africa. The government implementation of Reconstruction and Development (RDP) and other programmes such as Free Basic Water Policy (FBW), Masibambane Programme and Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), and the accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) were all developed by the government and other stakeholders to improve basic service delivery which includes water supply to the South African people (Maluleke, 2011:1). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) declares that water is a basic need and human rights." Mokgakane (2018) agrees that "every citizen has the right to have access to water." Mndawe (2020) has observed that the members of the communities in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality became more violent and damage government properties because of the municipality failing to meet people's basic needs and demands. The following questions will be addressed in this study: What are the mechanisms and structures in place to promote accountability in the local municipality, what is the impact of accountability mechanisms in enhancing efficiency in municipal water service delivery, and as well as what are the challenges associated with accountability

in the provision of efficient water services to the community.

## **2. Conceptual Reviews**

### **2.1 The Concept of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality Area**

The Bushbuckridge Local Municipality is categorized as a category B municipality whereby the head of state nodal positioning located within the District of Ehlanzeni which is situated in the north eastern side of the Mpumalanga province. The BLM is found as one of the largest four municipalities that make up the District in Mpumalanga province which also account for over a third municipal of its geographic area. The Bushbuckridge Municipal area provides a linkage to Lydenburg and other midpoints in the lowveld, especially Hoedspruit area, Pilgrim's rest and as well as far away to Graskop.

The Bushbuckridge Local Municipality can be thus known as the entryway that has to do with a major attractive force of tourist points located in Mpumalanga province and the eastern area of the Limpopo Province. This Municipality was also established in terms of section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa through the drive of carrying and providing the basic service delivery to the local citizens. Those basic services involve the provision of water, sanitation, electricity and housing (The Bushbuckridge Local Municipality Final IDP, 2015/2016). The BLM was constituted in terms of the White Paper on Transforming Public Service delivery of 1997 (the focus of Batho Pele Principles) with a main objective of serving and prioritising the interest of the South African pupils living in the Bushbuckridge area. There challenges in the municipality such as highest poverty rate, unemployment, poor service delivery backlogs and the highest level of the inadequacy of skills. The issue of HIV/AIDS was also further identified as a critical problem that has been also accelerated the level poverty due to a high death rate of parents in households (BLM Annual Report, 2017/2018).

### **2.2 Public Accountability as a Concept**

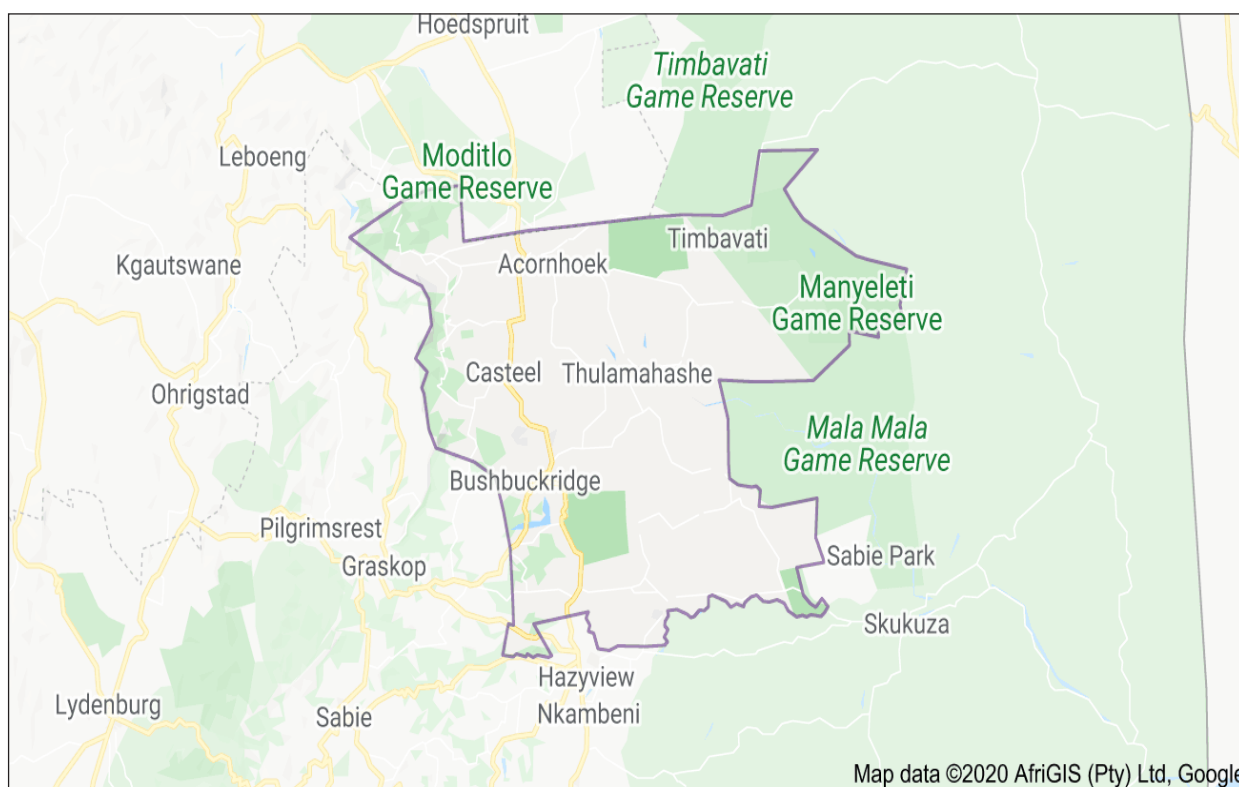
Turrin and Tullia (2020) defined public accountability as an umbrella of all the features that are connected for providing good public service, good conduct and responsible to their actions in their respective positions in the public sector. According

to Pollit (2003:89) accountability has become a popular concept, and people cannot get enough of it. The term has evolved into a rhetorical/verbal technique, serving as a synonym for a variety of political objectives. The concept of public accountability promises equity and justice, learning and progress, as well as transparency and democratic inspection, as well as integrity and ethical appropriateness.

The significance of accountability stops from the increased public desire for better services, greater responsiveness, and greater citizen participation (Milakovich, 2003). Public accountability is also stressed as being critical for improving public sector performance since it promotes institutional learning of service regulations, codes of behaviour, and performance standards. It also plays a critical role in promoting public officials' integrity, eliminating unethical nepotism, and discouraging corruption (Bovens, 2003). Trammell *et al.* (2019) postulated that public accountability is a governmental task in which the government allocated finances are being utilized to achieve service delivery to meet the needs of the community members. Public accountability entails the connection between the person's actions and a certain environment whereby an accounting officer has a responsibility to explain and substantiate his or her own conducts, the accounting officer will then need to answer to his/her outcomes and conducts and if perhaps an accounting person is not accountable for the actions taken therefore, he/she might face consequences (Tullia & Turri, 2020).

### **2.3 The Overview of the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality Area**

The Bushbuckridge Local Municipality (BLM) is located in the north-eastern part of Mpumalanga Province, flanked by the east by Kruger National Park. The municipal territory is 2,589.39 kilometres long and has an estimated population of 517,807 people and 126,506 homes. In the area, there are about 235 scattered villages and small communities. The following is the breakdown of languages: Xitsonga make up 58%, Sepedi 27%, SiSwati 7%, and IsiZulu, Tshivenda, IsiXhosa, and IsiNdebele 8% (Salga, n.d., p.987). In terms of economy, Bushbuckridge is a notably poor town, with about 85% of households living in poverty. Only 14% of the population of working age has a job. Water can be obtained from the following sources: A public tap provides 51% of the water, a piped residence provides 29%, wells provide 13%, and a stream or river provides 4%, and the

**Figure 1: A Map Area of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality**

Source: Google Maps (2020)

remaining 4% comes from boreholes (Department of Provincial and Local Government, 2007:19).

Shortage of water, unemployment, crime, poverty, health and education were also found as a core of development challenges facing the Local Municipality of Bushbuckridge. Many people who are living around in that municipal area of dominion are not employed and that was found as a biggest challenge for the BLM with regards to economic development (The Bushbuckridge Annual Financial Year Report, 2019-2020). Even though the Municipality has tried to adopt a holistic approach that will focus on addressing the issue of socio-economic factors that can be able to assist citizens in that area with regards to living quality life, the issue of basic service delivery continues to cast the people who are living in Bushbuckridge areas in a dark shadow.

#### 2.4 The Advantages of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality

The Municipality of Bushbuckridge has an advantage of being surrounded by Inyaka dam which its primary purpose is to provide drinking water to the

various rural areas including the urban areas in the surroundings of Bushbuckridge. There is a "Sabie river" that could also be a river that can be used to distribute drinking water by the Municipality, and that river is located at Hoxane area which is within Bushbuckridge. The Municipality has also "Mutlumuvi river" which is situated at Thulamahashe in Bushbuckridge which can be identify as another river that can be utilized by the Municipality as a source of water provision to the Bushbuckridge Local communities.

In Acornhoek area, there is still an "Agricultural dam" and the "Klein sand river" which can also form parts of water developments whereby the Municipality can connect pipelines to supply people with efficient water service in Bushbuckridge rural areas. It is worth noting that the "agricultural dam" that is located at the place called "Edinburgh" which falls under the Municipality of Bushbuckridge has the sufficient water that can be generated to supply the various communities and urban areas that are located closely to the Municipality. Lastly, the Municipality has an advantage of having a river called "Nwaritjie" in Mariti which is the river that has



non-stop water flows, and the river can be used to generate water to the closest people that are found living in BLM.

## **2.5 Principles and Strategies to Enhance Water Management**

South Africa is still categorised amongst under developing countries in Africa and the country has been facing challenges in water service delivery for decades still up to date. Weaver *et al.* (2017) pronounce that in order to comprehend the matters that are associated with water service supply to the people, it is also fundamental to understand the nationwide measure background of water service provision to the citizens. The scholars outlined that the critical principles for keeping and managing water are; fairness, sustainability, and effectiveness amongst the municipal service providers (public officials) and the service receivers (citizens). These values are therefore to monitor the principal aims of water service management and water supply through satisfactory to the citizens. The other way of managing water could be closing linking taps, and these is one of the strategies that will need involvement, willingness and an action of community members working together with local municipalities to save water linkage in places. Meran *et al.* (2020) the study has found that water management requires to be fully incorporated into the notion of a maintainable water resources managing attitude. The household's members must be advised to use water wisely and in a decent manner. Citizens that own cars were found as one of the people who are wasting water by using pipes to wash their cars rather than using buckets to save water.

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Literature Review From International to Local Perspective on Accountability in Municipal Water Provision**

Water is fundamental and observed as a gift of nature in all places, water is seen as a necessity for human life. Many states and societies have engaged in wars over water service delivery. Without water, it is highly challenging for humankind to continue with their daily activities in their households. Mohammed *et al.* (2021) postulated that, the issue of water in (Iran) leads the countries together with Iran into clashes because of the rivers which are based in the country and are furthestmost fundamental source of such

water. The scholars further stated that, the members of the communities in Iran gathered and residing closer to those rivers for the aim of getting water closer because of their government which is failing to provide adequate water service. Mohammed *et al.* (2021) have also observed that the Arabs and the Israeli residents have been fighting to own rivers for the purpose of getting water closer, and one of those rivers is Jordan river. In these battles, some water projects have been carried out, however, Arabs had not been counted for getting clean drinking water.

Water is a basic need where every citizen should have an access of water to use, without sufficient water this will threaten the livelihood of human beings. Bayeh (2016) proclaim that since the year 2015 till up to date there have been serious negotiations between Egypt and Ethiopia on how the two countries should discuss about the water crisis, the purpose of negotiation's was because of, the two countries was battling over the regulations of satisfying the reservoir of a river dam, it was also reported that the amount of water is not sufficient to serve all the community members of the two countries. Bani Salameh and Hayajneh (2019) declare that the immigrants arrival in Iran is one of the main causes of water scarcity, the Syrian wave of immigrants to Jordan since 2011 have been also the most recent cause that the countries experience water shortage.

### **3.2 South African Experience on Accountability in Municipal Water Service Provision**

Olivier (2019) in his study "making effective use of groundwater to avoid another water supply crisis in Cape Town (South Africa) has found that citizens have been addressing the concerns of water scarcity caused by draught. It was concluded that government disappointments water provision keeps on increasing in various areas in Cape Town. Olivier (2019) further declares that helplessness of water scarcity in areas of Cape Town caused by mishandling of existing surface water infrastructure. The issue of water crisis in the City of Cape Town has been shading the provincial government with a red tape since 2015. Muller and Zille (2017) reported that the provincial government has been attempting to increase additional storage of sufficient water by diverting water from the main rivers in Cape Town, it was further reported that, these water development projects was installed, however, some projects are still awaiting for national government to assist with funds to complete all planned development of water projects.

### 3.3 Provincial Context in Accountability in Municipal Water Service Provision

Rankoana (2020) observed that Vhembe District is one of the areas that is experiencing problems of drought in the most municipalities in South Africa. The municipality in Masisi area is experiencing inadequate finances to deal with provision of satisfactory drinking water to the Masisi community members. There is evidence that municipality is failing to cover all the areas that are experiencing drought which result to scarcity of water in Vhembe District. Rankoana (2020) further posits that there is still another area which is called Maheni in the Limpopo province that suffers from extreme drought that lead to the community member's questioning the municipalities for service delivery to the people. The Maheni (2021) Community Water Management Plan (CWMP) has also demonstrated that the groundwater intensities and boreholes have dropped down due to dangerous levels, and these put the members of the community in a situation of experiencing insufficient water service in the Maheni area.

### 3.4 The Challenges of Water Provision in Bushbuckridge Local Municipality

Mndawe (2020) Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in Mpumalanga province has been experiencing numerous violent protests for more than two decades, community members have been striking and vandalising government properties for the purpose of drawing municipal attention to respond on their mandate that the municipality has received from the members of the community demanding water service delivery and other basic services that the municipality render. Mndwane (2020) affirms that the municipality has been experiencing these protests since from 1997-2019, the findings of her study focused on Bushbuckridge Local Municipality concluded that the municipality is facing challenges of funds or finances to render adequate services to the members of the communities. Many scholars have indicated in their research projects that, most South African municipalities have a crisis of generating raising funds that could be able to render services to the local municipalities' closest residents. The local spheres of government have been given responsibility by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of (1996) to ensure that basic services to the members of the community are delivered. It is worth noted that failure to render those services, most lives of poor citizens in rural areas will be affected post

negatively because water is one of the basic needs of human beings. Local government is one of the arms of government located closest to the citizens and constitutionally tasked with the responsibility of delivering basic services to the citizens.

## 4. Research Methodology

This paper adopted qualitative research approach, and data collection has been conducted through face-to-face interviews, semi structured interviews questions and focus groups for a researcher to comprehensively understand the impact of accountability in enhancing municipal water service delivery at Bushbuckridge local municipality in Mpumalanga province. According to Macmillan and Schumacher (2001), purposive sampling enables the researcher to identify participants based on their knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation of the impact of accountability mechanisms in enhancing municipal water service delivery in BLM. A sample of twenty (20) was selected which includes one municipal Director from the Finance Department, one municipal manager, Regional Manager and two officials from the lower level in the water department. The external stakeholders are comprised of two wards councillors and two ward committee members and as well as eleven community members from ward 18 and ward 20 around BLM.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The study obtained information from the internal structures and the community. From the sources consulted and surveyed the following findings were obtained from the two different sources.

### 5.1 The Internal Structure (Municipal Officials and Related Stakeholders)

In summary the following are results from the internal stakeholders:

The mechanisms and the municipal structures that was put in place to promote accountability in the BLM were not proper and effective, the accountability and mechanisms in enhancing efficient water service delivery was not monitored and evaluated to see whether there is a promotion of accountability that will lead to best service delivery to the citizens.

Most challenges associated with accountability in the provision of efficient water services to the

communities include the lack of municipal budget, Lack of public participation, unskilled appointed municipal officials. The BLM does not generate enough funds to enable the municipality to provide efficient water service delivery to the communities.

Only the municipal officials that are in the executive positions understand the concept of accountability towards water service delivery to the communities.

The lower-level employees do not have an idea on how the accountability can support water service delivery to the members of the communities.

The BLM does not know what can be done to enhance accountability on water service delivery since the municipality does not have sufficient budget to render effective service delivery.

## **5.2 Community Members Findings and Results**

In summary the results from the community reflect as follows:

- The nature and the state of water supply in the BLM has been and currently poor due to corruption and mismanaged of public funds. The nature and the state of the BLM water supply trends as compared to the previous years is still the same and without no improvement.
- The observed main problem of the municipality in terms of water provision is corruption, lack of unskilled officials, lack of uneducated deployed politicians, political interference and as well as the lack of understanding of public accountability with regards to service delivery.
- The community members have perceived that the problem can only be resolved if the municipality can avoid deploying unskilled, uneducated and unqualified politicians to fill the positions that has to do with service delivery.
- The BLM does not organise and conduct workshops that will educate the public officials to have a better understanding with regards to accountability on service delivery broadly.
- The BLM seems to be careless in providing quality water service delivery to the various communities since the problem has existed for many decades.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The paper undertook to discover whether accountability does contribute to enhance municipal water service delivery at the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in Mpumalanga province. The literature review from international to local perspective has indicated that accountability on water service delivery has been a challenge and still a problem around the globe. The BLM is more dependent on municipal grants and it does not generate many funds in terms of its own source of revenues because the community members are not paying for the services provided as they are living in rural areas. On the other hand, the municipality does not have enough capacity to effectively and efficiently to deliver the quality water service delivery that is demanded by the various communities due to the budget constraints. The BLM will need to start initiating workshops that will have a content of teaching officials in all levels with regards to the essence of accountability on service delivery. It will be very crucial for the municipality to prioritize the evaluation and monitoring of employees given tasks, by so doing however the employees will be able to know what is expected from them and therefore the municipality will realise the goals and the objectives. Based on that, the study recommends the following:

- The municipality to organise and initiate workshops that will teach about the essence of accountability on service delivery broadly.
- To introduce strategies that will be able to deal with unethical conduct of the municipal officials.
- To put municipal system in place that will eliminate incompetent line managers, mechanisms to deal with corruption and as well as to promote the municipality to have necessary resources to enhance water service delivery to the community members.
- The municipality to strengthen weak IDP, to promote and support public participation, to deal with municipal low budget, unskilled officials and as well as non-participated municipal projects.
- It will be very crucial for the municipality to evaluate and monitor the work of municipal employees.
- Strengthening communications through top-down approach.

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# Integrating Decolonization and Africanization into the Curriculum Transformation Activities of South African Universities

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**Abstract:** Decolonization and Africanization as indigenous knowledge systems have long been marginalized and under-reported within the education pedagogical space. The paper explores the prospects of integrating decolonization and Africanization into South African universities through curriculum transformation activities. The paper employs a qualitative conceptual approach, where themes are discussed based on reviewed literature. The thematic analysis is based on the processes in curriculum transformation, decolonization, and Africanization of the curriculum, curriculum transformation framework guidelines, and an integrative approach to curriculum transformation. This paper could add value to the development of Afrocentric discourse that can address issues of indigenous practices and content that speaks to undocumented marginalized communities. Various decolonized theoretical knowledge that is critical to lend an understanding to insights and voices of internal and external stakeholders using a bottom-up approach could contribute to critical pedagogies that are smear and yet different to present knowledge systems in education.

**Keywords:** Decolonization, Africanization, Indigenous knowledge system, Curriculum transformation, Marginalized communities, Bottom-up approach

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## 1. Introduction

Colonization can be viewed as an intergenerational trauma based on subjugations to oppressive, demeaning one's cultural practices and language (Arday, Zoe-Belluigi & Thomas, 2021; Etieyibo, 2021). The young generation may not be blatantly conscious of the nuances and manifestations that have led to the marginalization that exists in diverse societies. However, there is a need for curriculum transformation and development that promotes humanness in African practices through the interruption of generational trauma of marginalization. Currently, there are deliberations that purport that schools, universities, and churches are sites that are currently offering programs to maintain, perpetuate and reproduce coloniality. Hence, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) remarks that seemingly, there is an absence of African universities but what we have are universities in Africa. The implication of this statement is that not only academic discourses should marginalize Eurocentric domination but should rather claim their own intellectual space as presently the South African education system is resident in Western modernism (Gumede & Biyase, 2016; Arday *et al.*, 2021). It becomes, therefore, imperative to critically reflect on and negate any form of ideology, theory,

relationships, and institutions, which support integrated decolonized and Africanized curriculums.

South Africa has made commendable changes in its educational landscape since 1994, especially the curriculum transformation issues (Harms-Smith & Nathane, 2018). There is a need for universities to decolonize the curriculum to speak to real-life changes and have an impact on society. Decolonising the curriculum can be described as reforming the teaching and learning process to address the local and current economic and socio-political challenges (Gumede & Biyase, 2016). When curriculums are decolonized, it means cleaning drastic outcomes from the Bantu Education system that divided the locals into advantaged and disadvantaged systems (Lotz-Sisitka & Lupele, 2015; Arday *et al.*, 2021). According to Etieyibo (2021), decolonization is an attempt to reverse the colonial paraphernalia that was imposed on Africans for a long time.

Some literature indicates challenges that universities have when implementing curriculum transformation that has elements of decolonization and Africanization (Costandius & Bitzer, 2015; Blignaut, 2017; Saurombe, 2018). For instance, Blignaut (2017) argued that curriculum transformation

should relate to societal needs, and provide relevant knowledge that reflects an African society, as the existing one does not show the direct relationship between a curriculum and the desired society needs. Blignaut (2017) further allude that students at African universities ignore the indigenous knowledge obtained from their societies and ultimately face a cultural shock when they replace it with a contemporary culture that does not favour them. The best lessons can be learned from Costandius and Bitzer (2015) in their Islamic model adopted in Egypt's Al Azhar University when other universities adopted a Eurocentric colonized model. Saurombe (2018) debates that transformation in universities is incomplete, because curriculums are inconsistent with the cultural values of our societies, and can be completed through the integration of indigenous knowledge in universities. Mendy and Madiope (2020) noted a research gap in integrating decolonization and Africanization into university curriculum transformation activities, that there is no framework in the education transformation literature to show how the concept can be infused into the existing curriculums in universities.

Decolonization and Africanization as indigenous knowledge systems have long been marginalized and under-reported within the education pedagogical space (Hungwe & Ndofirepi, 2022). Decolonization of higher education in Africa includes indigeneity in education, addressing racial issues, and involves the concept of 'Ubuntu' (Etieyibo, 2021). It is novel to tackle the decolonization matter and to have insights into an African context in higher education. Hence, the paper explores the prospects of integrating decolonization and Africanization into universities through curriculum transformation activities. On that note, the following themes are discussed: the processes in curriculum transformation, decolonization and Africanization of the curriculum, curriculum transformation framework guidelines, and an integrative approach to curriculum transformation. The discourse could add value to literature and contribute to critical pedagogies that are smear and yet different to present knowledge systems in education.

## 2. Theoretical Literature Review

For decolonization and Africanization into universities through curriculum transformation, the paper adopts the psychosocial theory. The theory originated from Erikson in 1963, when there was an

association between teaching and learning within curriculum transformation with Africanization (Shava, 2016; Mashiyi, Meda & Swart, 2020; Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2021). The psychosocial theory views the process of curriculum transformation to integrate teaching and learning with different dimensions such as personal growth, developing an identity that includes cultural aspects, and valuing historical features and reality in life issues (Mashiyi *et al.*, 2020). This could assist in the holistic development of students to link the curriculum to personal and societal concerns in an African way.

The curriculum transformation process in the psychosocial theory brings solutions to individual conflicts as the internal capacity is used in familiar environments (Mendy & Madiope, 2020). There is integration between the internal capacity to deal with challenges and external social demand. Therefore, the external demands can be met by decolonizing the curriculum to permeate methodologies and epistemologies in African perspective (Shava, 2016; Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2021). In fact, there are several transformations practices such as pedagogy, scholarship, epistemologies, student-centeredness, monitoring and evaluation. These can demonstrate the creation of a new post-colonial and post-apartheid South African social identity (Mashiyi *et al.*, 2020). In addition, the psychosocial theory includes societal cultural influence that involves aspects of equality and equity in education. The strength of the psychosocial theory focusses on how curriculum transformation affects factors like transitions, career development changes and maintaining interpersonal relationship in an African context but fall short on local identity issues that cultural interference could evoke (Mendy & Madiope, 2020).

To address the shortfalls of the psychosocial theory, the paper adopts the cognitive-structural theory in the curriculum transformation process. This theory entails curricula that allow a critical thinking process for students to describe changes experienced at the individual level (Mendy & Madiope, 2020; Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2021). Intellectual growth has effects on heredity and environmental factors. This implies the curricula consider the innate capability of students to relate the curriculum with problem-solving skills in their environments. Hence, the cognitive-structural theory complements the psychosocial theory's lack of explicit emphasis on individual competence. Applying these two theories can bring about inclusivity in the curriculum transformation process where

students can reshape their living conditions and be competent to solve their societal challenges in a decolonized African way (Mendy & Madiope, 2020). The paper is interested to explore how curriculum transformation in the context of African universities can include decolonization and Africanisation. To contribute to the literature, the following themes are discussed to better understand the process of implementing curriculum transformation in a local African context.

### **3. Processes in Curriculum Transformation**

The process of curriculum transformation entails universities setting goals and activities in line with the national plan for higher education crafted by the Department of Education in 2001 (Ramrathan, 2016; Banegas, 2019). The goals set on the plan are as follows:

- To increase access and to produce graduates with the skills and competencies necessary to meet the human resource needs of the country.
- To promote equity of access and outcomes and to redress past inequalities by ensuring that student and staff profiles reflect the demographic composition of South African society.
- To ensure diversity in the institutional landscape of the higher education system through mission and program differentiation to meet national and regional skills and knowledge needs.
- To build high-level research capacity, including sustaining current research strength, and to promote research linked to national development needs.
- To restructure and consolidate the institutional landscape of the higher education system to transcend the fragmentation, inequalities, and inefficiencies of the apartheid past and to enable the establishment of South African institutions consistent with the vision and values of a non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic society (Ramrathan, 2016).

The first phase of curriculum transformation, for instance, in South Africa was to change year courses into modules offered in a semester for comprehensible units of learning. In modulation, there was

the standardization of module credits within the National Qualification Framework (NQF) (Motala & Pampallis, 2020). In this development, one credit point was deemed equivalent to 10 notional hours of study, meaning that a module that is allocated 15 credit points would require an average student to spend approximately 150 notional hours of module engagement, which includes attending lectures, tutorials, and seminars; self-study; assessments; and additional reading. The modular system and its associated credit values formed the basis of qualification construction, recognition of learning, and qualification certification.

The second phase implemented a regulatory framework controlled by statutory bodies for qualification registration on the NQF, accreditation of qualification, and institutions need to get approval of accreditation for recognition and subsidy purposes (Motala & Pampallis, 2020). The accreditation is regulated by the Council for Higher Education. The curriculum transformation guidelines employ an outcomes-based ideology with credit points and level descriptors forming the structure of a program within the NQF (Banegas, 2019). There are exit-level outcomes linked to the assessment criteria and program credits. A qualification is awarded based on total credits obtained in a program.

All universities in South Africa are undergoing the third phase of curriculum and program reviews in a cycle indicated by the regulatory bodies (Motala & Pampallis, 2020). This phase follows the NQF guidelines with 10 levels, with the doctoral qualification occupying the uppermost level of the NQF. Transformation involves pegging academic and professional qualifications at different levels while changing program study periods. For instance, for undergraduate and honours programs the study periods remained 30 weeks per academic year and constituted a minimum of 120 credit points per annum, whereas research degrees (master's and doctoral degrees) were extended over 45 weeks per academic year and constituted a minimum of 180 credit points per annum. Further developments in curriculum changes were in relation to generic and professional bachelor's degrees, with professional bachelor's degrees being pegged at level 8 of the NQF and generic bachelor's degrees at level 7. Post-graduate qualifications from the honours level upwards were required to include research training with varying scopes of research capacity development (Motala & Pampallis, 2020).

The above transformation processes give knowledge on credit points, level descriptors, and rules of the combination that formed the basis of curriculum reforms. Then, there is a need for deep curriculum transformation associated with epistemology and ontology for exploring indigenous knowledge systems (Lotz-Sisitka & Lupele, 2015). The contemporary issues in deep curriculum transformation need that knowledge to be socially constructed, and the methodologies implemented for studying the curriculum to be real and practical according to societal needs. Most universities start by piloting the methodologies to be transformed by choosing certain programs. Then, based on the outcomes of the chosen programs, where transformation is done, the whole university is engaged on how curriculums can be transformed to include aspects of decolonization and Africanization. This can be based on methodologies, content, community-based projects, or linguistics as chosen by academics offering the courses (Banegas, 2019; Motala & Pampallis, 2020).

#### 4. Decolonization and Africanization of the Curriculum

There have been various debates around the term colony and numerous terms are used to describe various facets of decoloniality. Though South Africa is no longer a colony of Britain and of the apartheid system, this may be regarded as internal colonialism as it subjugated one group by another group within the same country. In this paper, coloniality focuses on the perpetual processes of control, domination, and exploitation which may also be disguised in the language of salvation, that is, Christianity, progress, modernization, and being good to everyone (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

As Harns-Smith and Nathane (2017) comment that the chronological termination of geopolitical arrangements may have occurred, but the epistemological, psychological, cultural, and linguistics imperatives may have been adopted. Due to these factors, it has become apparent and a mandate for a decolonized epistemic turn that will require transformative pedagogies that will develop a scholarship of learning and teaching. This enables one to question, and critically think about the theory, writings, and communication of a new epistemology that caters to bilingualism, translanguaging, and versioning, and others to language articulations that can empower people. These may include the facilitation of social justice by removing structural

discriminatory and structural injustices and facilitating indigenous knowledge systems, and newly co-constructed identities in persons, families, and communities (Dominelli, 2010).

This is, therefore, a call for people to develop an awakening consciousness that seeks for them to become aware of their problems and have a will to bring about change (Gumede & Biyase, 2016). This will enable local actions to meet immediate means and be documented. There is also a need to reform consciousness and people's developments should inculcate a desire for self-determination and sharing power (Hungwe & Ndofirepi, 2022). People will need to question inequalities and injustices from micro to macro levels. This implies the development of deep consciousness, the highest level of thoughts, and a view of problems within the structured context; meaning, making connections between socio-economic contradictions and injustices in societies. People need to start questioning cultural practices and old values and develop new values. This may be achievable through democratic, participatory, and empowering ways of working with people and enabling them to evoke critical thinking and deliberations that could contribute to the body of knowledge in pedagogy (Etieyibo, 2021).

Through decolonization, people should be wary that Africanism is intertwined, and the philosophy of Ubuntu has long immemorially been embedded in African systems of existence (Omodan & Diko, 2021). In addition, Plaatjie (2013) views Ubuntu as a word that means positive attributes of being human, such as a sense of belonging, selflessness, hospitality, sharing, humility, and respect. In essence, Ubuntu is a code of ethics deeply embedded in African culture, 'umntu ngumntu ngabantu'. The word Ubuntu is Xhosa and Zulu, is known as Botho in Sesotho, Tswana and Sepedi; whereas it's known as Vhutu in Tshivenda, Bunhu in Xitsonga, and Mensheid/Medemensilikheid in Afrikaans. This implies that all cultures in South Africa confirm the African origin of this value. This also may imply recovery of African values curricula should take cognizance of African values and these should form part of the syllabi that commence from early childhood development to adulthood. Therefore, the curriculum in Africanism should be guided by African values that highlight:

- Importance of a family unit that sticks together.



- Mutual coexistence of a person to a group.
- Respect for elders.
- Fear of God.
- Deep commitment to sustaining meaningful community life through shared produce, problems, and sorrow (Mathebane, 2017).
- Consultation on all issues.
- Desire for consensus on major problems.
- Fair, honest and humane.
- Compassion politeness and dignity.
- Generosity and helpfulness.
- Self-respect, sincerity, goodwill, and tolerance (Shonhiwa, 2016).

Considering the aforementioned values, it then becomes apparent Africanism is regarded as group cohesiveness that is based on respect and mutual coexistence and sharing of resources among community members and the impoverished.

## **5. Curriculum Transformation Framework Guidelines**

Eurocentric content and pedagogies dominate the curriculum of most African countries (Motala & Pampallis, 2020). This result is the African child not thinking and innovating in ways that promote the African identity (Namubiru, 2022). In calling for curriculum transformation, driven through the lens of decolonization and Africanisation there is a need for us to rethink the position of Africa in the knowledge economy in terms of Africa we want through curriculum transformation. This paper posits that the decolonization and Africanisation of our curriculum as a transformative process must be underpinned by a desire to refocus our teaching curriculum in the African context. Context matters as students will be able to draw their knowledge from their own experiences resulting in indigenous knowledge being infused into the curriculum content (Namubiru, 2020). Such knowledge will enable society to solve African problems in African ways as already alluded to in Mendy and Madiope (2020). Mendy & Madiope (2020) point out that there is a huge framework lag in

the way our curriculum is designed and implemented as it remains widely Westernised and Eurocentric.

Adopting an Afrocentric curriculum framework must start with the curriculum design process. There must be a clear intention to decolonize and Africanise the curriculum in the design process. Such a framework must aim at infusing an African culture, customs, practices, and languages as pillars of the education system. These are glaringly missing in the current westernized and European epistemologies that are inherited from the former colonial masters (Kariya, 2015). There is a serious need to rid the system of aspects of the western curriculum that dehumanizes black students and the neo-colonial educational practices do not serve the African interests culturally, socially, and economically (Evans, 2016). The neo-colonial and imperialist attributes that perpetuate colonialism need to be guarded against in the curriculum transformation process.

In a quest to fight neo-colonialism in the higher education space, especially after the #Fees Must Fall and #Rhodes Must Fall in 2015 and 2016, universities have tried to infuse notions of Africanisation at the center of knowledge production. Questions around "who are we?", "whose knowledge?" became louder (Heleta, 2016). Calls for knowledge that empowers and liberates, rather than domesticates became louder. Central to the curriculum transformation framework and guidelines must be the reconstruction of knowledge that includes the appreciation and development of indigenous knowledge systems, around Ubuntu (Omodan & Diko, 2021), Afrocentric theories and practices (Davies & Wa Ngugi, 2020).

A decolonized and Africanised curriculum must, in the recontextualization fields select knowledge from the production fields, select it, rearrange, and transform it into a pedagogic discourse that recognized African knowledge, and values (Badat, 2017; LeGrange, 2016). Transformative curriculum design hence must be guided by the extent to which African knowledge systems of Ubuntu and humanization are drawn from the periphery to the center of the academic discourse. In calling for social justice, there is a need to humanize the pedagogy through Ubuntu values being infused into practice. A transforming curriculum should be viewed as responding to the local and global contexts, histories, realities, and problems (UP, 2016). Decolonising and Africanising the curriculum need to be driven by a desire of changing the narratives and knowledge

creation imposed by Western epistemologies taught for years in South African universities (Ripero-Muniz *et al.*, 2021). Tied with Ubuntu is an African pedagogy, which must show the intentions to shift towards caring for the students who in the main hail from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The issue of language parity plays a critical discussion point in the quest for an Africanised and decolonized curriculum. The continued practice of teaching in English (a second language) does not seem to work well in a context where students as well as lecturers are multi-lingual, diverse, and have different pedagogical needs (Ripero-Muniz *et al.*, 2021). Language parity (equality of languages) hence allows the pedagogy to address the specific contexts in cognizance of the lived experiences of teachers and students. The African languages have to be legitimated as it is at the center of human existence that affects culture and history (Ngugi wa Thio'o, 1992, in Ripero *et al.*, 2021). The learning approaches could be aligned to allow for the co-creation of knowledge with students in more student-centered ways allowing for the integration of critical thinking and problem-solving skills as part of the teaching and learning process (Nisancioglu & Gebral, 2018). An inclusive curriculum thus allows for students to be involved in how to Africanise their responses when given tasks thus using the South African contexts. This is one of the ways that control of knowledge can culminate in control over the economy, control of authority, and control of the public sphere (LeGrange, 2018). Thus, Africanisation brings pride, dignity, and respect to Africans that develop African education (Mashabela, 2017).

Tied to language parity is the desire to Africanise and decolonize textbooks and other reading resources. Soto-Molina and Mendez (2020:14) argue that prescribed textbooks assume a "one-language-one-culture relation to an idealized self and lifestyle close to the native linguistic model that teaches how to speak and what type of social and normalized rules and rituals must be respected and repeated". Hence, local resources that center on African ways of doing and being must be encouraged as their thinking is drawn from an African context. The focus should then be on the production and promotion of literary productions from the African continent that is currently being ignored given their conspicuous absence and underrepresentation from the university libraries.

## 6. An Integrative Approach to Curriculum Transformation

An integrative approach to curriculum transformation entails several aspects that include decolonization and Africanisation in the teaching and learning process (Taylor & Cameron, 2016). The decolonized curriculum is about integrating the western models with what is happening in South Africa and Africa in general. This can permit students to be knowledgeable about their African cultures and ideologies like Ubuntu (Omodan & Diko, 2021). The integration between the western and African curricula has an expression of identity as supported by the psychosocial theory (Shava, 2016). The curriculum is made relevant to students when attention is paid to African writers, their theories and discoveries, and philosophical ideas. There are studies that focus on the integration of African epistemologies into existing curricula and are viewed as intersecting domains instead of separate domains of knowledge (Taylor & Cameron, 2016; Shava, 2016). The African values and cultures dominate the teaching and learning process. This integration does not take away the western knowledge but encourages infusing the African indigenous knowledge into the western curriculum that the African students are studying. This can inter-weave indigenous, national, and international knowledge, in appropriate and meaningful ways (Gumede & Biyase, 2016; Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2021).

There are huge disadvantages that transpired from the colonized system. Students do not respect their cultures and their historical practices (Blignaut, 2017; Mendy & Madiope, 2020). This is evident to the youth that values and looks forward to the western type of Africa that does not exist. Today's youth place value, high expectations, beliefs, and trust on the colonized curriculum (Taylor & Cameron, 2016). This curriculum favors the interest of the already rich people and drives the youth to one way of looking for employment, hence, this high rate of unemployment among the South African youth (Pasara & Garidzirai, 2020). Adopting a decolonized curriculum could allow the youth to acknowledge the power in their environments, and what works in their surroundings in a practical way. For instance, when teaching about how economies grow, western books inform about the economic growth model that includes production functions (Pasara & Garidzirai, 2020). The decolonized and African way can include a curriculum teaching about

the production of indigenous plants that grow in South Africa and how they can be commercialized. This allows beneficiation to the active participants in the economy and can alleviate employment and lower inequality as stated in the psychosocial theory (Mashiya *et al.*, 2020).

Integrating decolonization and Africanisation into the university curriculum can follow several processes and strategies. It should be noted that for instance in South Africa, there are diverse universities and therefore the strategies can vary to suit the individual institutions (Vandeyar, 2020). For instance, Swart, Meda and Mashiya (2020) alluded that the strategies can include collaborations with local and international research partners to encourage research on curriculum transformation, workshops on decolonization and Africanisation of curriculums, and application of critical theory on curriculum reforms. These place academics in universities at the center of this process, as they are key in integrating the western curriculum with African knowledge (Vandeyar, 2020). Academics know how to integrate indigenous ways into curricula. For example, when academics plan the curriculum, learning outcomes and learning activities should be based on the African context that involves students' societal issues, and prescribed books chosen should be those written from an African perspective, though international books can be recommended. However, some African writers experience gatekeeping in publishing their books, but this should not discourage placing in the public domain real African knowledge (Mendonça, Pereira & Ferreira, 2018).

Academics can engage students in integrating indigenous knowledge into the curriculum in their teaching and learning activities (Vandeyar, 2020). This can be done by integrating African knowledge with western theories. A practical example is when teaching inclusivity in education using "Ubuntology" as alluded to by Omodan and Diko (2021). Students are allowed to critique articles written by African writers and compare knowledge against the western writers. In addition, students should be allowed to relate what is learnt with how to solve their societal problems, to communicate the importance of social justice with regard to issues of poverty, to make teaching and learning relevant and meaningful. For instance, teaching monetary policy of South Africa using a textbook written in western context will differ here and there, and students should be able to critique and check reality in the

South African context to see what works. Where possible, universities should have policies to allow the integration, for instance in multilingual pedagogy in classes to clarify certain issues in the content being taught (Mendonca *et al.*, 2018).

## **7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The paper explored the prospects of integrating decolonization and Africanization into universities through curriculum transformation activities. The paper employed a qualitative conceptual approach, where themes were discussed based on reviewed literature. The thematic analysis is based on the processes in curriculum transformation, decolonization, and Africanization of the curriculum, curriculum transformation framework guidelines, and an integrative approach to curriculum transformation. This resonates well with a people-centred approach that is participatory, inclusive, and enhances increased freedoms and capabilities.

It can be recommended that there should be pedagogies that facilitate empowerment, recognition of strengths and resilience with opportunities, and also investigate, question, analyse and reconstruct power relations and hierarchies that exist in all spheres of life. Curricula should be developed to unveil and conscientize levels of awareness aimed at awakening the oppressed knowledge, creativity, and constant critical reflexive capabilities. Through these processes, there would be demystification and understanding of the power relations responsible for student marginalization. There must be a creation of knowledge that is spiritual and culturally sensitive to Africanization. This implies that there should be a creation of enabling environment that provides empowering theories and languages based on the knowledge of the people and on what they are familiar with. The curriculum should be transformed through the construction of knowledge and should include the appreciation and development of indigenous knowledge systems that embrace Ubuntu, and Afrocentrism theories and practices. The struggle of oppression is also located in SELF, self-discovery is key, and this needs a psychological approach to self-reflection, reconstructing and re-appreciate oneself, and regaining self-pride. Curriculum transformation through dialogues that cater to student voices, external and internal stakeholders, and potential employers is key to the process. It is through these efforts that participation and collective action can be achieved.

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# The Impact of Human Resource Management on Social Worker's Performance in Rural Areas: Evidence From Selected Social Workers at Capricorn District in Limpopo Province

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**Abstract:** There is no doubt that social workers are rendering professional quality services to vulnerable groups across the globe. In South Africa, however, social workers face challenges impacting their daily performance. This study explored the impact of Human Resource Management and Infrastructure (HRMI) on social workers' performance in rural areas. A qualitative research method was used to collate in-depth information from 30 social workers. A purposive sampling method was employed to purposefully select social workers who met the criterion. Primary data was obtained through Semi-structured interviews with social workers and secondary data from books and journals. The findings revealed that there is a lack of office space, a shortage of equipment such as official phones, computers, and stationery; and poor supervision which affects service delivery. The findings further revealed that the infrastructure consists of old buildings that are not conducive to human habitation or office space and of lack transport. Therefore, this paper proposes the following recommendations: that all necessary resources for the effective performance of social work duties be provided. It is further recommended that the infrastructure of the office space should be rehabilitated for a conducive working environment and there should be a provision of transport.

**Keywords:** Human resource management, Infrastructure, Performance, Performance management

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## 1. Introduction

Human resource management and infrastructure is a strategic approach to the efficient and effective management of officials in an organization to an extent that they have a superior competitive advantage (Eneh & Awara, 2016:27). The strategic importance of human resources and infrastructure's role in organizational performance is receiving increasing recognition worldwide. Human resources and infrastructure were executed in South Africa and worldwide to improve knowledgeable and dedicated employees to the organization to meet employees' desires, aspirations, objectives, principles, and dignity (Rui, Zhang & Shipman, 2017).

Human resource management plays a key role in organizational performance in a lot of institutions. It is enhanced by the practice of appraisal rewards, career guiding, improving conditions, training, improved communication, and conditions, as well as development, selection, and recruitment (Abualoush, Bataineh, Masa'deh & Alrowwad, 2018). Organizations locally and internationally have aimed to get high profits and achievements, as such, they must apply their human resource management

effectively and efficiently (Sauce, 2022). In addition, organizations must be aware of human resource management more realistically and keep their human resources up to date (Sauce, 2022).

Most importantly, managers play significant roles in the purpose achieving organizational and a making profit. These roles examine the influence of human resource management on organizational performance (Mansor, Abu, Kamil & Nasir, 2014). According to Sauce (2022), good infrastructure such as offices and transport in the workplace contributes a lot to boosting employee productivity, increasing profits, increasing peace and tranquility, as well as reducing stress and making employees work hard (Sauce, 2022). Human resource management and infrastructure have important and unique influences on the departments' performance in South Africa and other countries. This paper was based on the impact of human resource management on social work performance.

## 2. Aim and Objectives of the Study

HRM and infrastructure play a significant role in the employee's performance. There have been issues

around the lack of competency in human resource management and the lack of provision of infrastructure to social workers. However, it is unclear if this has an impact on the employee's daily performance. This has contributed to the employees' poor performance (Nzanywayingoma & Yang, 2019:165). This paper aims to find out the impact of human resource management and infrastructure on social workers' performance: evidence from social workers from six different municipalities (Blouberg, Molemole, Lepelle-Nkumpi, Polokwane Cere, Polokwane Mankweng and Polokwane Seshego) in the rural areas within Capricorn District and the following are the objectives:

- To find out the impact of Human Resource Management and infrastructure on social workers' performance.
- To evaluate and monitor the performance of social workers.
- To suggest strategies that can be implemented in the study.

The key research questions were:

- What is the impact of Human Resource Management and Infrastructure on social workers' performance?
- How are social workers' performances assessed and monitored?
- What are the strategies that can be implemented to address the emerging issues

### 3. Conceptual Perspectives

#### 3.1 Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a practice focusing on selecting, training, recruiting, and human resource development in an organization. It's therefore associated with the supervising of an individual's dimension. Furthermore, it also focuses on activities that focus on the use of human resources in an organization, as well as aiming to improve the highly motivated and smooth functioning of an organization. Lastly, other functions include preparation, obtaining, developing, applying, and supporting employees in the accomplishment of the organization (Gamin, 2021). Essentially, Human Resource Management (HRM) is a practice focusing

on selecting, training, recruiting, and facing challenges impacting an organization (Eneh & Awara, 2016:28). It's therefore associated with supervising an individual's dimension. It has various activities that focus on the adequate use of human resources in an organization, as well as aiming to improve the highly motivated and smooth function of an organization. Additionally, other functions include; acquiring, developing, planning, obtaining, preparing on, and maintaining 'hr resources' towards the achievement of goals in the organization (Maxwell & Singh, 2021:128). Lastly, due to increased emphasis on Human Resource practices, it is thus recommended that Human resources must understand the critical nature and importance of the effectiveness of all Strategic Human Resource Management Practices which include: training, planning, reward, recruitment, selection, and promotion in creating value for the organization (Eneh & Awara, 2016:28).

#### 3.2 Performance

Within the public sector, as quoted by Matei (2006), and cited by Ion and Criveanu (2016:181), the concept of performance is found at the intersection of three dimensions in the implementation of the orientations followed by the organization with the tools of its policy. Then the focus goes to target groups such as customers, users, and other public sector agents as given by the organization. Finally, to achieve desired results, institutional resources are effectively used. The concept of performance itself remains a difficult concept to understand, however, it can be used as an initial starting point for the researcher. Performance functions from a specific objective are ruled by their relevance to the environment, by a set of selected features and It comprises elements that are both static and dynamic (Folan, Browne & Jagdev, 2007:615). Performance in investigational circumstances includes the mental meaning, which has resonance with other fields of research, particularly the use of performance measurement; while, in linguistics, actual versus theoretical usage of language is denoted as performance – again we have the pre-set standard or strategy (knowledge of a language) against which performance is judged (actual language use), thus this definition is equivalent to those already examined (Folan *et al.*, 2007:618).

#### 3.3 Infrastructure

According to Weber (2010), infrastructure is usually defined as the total of all materials, personal and

institutional assets, as well as circumstances and facilities available to an economy based on the division of labor and its economic units which contribute to realizing the assimilation of factor remuneration, given an allocation of resources. According to the Masterclass (2022), Infrastructure refers to the physical, social, and economic systems that support society. Firstly, Infrastructure improvement is seriously aimed at the smooth process of a current, industrialized nation. Secondly, it is classified into two major aspects: hard and soft infrastructure. Electrical grids, roads highways, and bridges, buses, and trains are regarded as physical components that support our daily life, which is called hard infrastructure, is the physical components that support daily life, such as electrical grids, roads, bridges, and highway systems, as well as the goods that make them operational such as mass transit, buses, and trains. The economic and social components and human capital such as hospitals, telephones, and economic facilities are regarded as soft infrastructure.

### **3.4 Performance Management**

According to Armstrong & Taylor (2014:62), Performance management can contribute to the development of high-performance culture in an organization by delivering the message that high performance is important. The management of organizational performance is continuing responsibility of top management who, with the help and advice of HR, plan, organize, monitor, and control activities and provide leadership to achieve strategic objectives and satisfy the needs and requirement of stakeholders.

## **4. Literature Review**

### **4.1 Human Resource Management's Goals**

Throughout the years, Human Resource Management has been widely criticized due to different concerns such as engaging the labor force, handling relations, training and improvement approach, acceptance of expected change, and employee health and well-being as listed by Armstrong and Taylor (2014:4). In addition, it has more promises than service delivery as well as is morally suspected. Moreover, it is overly uncertain, simplistic, prescriptive, and precise. Lastly, HRM has been claimed to be manipulative concerning shaping human behavior at work and placing excessive emphasis on business needs (O'Riordan, 2017:8). HRM's main goals assist the organization by achieving its objectives

through HR strategy development and implementation within business strategies. Secondly, it assists in creating a high-performance culture for growth and productivity. Lastly, HRM has been claimed to be manipulative in shaping human behavior at work and placing excessive emphasis on business needs (O'Riordan, 2017:9).

### **4.2 The Impact of Human Resource Management on Employee Performance**

According to Burke, Allisey and Noblet (2013:2), four reasons focus on HRM in the public sector and these reasons are as follows: firstly, there is a lack of information on HRM in the government sector in the literature; secondly, the HR role of the government is to ensure effective service delivery; thirdly, the importance for agencies to maximize investment and the level of public investment in civil services and; lastly, challenges affect public sector agencies due to the scale of the workforce (Burke *et al.*, 2013:2). Unfortunately, the listed four reasons have negative implications on the volume of demands faced by public sector organizations as well as the amount to which public sector services can meet these demands (Burke *et al.*, 2013:3). In addition, the recipients and providers are also affected by the listed above reasons, as such, the recipients and providers will benefit from research that focuses on addressing the issues faced in the public sector (Burke *et al.*, 2013:3). Hence, it is crucial to draw greater attention to challenges faced in the public sector utilizing a mixture of literature reviews, empirical research, and case studies. This will enable employees with solutions or directions on how they can manage challenges (Burke *et al.*, 2013:4).

According to Sharma (2021:159), HRM contains an assessment of employees such as helping with rewards and remunerations, motivation conserving good relations with labor and trade unions; thus, providing employees with health, welfare, and security through observing the labor regulations of the country in the study (Sharma, 2021:159). Furthermore, HRM also aims to place individuals on assigned tasks hoping to have improved production. As such, HRM utilizes the information and contributions from psychology and economics input as listed in Table 1 on the following page by Sharma (2021:159).

According to Sharma (2021:159), Employee Concerns-Human Resources focus only on individuals while in

**Table 1: The Table of HRM Multidisciplinary Activities**

<b>Competitive Challenges</b>	<b>Workforce</b>	<b>Worker's Worries</b>
1. Globalization	7. Preparation	15. Life Span Distribution
2. Machinery	8. Employment	16. Feminine and Masculine Problems
3. Employ Control	9. Enlistment	17. Scholastic Aspect
4. Human Capital	10. Job	18. Employees' Rights
5. Responsiveness	11. Design	19. Privacy Issues
6. Cost Containment	12. Training	20. Work Attitudes
	13. Appraisal	
	14. Communication	

Source: Sharma (2021:159)

HRM the focus is on the recruitment, selection, and preservation of people within the workplace.

#### 4.3 The Impact of Infrastructure on Employees' Performance

There is a direct impact of infrastructure on labor productivity, and an indirect impact of infrastructure on total factor productivity which has a long-term growth impact in South Africa (Zondo, 2020). This provided an innovative way of exploring the effect of the organization on the total factor of production and labor production which allows a clearer difference between the direct and indirect effects of the organization (Fedderrek & Bogetics, 2006:2). According to Fedderrek and Bogetics (2006:2), the Impacts of infrastructure have yielded contradicting outcomes with little robustness. According to Sadmanov (2015:11), transport, water, gas, and electricity were found to increase the chances of unemployment in rural areas and diverse infrastructure sections have diverse effects on a better quality of life and the alleviation of poverty. According to the Masterclass (2022), infrastructure promotes the exchange of goods and services and business operations, and it enables economic growth. In addition, disruptions to the supply chain can have disastrous effects on a region's economy. Critical infrastructure aims to reduce the number of disruptions to the workforce, importing and exporting, and economic activities.

#### 4.4 Monitoring Performance in the Workplace

Performance usually involves a composite of capacity, information, abilities, experience, and

inspiration. Inability to achieve can be an outcome of the lack of these reasons: perform work knowledgeably (capacity), required data perform work correctly (information), inspiration with a positive interest when doing work accordingly as well as working hard without any anticipations (Tshabalala, 2015). Performance measurement has cost implications, whereby certain levels of achievement qualify for benefits such as bonuses (Tshabalala, 2015). However, the measurement of performance has cost implications, whereby there is a standard for one to qualify for remuneration benefits. The two components, which are key result areas (KRAs) and core management criteria (CMC) are used as criteria to assess the performance of employees. The KRA covers the main areas of work, as well as concentrating on activities that can assist the department to achieve effectively (Tshabalala, 2015). The study findings concur with the above literature that social workers are also measured through the KRAs and are given scores that determine an appraisal of incentives for their hard work.

### 5. Research Methodology

The research technique used in the study was a qualitative approach. De Vos, Strydom and Fouche (2011:64), state that qualitative research design focuses on answering questions about the complicated nature of the problem to describe and understand the problem from the participant's opinion. According to Neuman (2006:220), the purpose of exploratory research is to study and understand the issue or phenomenon to develop primary ideas and move forward with refined research questions by concentrating on the "what" question. Therefore,



social workers in six different municipalities under the Capricorn district were interviewed such that there will be knowledge for the researchers to gain towards the study.

### **5.1 Sampling Methods and Sample Size**

Neuman (2006:219) refers to sampling as a lesser set of circumstances a researcher chooses from a large population and popularises to the population. The study sample was based on the targeted population of social workers in six different municipalities in the Capricorn district (Blouberg, Lepelle Nkumpi, Molemole, Polokwane Ceres, Polokwane Mankweng and Polokwane Seshego). According to Dinneka (2015), firstly, the social worker's role is to advocate for the rights of those people who are disempowered by the community to empower people. Secondly, social workers help clients express their difficulties, find solutions, and enforce interventions to grow and enlarge the abilities of clients to deal with their problems. Purposive sampling was adopted which falls under the non-probability sampling method. According to Babbie and Rubin (2010:179), purposive sampling is selecting participants based on the researchers' judgment about which ones will be more representative of the whole population. A qualitative approach was used for the study. 30 (5 from each municipality) participants were interviewed.

### **5.2 Data Sources**

Kumar (2014:171) explains there are major two approaches to gathering information about a circumstance, a human being, and a problem. These data can be characterized as primary and secondary data. Data collected using the first approach is collected from the primary data, whereas the sources used in the second approach are secondary data. Primary data was collected from social workers working in six different municipalities in Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. Then, Journals, articles, books, the internet, legislation, and other literature sources assisted in the study.

## **6. Data Collection Procedure**

Permission was requested in a form of a letter to the department of social development for the study. The purpose was to seek permission to interview social workers in the municipalities. Rubin & Babbie (2008:70) state that the main principle of research

ethics is that participation must be voluntary. Each participant should have information and understand the risk, effects, and benefits of being part of the research, and they are not to be forced if they wish to decline or withdraw from the study (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:143). All the social workers from the 6 different municipalities voluntarily participated and signed an agreement form to be in the study.

### **6.1 Data Collection Methods**

The method used for collecting data was semi-structured interviews. De Vos *et al.* (2011) explain the method as it's used to acquire a comprehensive description of a particular topic. During interviews, the Interview schedule was used to obtain information from 30 participants from six different municipalities.

### **6.2 Data Analysis**

In this study, information was collected in a form of qualitative data. To process data, thematic analysis was used. This analysis method allows for analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. Furthermore, the data set will be organized and described. In detail, unfortunately, it has been found that thematic analysis also analyses and interprets the topic researched (Braun & Clarke, 2006:77-101).

### **6.3 Area of Study**

Figure 1 on the following page represents the area in which the study was in the Capricorn district. These municipalities are in Limpopo province. As per Stats SA Census (2011), Blouberg Municipality is found in the Northwestern boundary of the Republic of South Africa with Botswana and Zimbabwe where the Limpopo River serves as the border between the municipality, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. Furthermore, Blouberg is 95km away from Polokwane and obtains 21 wards with 162 629 people. It is a rural municipality under the control of a tribal chief, whilst Polokwane is found in the middle of Limpopo Province. It contains well-known areas such as Polokwane Ceres, Mankweng and Seshego, with a population of 628 999 people. Lastly, the Molemole Local Municipality, which is within Capricorn District and is around 60 km north of Polokwane has a stats of 108 321 people. Lepelle-Nkumpi is within a close distance of 45 km from Polokwane, and it is under the tribal chiefs with other municipalities such as Sekhukhune with 230 350 people.

Figure 1: Map of Capricorn District



Source: Municipalities.co.za

## 7. Results and Discussions

The paper aimed to explore and present the information gathered from the participants in terms of the impact of HRM and infrastructure on their performance: evidence was from social workers in six different municipalities in Capricorn District, Limpopo Province. Data was gathered through interviews and observation with respondents working in different municipalities, with a sample of 30 social workers. The information gathered was subjected to qualitative analysis through thematic coding. Due to the analytical framework, the interviews studied a variety of problems. The findings follow from social workers.

### 7.1 Personal Characteristics of the Respondents

#### 7.1.1 Gender and Age of Participants

Personal profiles of the participants were as follows: the majority of the participants were women and men, with ages ranging from 32 to 45 years. The findings suggested that both men's and woman's performance is affected by human resource management and the infrastructure in their workplace.

#### 7.1.2 Educational Achievement

The findings showed the similarities of the social worker's qualifications for a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work which is attained in different South African Universities. The difference is that most of these participants have pursued their studies and have acquired their master's, degrees, and other post-graduate diplomas. The findings imply that most participants are overqualified for their current positions and there are no promotions in their workplace.

## 8. Findings From Social Workers Working in Six Different Municipalities

The following were the key results from the study:

### 8.1 The Impact of Human Resource Management and Infrastructure on Employees' Performance

Capricorn district is situated in Limpopo province and is subdivided into six municipalities and social workers were the participants of the study. Based on the findings from the social workers, human

resource management and infrastructure have a massive influence on the worker's daily work and the productivity of their organizations or departments. However, there is not enough literature to substantiate that both human resource management and infrastructure have an impact on performance. Most literature focused more on the influence of HRM on workers' daily work.

Findings from participants were that infrastructure and human resources are the most important thing that should be taken into consideration since there is a lack of resource management. Investing in infrastructural design can help employees satisfy the biggest asset of the company, your employees. The findings also revealed that the facilities that they are working in are old, not conducive for all kinds of clients (disabled, pregnant, and elderly) and that they do not have transport to do home visits. According to the Masterclass (2022), employees cannot function without basic needs such as facilities, access to clean drinking water, food, medical attention, and transport and communications systems.

The findings also reveal that human resource management is important in their day-to-day work. There is poor supervision between the social workers and their supervisors due to the ratio of supervisors versus supervisees. Shortage of equipment such as official phones, computers, and stationery which are the basic need for rendering services to clients was found to be another factor that has a huge impact on their performance. Garmin (2021) agrees with the findings, that HRM also focuses on activities that focus on the use of human resources in an organization, as well as aiming to improve the highly motivated, developed, and supported employees in the accomplishment of the organization. Other social workers stated that their performance is poor due to their own personal reasons, such as marital and financial problems. And others revealed that they have been requesting transfers to work near their families with no luck, as result, this has affected their morale and it had led to poor performance at work.

## **8.2 Monitoring and Evaluation of Employee Performance**

Social workers are expected to contract or sign a performance agreement in which the Performance is assessed through a performance development management system. According to Tshabalala

(2015), PMDS is nothing more than a tool to control employees' performance to the extent it rewards excellence, and ensures that they develop excellently. Thus, deficient performance should be identified and addressed quickly to prepare employees for appraisals and not be used as means to retaliate, thus, prejudicing, and penalizing subordinates. According to Armstrong (2014:58), organizations should develop a 'performance high culture for improvement of performance, setting goals, and monitoring performance. The other characteristic is to align performance management processes to the goals and objectives set to achieve.

Based on the evidence from social workers, their performance is assessed, monitored, and evaluated by their supervisors and then it will proceed to the moderation committee. The evidence also shows that after they have been assessed, those who have achieved and were scored highly are awarded incentives. Although some evidence also revealed that there is unfairness (assessment done with a personal vendetta than assessing the actual work) during the assessment, and as a result, this also leads to deficient performance of employees. The findings were also validated in terms of the Public Service Regulation (2001), as amended, that all workers in the government sector must be assessed. This is because workers' performance assessments should be related and conversant with the organizational performance evaluation.

## **8.3 Strategies to Improve the Performance of Employees**

Evidence revealed that the employee's performance is the most important thing in the organization since it leads to productivity and as a result there is a need to improve the performance of the employees. The findings revealed that social workers need the services of an employee wellness program so that their morale can be uplifted. As such, the department needs to improve its conditions. This can be done by making employees happy by improving the transport system, reducing their workload, introducing a qualification-based salary, or promoting workers once they get higher qualifications. Previous studies done by human resource management suggested indicators for measuring the performance of the employee. The indicators were as follows measured quality that must be rejected or redone through workout percentage: the satisfaction of customers which is measured through the feedback of

customers and loyalty of customers Customer (Njanja, Maina, Kibet & Njagi, 2013). According to scholars, the increment in public servants' wages will contribute to the reduction of power abuse and the efficient public sector in the system. The more employees are treated fairly, the better the working environment and more productivity in the organization.

## 9. Conclusion and Recommendations

It was evident that there is a massive impact of HRM and infrastructure on the daily social workers' performance. Regardless of the low sample of social workers working in rural areas used in the study, other useful findings were identified. Based on findings, it was found that employee performance is not only affected by human resource management and infrastructure but the other causes which were their personal and financial problems. From the above information presented, therefore findings from the study recommendations are supported. This paper recommends that all necessary resources for the effective performance of social work duties be provided. Furthermore, the infrastructure of office space should be rehabilitated for a conducive working environment. That will enable them to work in a conducive environment for employees at those six municipalities. The evidence from the study states that the morale of participants is low due to a lack human of resource management and this has resulted in deficient performance in the workplace, therefore there is a needs to maintain partnerships with other stakeholders to acquire assistance with infrastructures and resources and ensure that there is a provision of transportation/ cars to smooth service delivery.

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# A Systematic Review of Empirical Studies on Integrated Development Planning as an Apparatus for Strengthening Community Involvement in South Africa

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study was to systematically review empirical studies conducted on integrated development planning (IDP) as an apparatus for strengthening community involvement in South African municipalities. This study was conducted due to an increasing lack of community involvement in municipal affairs. Many scholars indicate that the coronavirus (COVID-19) has presented many challenges in the local sphere of government, and one of the challenges is poor community participation. The IDP is an important mechanism for strengthening community involvement. By doing so, communities can determine their most desired needs and aspirations. To realise the objective of this study, which was to systematically review empirical studies on IDP as an apparatus for strengthening community involvement in South African municipalities, the author has deployed a qualitative research approach in the form of a systematic review. Secondary data has been retrieved from different databases, such as Google Scholar, Sabinet, Scopus, and Google, using keywords for this study. A total of seventy (70) studies were sampled and systematically reviewed. However, only thirty-eight (38) were relevant and cited in this study. Three different theories have been deployed in this study: democratic decision-making, new public management, and the ladder of citizen participation. It is found that there is an increased lack of community involvement in the IDP process due to obsolete mechanisms, unethical conduct, and poor understanding of the design and implementation of the IDP by local government practitioners. Thus, this study recommends that municipalities always adhere to different pieces of legislation governing local government when designing and implementing the IDP process.

**Keywords:** Community, Community Involvement, Decision-making, E-participation, Integrated Development Planning, Municipalities

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## 1. Introduction

The provision of services in South Africa was predicated on racial segregation during the apartheid period up to 1994. The emergence of a new democratic government in 1994 allowed for transformation to reduce the injustice and inadequacy related to service delivery (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022a). The government introduced new public policies to ensure that the local government plays a meaningful development role to benefit all citizens of all races and previously disadvantaged and marginalized groups (Mashamaite & Madzivhandila, 2014; Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022a). The South African government has done a lot to promote community involvement in the development planning process. For instance, the government introduced the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in 1996 to strengthen community voice or involvement and ultimately lessen service delivery backlogs. According to Asha and Makalela (2020), "integrated development planning" is viewed as a procedure

by which municipalities create five-year strategic development plans. An IDP aims to reach decisions on issues like municipal budgets, land management, the promotion of local economic development, and institutional transformation in a consultative, systematic, and strategic manner. It is one of the key tools for local government to deal with its new developmental role. Community involvement, on the other hand, is defined by the World Health Organization (2002) as individuals actively taking part in analysis, decision-making, planning, program implementation, and activities. Makalela (2017) opines that strengthening community involvement throughout the planning and implementation process is critical for the IDP to be more trustworthy and resilient. However, even after the introduction of different policies, service delivery challenges persist as a result of poor community involvement in the IDP process, primarily in local municipalities.

A study by Mathebula (2018), in the Mopani District Municipality, revealed that the IDD process is not

properly, efficiently, and effectively applied to provide the services envisioned. Mnguni (2018), and Asha and Makalela (2020) concur with Mathebula's study, indicating that this is a result of poor understanding of the IDP process by local government officials and political office-bearers. This poor understanding has contributed to service delivery protests among communities. Mamokhere and Meyer (2022a) further assert that in South African municipalities, protests against the lack of community participation in the socio-economic development process and poor service delivery have become fashionable. The motivation for conducting this study was based on the increased lack of community involvement in municipal affairs. For instance, in 2020-2021, many scholars have stressed the growing poor or lack of community in the IDP process due to the unprecedented impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Some municipalities were able to ensure that there is an annual review of the IDP by consulting with communities through a different electronic platform known as "e-participation". Thus, this systematic study is certainly not a new contribution to the focus area. Many systematic studies have been undertaken on integrated development planning and community participation in South Africa. However, this systematic review study would be beneficial to both local government practitioners and policymakers in the academic arena. Consequently, it will add to the knowledge base of the municipality and possibly integrate development planning in different provinces. Based on the introduction provided, the research question that forms the foundation of this research is: Why is the IDP process used as an apparatus for strengthening community involvement in South African municipalities? Equally, this study aims to systematically review empirical studies conducted on the integrated development plan as an apparatus for strengthening community involvement in South Africa.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Asha and Makalela (2020) indicate that integrated development planning is understood as a process through which municipalities prepare strategic development plans for five years. An IDP is one of the key instruments for local government to cope with its new developmental role and seeks to arrive at decisions on issues such as municipal budgets, land management, the promotion of local economic development, and institutional transformation in

a consultative, systematic, and strategic manner. While community involvement, according to the World Health Organization (2002), is seen as the active participation of people in the analysis, decision-making, planning, and program implementation, as well as the activities. Thus, the study adopted the Democratic Decision-Making Theory, better explained by Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2020) to understand the correlation between IDP and community participation as defined above. Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2020), in their study, indicate that the community participation process is considered indispensable as it improves the relationships between the communities and the government in the decision-making processes. The study implies that community participation is a legal requirement. In the South African context, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, section 152 makes provision for community involvement in municipal policy-making and decision-making. The requirements of the Democratic Decision-Making Theory are consistent with constitutional requirements and the growing secondary literature (Enwereji *et al.*, 2020; Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022a). Therefore, this theory is deemed relevant for this study based on its theoretical grounds. The theory emphasises the need for a leadership style that will allow community members to participate in the decision-making process (Holman, 2010). Bhatti *et al.* (2012) see democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership or shared leadership, "as a type of leadership style in which group members take a more participative role in the decision-making process". As such, Quick and Bryson (2016) affirmed that in democracies, community members are seen to be significant stakeholders in that they can participate neither indirectly nor directly via elected representatives in the formation, adoption, and application of the laws and policies such as IDP and service delivery that affect them. Community participation, therefore, is a major part of the government-public connection in democracies. However, according to Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2020), Democratic Decision-Making Theory "is the opposite of an autocratic leadership style where leadership happily dictates the shape of management".

Ulrich and Wenzel (2017) state that in the Democratic Decision-Making Theory, leaders agree to equity, equality, fairness and transparency in the process of management. Although the democratic decision-making style seems frank, the process is

considered intricate, as it can be challenging to bring groups of people from different backgrounds together and make them agree on a single matter. The democratic leadership style is complex, but the researcher further argues the pros (advantages) and cons (disadvantages). The advantages may include a transparent process that is perceived to be fair, while the disadvantages may include communities being vulnerable to political campaigning and a lack of ownership in implementing decisions. McCallister (2019) indicates that "the process entailed in the democratic decision-making style comprises assessing situations and evolving options, meetings' scheduling for agreement, assigning an advocate for each option, holding reasonable discussions with delegates on each option, and voting for options or agreeing on each concept raised". Similarly, Quick and Bryson (2016) also affirm that stakeholders, including government agencies, political leaders, non-profit organisations, and business organisations, interact to formulate or implement public policies (IDP) and programs through community participation. Quick and Bryson (2016) further indicate that community participation in many instances could be "limited to discrete acts (e.g. a town hall meeting or citizen survey) or described by a set of practices (e.g. arranging public hearings or other types of consultation processes), participation more generally is the process of engagement in governance".

The study also adopted the theory of New Public Management (NPM) as a lens better explained and promoted by Munzhedzi (2020), who indicates that NPM is a dominant paradigm in the public administration field of study. The goal of NPM as a theory is to systematically reform traditional public administration to improve a capable and effective government operation. The NPM theory, according to Islam (2015), has been on a mission to transform the old or traditional public administration. The theory aims to reform public administration and ensure innovative ways to reduce service delivery backlogs. The theory aims to reduce the service delivery backlogs by adapting to decentralising responsibilities, encouraging public participatory planning, and reform or modernisation (Maserumule, 2009). The NPM aspect is consistent with the constitution and democratic decision-making theory, promoting participatory governance. Furthermore, Munzhedzi (2021) indicates that community participation in municipal affairs is imperative for the NPM approach, facilitating participatory planning over democratic mechanisms and structures.

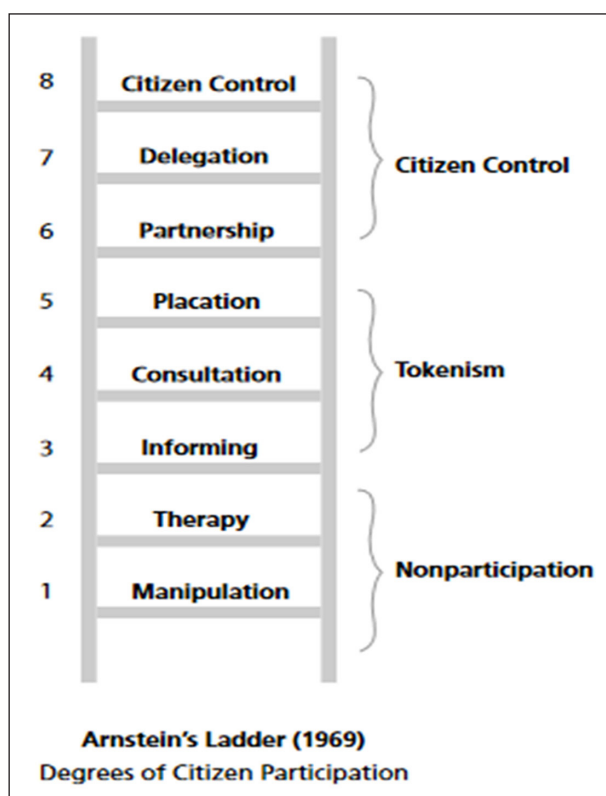
Having said that, the study finally adopted Arnstein Sherry's ladder of citizen participation theory, which he pioneered in 1969. Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation theory talks about community participation in the planning process in the United States. "The ladder of citizen participation is one of the most widely referenced and influential models in the field of democratic public participation. This theory describes how empowered public institutions and officials deny power to citizens and how levels of citizen agency, control, and power can be increased" (Arnstein, 1971). Arnstein (1971), in his or her study, further argues that community participation is a democratic process and to be classified as community involvement genuinely, it needs the redistribution of power. Similarly, in Mnguni (2018), Mamokhere and Meyer (2022a), community participation implies the involvement of communities in policy-decision-making activities. This also involves the identification of services' needs, budget prioritisation and preparation of the IDP.

Eight (8) steps constitute the ladder of citizen participation theory. These steps guide whoever is in power when imperative decisions are made. Thus, formulating effective approaches to involve communities has become important. The ladder of citizen participation developed by Arnstein (1971) includes the following eight steps namely citizen control, delegation, partnerships, placation, consultation, informing, therapy, and manipulation. The steps by Arnstein (1971) are relevant in this study based on their ground and contributions to encouraging active community participation. Therefore, The South African municipalities should use these steps as recognised by Arnstein's theory of citizen participation. The steps stipulated by the ladder of citizen participation theory ensure that community participation is achieved and encouraged as expected by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Municipal Systems Act and Municipal Structures Act. The citizen participation ladder theory is presented ascending from "manipulation, Therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegation and citizen control". Figure 1 on the next page shows the ladder of the citizen participation model.

By analysing the steps of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation, the author argues that communities should control the planning processes (IDP), thereby identifying service priorities. Giving communities a say in planning processes could lead to the successful implementation of local government



**Figure 1: Ladder of Citizen Participation**



Source: S. Arnstein, 1969

programs like IDP. Equally, as much as community participation is a legitimate mandate, it should be maintained and not just be done for compliance as per step three (3) of the model above. Step 3, which is informing, indicates that "informing is the most significant first step to legitimate community participation. However, the emphasis is on a one-way flow of information too frequently. There is no channel for feedback and no power for negotiation". It can be argued that step three (3) undermines community participation because the municipalities often do not provide feedback to communities on municipal affairs. The municipalities are undermining the constitutional mandate to provide adequate feedback to communities. Rowe and Frewer (2005) indicate that there are "various methods that can be used to provide feedback to communities on the activities of the municipal council and municipalities in general. Municipalities can use media announcements, public notices, ward committees, and ward meetings to provide feedback to communities". The municipality should avoid manipulation (Step 1) of communities, a non-participation. Community participation should not be viewed as a compliance measure but rather as a means of achieving

desired results by encouraging interactive and consultative participation (Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2021; Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022a).

All the theories adopted in this study fit well based on their grounded arguments and contribution to the existing and growing body of knowledge. All the theories adopted urge the responsible authorities and agencies to facilitate active community participation in the planning processes.

### 3. Empirical Literature Review

Every responsible national, provincial and local government sphere is supposed to develop inclusive development plans regularly to improve residents' social, economic, and political well-being. According to Chukwu (2020:56), developing a comprehensive and consultative development plan is a critical challenge across the world. In Nigeria, development planning has been hampered by a lack of coordination, execution, and management of policies since 1958. Naidoo and Ramphal (2018:82) indicate that the municipalities closest to the people worldwide are struggling to fulfil their duty to deliver basic

services that satisfy communities' aspirations and needs. As a result, municipalities are at the forefront of every government's development plan as they are mandated to develop integrated development plans that represent national imperatives. In South Africa, the national, provincial, and municipal governments collaborate to implement their powers and functions as required by the Intergovernmental Relations Frameworks Act (Act 13 of 2005). Besides that, there are existing pieces of legislation that govern development planning. However, challenges hamper the effective implementation of those plans, such as poor community participation and appropriate mechanisms.

Many empirical studies have been conducted globally and in South Africa to understand the correlation between the Integrated Development Planning process and community involvement. According to the study conducted by Zwane (2020:97) titled, "Community participation in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the Umzumbe Local Municipality", it is found that the Umzumbe Local Municipality is not committed to the IDP. From the respondent's perspective, "a total of fifty-five per cent (55%) of the respondents chose an option of "No" and felt that there is no commitment by the Municipality. While 45% believe the municipality demonstrates a commitment to identifying IDP issues through public participation". According to Zwane (2020:98), it is clear that communities in Umzumbe Local Municipality believe their municipalities are unconcerned about IDP issues. The results show that there is a lack of participation among communities and the municipality. Qualitatively, Zwane (2020) takes a different view from the IDP Manager, who indicates that "communities were constantly engaged in IDP related matters during the public participation gatherings by inviting inputs and ensuring that these were forwarded to the relevant units of the Umzumbe Local Municipality for consideration during the IDP planning processes". Therefore, from the IDP Manager's perspective, the municipality is committed to the IDP. To understand the extent of community participation in the IDP process, a study by Themba *et al.* (2020) from Mbombela Local Municipality found that "the residents of Matsulu were not engaged, at all times, in municipal matters, particularly when it came to policy and decision-making. The findings show that 87% of the respondents (community members) were not fully involved in the processes of decision and policy-making of the municipality. In comparison, 13% of the respondents indicated that they were involved

in policy and decision-making of the Mbombela Local Municipality. The majority of the respondents (87%) clearly stated that the municipality called the community meetings but that those meetings were limited and their opinions were requested and welcomed. Instead, the municipality had already made a decision. Consequently, the municipality consulted the community after taking decisions and making policies alone". These findings do not comply with the ladder of citizen participation theory by Arnstein (1969), emphasising that consultation should not be a one-way flow; the municipalities should provide feedback on decisions taken.

On the other hand, in his study, Dyum (2020:51), in an attempt to understand the meeting attendance level or manner in the IDP, found that meetings are attended by "a very small number of people". Therefore, it can be affirmed that there is a lack of interest or knowledge of community participation processes (Dyum, 2020). However, it can be argued that a lack of interest or participation occurs because communities have little knowledge of these meetings, and the municipalities are not even educating the communities. Based on the study conducted by Ndou (2019) titled, "Challenges militating against community participation in the Integrated Development Plan Process in Thulamela Local Municipality", it was found that "76% of the respondents agreed that community members are actively participating in the IDP process. This is an indication that community members of Thulamela Local Municipality actively participate in the IDP process. 19% of the respondents agree that active community participation in the IDP process plays an important role in the improvement of basic service delivery" (Ndou 2019). In contrast, Malatji (2019), in his study, indicates that "the majority of the participants in Tickyline village under Tzaneen Municipal area do not participate in development projects because some meetings are held during odd times, particularly during the initial phases of the projects." According to Malatji's (2019) research, the challenges of participation are influenced by officials who make decisions on behalf of communities and believe that communities are less capable of making independent and fruitful decisions about their projects. According to the study conducted by Masuku and Molepo (2020:450), they attempt to understand the benefits of community participation in the IDP. Empirically, "community members indicated that taking part in municipal development initiatives creates unity among them because they have a

common interest". Another community member, during a focus group discussion, expressed her view as follows: "When we are discussing issues that are of great concern to the majority of the community, we also agree on how to address them, that unites us, and we become one. So, the more we talk about our development issues as a community, the more united we become." The findings above are similar to those of Eversole (2012), who stated that "communities indicated that when they participate in municipal affairs, they stand a better chance of making suggestions towards IDP, and this fosters a sense of shared purpose, ownership, and responsibility". However, the findings of the study conducted by Masuku *et al.* (2020) do not confer with the findings of the study conducted by Malatji (2019), who indicated that there is no unity among the key role players at Ticklyline village under Tzaneen Municipality. His study indicated 'no unison' among the community members, traditional leaders, and other community representatives. Malatji (2019) further revealed that communities are often silent and poorly represented as the IDP does not represent communities' needs and aspirations.

Similarly, Mbelengwa (2016) acknowledges in a study conducted in the Alexandra community under the jurisdiction of the City of Joburg Municipality that community participation in the IDP process is ineffective and meaningful to either the communities or municipal officials. Mbelengwa (2016:67) revealed that communities are ignorant about participating in budgeting issues and the IDP process because they perceive their participation as useless. After all, the municipality does not prioritize their needs and aspirations. In the same study, it is found that lack of training and knowledge about the IDP process and budget are also crucial challenges, which make many community members ignorant and reluctant to participate in municipal affairs. When the participants were asked about their knowledge of the IDP, one of the participants indicated that "I do not know about these IDPs. How do I even tell other people about things I am not sure of?" (Mbelengwa, 2016:55).

It is further empirically found that communities' opinions in the preparation and implementation of the IDP process, especially at the initial phase and identification phase, are generally not valued, and communities often isolate themselves from effective participation. Equally so, it is revealed by Mbelengwa (2016:67) that "consultation is not

adequate and it is done wrongly". In this regard, it can be affirmed that there is a feeling of dissatisfaction about the lack of consultation and involvement in policy and decision-making. In line with the above findings, the participants from the Alexandra community empirically indicated that "municipal officials do not consult us as the community when it comes to the decision-making in the IDP; they make their own decisions without us". While other participants indicated that "the municipality is so corrupt, they do not consult when it comes to major decisions, and they award contracts and tenders to their comrades for almost all the projects in our community". These findings concur with the study findings conducted by Ndou in 2019, which indicated that communities are not actively involved in the IDP process. The above findings by Mbelengwa (2016) and Ndou (2019) also complement the findings by Asha *et al.* (2020), who revealed poor community participation as one of the challenges that hamper the effective implementation of the IDP process, while the empirical findings in Mathebula (2018) are comparable to those in the previous studies. The study went to great lengths to determine if municipal officials from various departments are familiar with and comprehend the IDP as a management tool. The participants indicated that "I know the IDP as a document that comes through my department for clearance every year, and the information is the same as the previous year". Thus, from the findings, it cannot be confidently opined that some municipal officials have a general understanding and knowledge of the IDP. Naidoo *et al.* (2018) revealed that some grassroots challenges hinder effective community participation in municipal affairs. The study conducted at Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in South Africa revealed that the municipality does not conform to the public participation processes and the *Batho Pele* principles when implementing the IDP process. The public participation process and the *Batho Pele* principles require communities to be informed, consulted, involved, collaborative and empowered. These requirements for the public participation process are also in line with what the ladder of citizen participation theory advocates. In the study conducted by Mamokhere and Meyer (2022b), titled "a review of mechanisms used to improve community participation in the integrated development planning process in South Africa: an empirical review" it is found that lack of community involvement is a result of poor or obsolete mechanisms which are not relevant in the era of COVID-19 pandemic such as public meetings. From

the empirical studies conducted, it can be affirmed that community participation in the IDP process in some municipalities is encouraged in line with legislative frameworks while, in other municipalities, communities are still not actively involved in municipal businesses.

#### 4. Research Methods and Designs

This study adopted a qualitative research design in the form of a systematic review. The author used this design to review existing literature in the fields of IDP and community participation. Thus, a systematic review involves a critical and reproducible summary of the results of the available publications on a particular topic or clinical question, according to Linares-Espinós *et al.* (2018). Tawfik *et al.* (2019) concur that a systematic review is defined as a review using a systematic method to summarize evidence on questions with a detailed and comprehensive plan of study. Furthermore, despite the increasing guidelines for effectively conducting a systematic review, the basic steps started by framing a question and then identified relevant work, which consists of criteria development and searching for relevant articles using keywords such as integrated development planning and community participation or involvement, appraised the quality of included studies, summarised the evidence and interpreted the results. The motivation for adopting a systematic review in this study was based on the fact that an unsystematic narrative review tends to be descriptive, in which the authors frequently select articles based on their point of view, which leads to its poor quality (Tawfik *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, a systematic review was deemed significant as it promoted the quality of the results.

In other words, a comprehensive analysis and synthesis were performed on the previously published research on IDP and community involvement in South Africa. The procedure comprises the review of information gleaned from the internet, books, and journal articles. Different databases were used to collect secondary data, such as Google, Google Scholar, Sabinet, and Scopus. Also, NVivo software was used for the review of the literature. NVivo was used in this study because it is good software to use when conducting a literature review. The system allows you to manage your sources, identify themes, and helps you make connections between sources. In conclusion, the systematic review method was used to attempt to answer the research question,

which was aimed at drawing a more trustworthy result from which a conclusion could be derived. The next section focuses on the theoretical framework which intends to support the grounds and the argument of this study. The theoretical framework also assisted the author in arriving at a trustworthy conclusion.

#### 5. Results and Discussion

There is a lack of community involvement in the Umzumbe Local Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The majority of respondents (55%) who selected "No" believed that the municipality had not made any commitments. 45% of respondents think that the municipality shows a commitment to identifying IDP issues through public involvement. According to Ndou (2019) research, 76% of participants believed that community people actively participate in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process. 19% of respondents concur that increasing community engagement in the IDP process is crucial for enhancing the provision of fundamental services. It can be argued that a lack of participation occurs because communities have little knowledge of the IDP meetings in their areas. According to study by Malatji (2019), there is no cooperation among important stakeholders in Tickyline Village, which is part of Tzaneen Municipality. Communities frequently remain mute and have poor representation since the IDP does not reflect their needs and goals. Officials that make choices on behalf of communities have an impact on participation challenges. According to Mbelengwa (2016:67), community involvement in the IDP process is unproductive and has no significance for either the communities or city officials of the City of Joburg.

#### 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study systematically reviewed empirical studies conducted on the IDP process as an apparatus for strengthening community involvement in South African municipalities. Involvement of community participation in the IDP process and municipal affairs is a legal requirement in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000) and Municipal Structures Act (Act 117 of 1998). The study concludes by recognising and acknowledging a gap between the IDP and community participation. Therefore, more studies should be conducted to close the gap and educate the public,

local government practitioners and scholars on the importance of improved community participation in the IDP process. They also study emphasised how difficult it is to design and implement the IDP process. A consultation process should be promoted to support the meaningful design and execution of the IDP process. A consultative approach necessitates the active participation of several important stakeholders at numerous levels of analysis and decision-making. The IDP process must guarantee that all stakeholders are included when and where needed. Based on the findings of this study, the study recommends the following:

- The study recommends that municipalities always adhere to different pieces of legislation governing local government when designing and implementing the IDP process. For instance, the Municipal Systems Act (2000) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) require municipalities to actively involve stakeholders in the planning process to provide municipal services sustainably and satisfactorily.
- It is found that there is low participation of stakeholders. Thus, municipalities should acclimate to the new era or risk being left behind to ensure community participation in the IDP process. Municipalities should acclimatise to the emergency of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and COVID-19 pandemics, which have changed how things used to be done.
- The municipalities should provide the roadshow to promote effective, timely participation and understanding of the whole consultation and approval process of the IDP. The roadshow should also educate different stakeholders on municipal functions such as the IDP.
- South African municipalities should design mechanisms that make it easier for marginalised and previously disadvantaged people to participate in municipal planning and decision-making processes freely and without prejudice. Because most of the respondents in this study stated that they were not adequately encouraged to engage in the IDP process due to obsolete "outdated" mechanisms, it would be beneficial to all the stakeholders if the municipalities adopt e-participation while taking note of the old and previously disadvantaged people without access to technological tools or mechanisms. Electronic

participation (E-participation) should be adopted by using a variety of electronic media, including radio and television shows, emails, the Internet, Zoom video conferences, social media sites like Facebook, and group discussions on WhatsApp should be used to improve community participation during and post-COVID-19.

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# The Intervention for Peace and Border Control Safety in South Africa

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**Abstract:** Migration control is a burning issue worldwide and a politically contested in South Africa. This paper analyses challenges of illegal immigration that poses danger and threats into South Africa which triggered the intervention of peace and border control for safety and security as a measure. The illegal migration and refugee crisis in South Africa post 1996 has reached the stage of uncontrollable situation due to lack of information about number of illegal immigrants that crosses the borders into the country. The Department of Home Affairs in South Africa fails to identify risky migrants. The illegal immigration in South Africa is caused by economic and political factors from African countries. There are potential dangers arising from illegal migration as well as unsuitable way of addressing them. Stringent border control is not a big obstacle to freedom of movement within South Africa as granting of work permits, residency permits, access to welfare provisions and social assistance are vital importance instruments for controlling, improving and limitation of free movement of people. The paper applied qualitative methodology using case study and secondary data of official documents, archival records and existing literature. In view of current situation of illegal migration and uncontrolled borders in South Africa, this paper seeks to analyse the challenges of border control and challenges in South Africa for management of border control for safety and security. The illegal immigrants posing danger and threats remain a major challenge in South Africa. This paper conclude that South Africa should implement immigration laws, introduce biometric system, build refugee camp, and build a wall at the borders to control immigration.

**Keywords:** Border, Control, Migrants, Implementation, Intervention

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## 1. Introduction

Human migration has taken place throughout history. At times, it has been considered an opportunity by the receiving countries, but in today's world, migration is viewed as a threat. In the new millennium, migration seems to threaten the social and political stability of the world's established democracies, especially in United States, Europe, United Arab Emirates, China, and South Africa are all the democratic countries amid the continuing influx of refugees from the war in Syria, political and economic migrants from other parts of Africa. In post-Apartheid South Africa, it is alarming how migration has become a security issue, it is instructive to highlight how cultural differences, as a system classification, are associated with threat (Saleh, 2020).

According to William Blake (2002), the challenges of border peace control has been one of the most politically contested issue in recently, reflected in both the polarization it has caused and the massive resources that have been used into new border control security tools worldwide. Most disguised word 'refugee crisis,' when migrants are yearning to enter

first world countries due to economic crises which happened in South Africa after 1996, has resulted in a vast expansion of the South Africa border control resources, notably an array of new automated surveillance and screening tools costing millions of Rands in airports borders. Mr Donald Trump, the United States former President, managed to build a border security wall between the US-Mexican border, regardless of the old border fence that was done previously from Mexico to the Pacific Ocean (European Commission, 2019). Asia was not exceptional as India, political controversies surrounding migration from Bangladesh and Pakistan have resulted in a steady increase in the budget of the Border Security Force and significant spend a fortune into new high-tech border control tools (Paik, 2020).

The South African government has mandated the Minister of Public Works to build a fence on the land border between South Africa and Zimbabwe at the Beitbridge border to control the illegal passing of migrants from Zimbabwe to South Africa. It has been seen in the news where undocumented African migrants' cross borders through Zimbabwe passing to South Africa with busses to seek employment and

better lives. This had propelled South African Home Affairs minister to investigate his departmental office officials as many immigrants' documents expire leading to overstay in South Africa. The Minister of Home Affairs investigated officials because it is their duty to maintain the records of migrants entering and exiting the country and know who is in the country and when their documents expire, to assist those migrants to renew or to leave the country and travel back to their countries. The people in South Africa formed movements such as *Operation Dudula* and *Put South African First* to fight against illegal immigrants in South Africa. They recognise themselves as community movements in South Africa.

The two movements encouraged the Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motswaledi, to tighten borders by peaceful border control Border Management Authority (BMA) Bill that has been welcomed and passed on June 11, 2017, to be implemented in managing all borders across South Africa (BMA, 2020). This BMA, in May 2022, was ready to operate as a stand-alone entity. It is a serious challenge because women and children in South Africa keep missing daily without trace, some are found dead after a while the perpetrators of these crimes have been committed by foreigners and South African citizens at different areas in the country as communities caught many on the act and at times, they commit mob justice (Phipps, 2020). The small business shops in the local townships and rural areas owned by immigrants sell goods that are made with damaging chemicals mostly by Ethiopians and Somalians. The Afri-Forum suggested patrol at the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe. But the Department of Home affairs dismissed it and said it would be illegal for Afri-Forum to conduct patrols. The land border control security is not the only challenge as air transport borders at airports has been facing challenges of immigrants who enter the country illegally (Project South, 2020).

## 2. Background

Africa was decolonized in the 1950s and entered in a whole new shape of African political spectrum. It was in the hands of African states leadership and its societies had a privilege to determine and reshape their continent's destiny. The African leaders took advantage of the opportunity and had to get rid of the continent of remnant vestiges of colonialism, particularly in Southern Africa, while at the same time working to foster greater continental unity for

development and prosperity. An indication of Africa's determination became evident with the creation in 1963 of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) with the task of continental liberation, unity, and development. Although the OAU registered success in achieving the objectives of liberation and unity, the same could not be said for continental development. The OAU had been struggling with the inability to advance Africa's development to challenges of peace and security that confronted the organisation from its inception. For instance, the eruption of conflicts between some African states (such as Algeria and Morocco; Mali and Burkina Faso; Somalia and Ethiopia; and Somalia and Kenya) in the 1960s and 1970s due to border disputes as well as within African states (such as civil unrest in the Congo in 1966 and in the 1966-1970 Nigerian civil war) diverted much of the attention of the OAU from development to conflict resolution (African Union, 2003).

The control of peace border security was a necessity in the African continent across their country borders due to inter-state and intra-state conflicts that presented unprecedented challenges as well as threats to stability and the development of Africa, where refugees of economic and political crisis triggered migration to countries that are better developed than those other African countries. Such conflicts often forced people to flee their homes to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The arrival of refugees in other countries led to competition for resources between refugees and the nationals of such countries; thus, often causing another conflict in the hosting country with its citizens competing for jobs, education and crime made by unknown immigrants who cannot be traced by the Home Affairs system because most immigrants cross the borders illegally without proper documents and Department of Home Affairs can assist in registration of illegal immigrants to be registered and known on the system or return them to their respective countries safely (Naldi, 1999).

## 3. Research Methodology

This paper applied a qualitative research method. De Vos (2005:269) noted five strategies of inquiry that can be applied when this type of research is carried out: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. The last was chosen for this particular paper. According to De Vos *et al.* (2005: 269), a case study can be regarded as an exploration or in-depth analysis of a bounded system.



De Vos *et al.* emphasise that the case may represent a process, activity, event programme or individuals. The case study strategy of enquiry was chosen because it allows for a comparative analysis of cases. This article uses more than one case; it thus falls under the category of collective case study. This study looks at South Africa cases and the decision to choose these cases was motivated by several factors. This article used secondary data-collection method the review of official documents (statutory or non-statutory), existing literature and archival records.

#### **4. The Significance of Peace Border Security**

The peace border safety is significant in strengthening an effective managing of land, sea, and air border control in every country. Immigrants crossing the borders from their respective countries to another country, it might be refugees, economic or political matters but they are first "human beings" before named travellers, migrants, and foreigners. These migrants' human rights must be taken into consideration for their safety on the border gates not to be victims of circumstances by officials, soldiers, and guards at the border gates. The borders must be walls but also gates for effective control (SBG, 2020). The basic policy issue at borders is how to balance the needs for fortification with the need to soften and strengthen peace border controls; how to balance encouraging the legal flows of people goods services and capital thought necessary for economic development and political stability into domestic territories while keeping non-legal flows out; briefly, how to balance the need for mobility with the need for control. As Hobbing (2005a) notes, the 'concept of integrated border management' represents a delicate attempt to marry security concerns with trade facilitation. The exploring literature method from secondary data such as articles and documents were applied in this paper. That balance requires political decisions about which values and interests matter and how much emphasis should be placed on promoting border safety control. Where does the balance lie between promoting economic growth and softening border controls versus protecting the security, rights and freedoms of people and fortifying the borders, and who will decide?

#### **5. Criminal Activities at Land Borders**

The issue of migration affects security in terms of criminal activities taking place in the hosting

countries. The European Council had requested that the Council and Commission devise a plan for more effective control of external borders in December 2001. The preferred policy solution of the Commission has been the smartening of borders using high-tech information systems and automated technologies (European Union, 2017). The so-called Smart borders are a solution which can simultaneously meet the two objectives of enhancing security and facilitating travel (Rexer, 2021). The term smart borders refer to technologies such as biometric identification tools, automated risk profiling, and interlinked information systems, which aim to automatically identify 'risky' people and to permit legal immigrants to cross borders unimpeded (European Council, 2008).

#### **6. Human Smuggling**

The smuggling of humans is one of the critical factors affecting national security in Sri Lanka due to immigration and the country's geographic features. Immigrants cross the coast illegally from India because of the presence of specific landing points that smugglers and fishing captains operate in (Holzberg, 2020). According to Sri Lanka's police reports, the police have intercepted 89 vessels engaged in human smuggling since 2009. The same issue is happening in South Africa today. In the cities such as Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg women and children keep going missing day in and day out and it has been said and seen on the news that many missing people are found dead, and some cannot be found (Lankov, 2020).

#### **7. Border Threats and Vulnerabilities**

The security threats by migrants in the hosting country needs border security management to control external access and threats to domestic territories and populations. The effective management requires a legitimate conception of what is a proper border and legal crossing and what is safe to let in and what threatens security of the country receiving migrants. The legal mobility will always have illegal counterparts' violations of the laws of the state and threats to its people and style of governance. But all illegal border crossings and transactions are not equal as threats. The well documented migrants are the legal migrants that are known on the system. The border management must balance the need for openness of borders against the likelihood of risks and vulnerabilities such as, what constitutes threats

which must be controlled and what threats are not harmful or less importance and for which controls may be less stringent without leading to potential harm to community and national security interests. These threats and vulnerabilities vary and require different policy solutions in every country. The violations of border control laws are equally illegal but not equal in terms of security concerns. There are five general categories of threats to security, though analytically distinguishable, merge at their edges:

- The usual criminal acts which cross borders (e.g. car thefts on one side of the border and 'chop shops' across the border).
- The technical violations (lack of proper papers, and irregular, illegal migrants looking for work).
- The transnational risky organised crime (various forms and types – smuggling cars, guns, drugs and other commodities, human trafficking, the illegal transfer of arms and nuclear materials, or the illegal transnational disposal of dangerous materials such as radioactive waste).
- The terrorist security threats.
- The threats to the integrity of border management corruption, abuse of power, violence against other border guards.

The duties of South African border guards are to check the migrants' documents and safety coming or leaving the country on the border crossing. The proper and effective border management requires that law and policy make clear distinctions on what is worth paying attention to and spending limited resources on, and what has lesser importance and can be placed lower on a priority list of things for border guards to be doing. This is a technical issue but also a political issue since conceptions of threats are easily manipulated, the recent focus on illegal migration, a discourse in which illegal immigrants have come to be defined as criminals who need to be treated as such because they are unknown in the receiving country. A prerequisite for effective Integrated Border Management (IBM), as well, is a clear notion of vulnerabilities arranged in some order of seriousness or criticality. There is little chance to manage borders in an integrated and effective manner, given resource scarcities, unless there is a clear sense of what matters and border guards are trained to distinguish among levels of threats and

vulnerabilities. Border guards cannot do their work efficiently if all illegal acts are equal. This is a standard policing problem. Police must enforce every law on the books to deal with serious matters. Traffic control is a typical problem. If police stopped cars for every violation they observed, they would be stuck half a mile or less from the station house and would never be able to patrol their beats. Dealing with illegalities of a minor nature will allow more serious threats to pass unchallenged, a tactic probably not unknown to experienced border smugglers and organised criminals. The basic border control and security problem is not illegal immigration, but the mobility of people (Koslowski, 2007). There are millions of tourists, businesspeople, family visitors and legal workers move across the globe to developed countries every year and arrive at borders. The large size and extent of legal mobility may simply overwhelm the capacity of the state to manage its border efficiently. Many migrants, goods and carriers arriving at borders are the real balancing problem. The thickening of borders, extending them globally through a variety of technological and cooperative mechanisms, is one way of preventing being overwhelmed. Thus, prevention of problems is better than solving problems.

The most challenging issue is the integrity and corruption. The corruption of border guards, which is known to happen, undermines the integrity and existence of border controls and needs to be taken seriously as a problem in the planning, implementation, and management of border controls. Corruption weakens and can destroy the most carefully designed plans and policies of BMA. The border controls functions effectively whenever the officials and border guards and immigration inspectors do their jobs as they have been trained. If border guards fail to do their jobs properly, because they have become corrupted, are lazy, engage in other activities or pursue personal inclinations on whom to stop and question, then the border disappears as a control mechanism, and all risk and vulnerability assessments become meaningless (SBG, 2020).

## 8. Managing Air Border Control

Not all borders are the same, and they must be managed in different manner. The nature of threats, the space and area that have to be controlled, the types of equipment needed and the skills to use them, the number of personnel required, the extent to which information exists and is immediately accessible in shared databases, the level of integration

which has to be achieved among numerous agencies, contingents and personnel on the ground, and the overall costs of routine control efforts differs. Every type of border poses specific problems. The Airport borders deem to be the easiest to control than other kinds of borders. The South African travellers arrive in a confined space, are always visible as they walk through various checkpoints. The South African Home Affairs immigrants' officials are always available when migrants from different counties arrives and have to use proper methods of identifying immigrants' and have their documents checked quickly against information in databases and they are observed for unusual and suspicious behaviours by many border guards, dogs and their handlers, and occasional profilers. These borders cannot be patrolled by personnel in any efficient manner, hoping to spot illegal crossers as they are transported or walk across the borders. These borders can at best be placed under surveillance by technological means (long-range radars, sensors sprinkled on suspected routes), air patrols by helicopters, small planes and drones, or observation towers. In general, border controls which often were handled in earlier times by military units have been replaced by technology, fast response when alerted and the assistance of national police. Once suspected illegal migrants are detected, border guards can be dispatched to intercept them if possible, and local national police can be notified of the incursions of unwanted and irregular crossers for further law enforcement actions within the internal space of South Africa. The air border migrants in South Africa as a receiving country has never experience the challenges of undocumented migrants. Minister Motsoaledi indicated that the Department of Home Affairs officials fail to keep records and remind those migrants to return back to their respective countries when their visas and passports expires due to lack of enough inspectors in the country (SBG, 2020).

## **9. Managing Sea Borders Control**

The sea border present their own challenges. It requires major investments in ships and observation technology to spot small boats on a large ocean before they reach the territorial waters and shores of South Africa. There are numerous boats that make it across the Mediterranean and an unknown, but large, number of illegal migrants drown as their boats are not designed for long journeys and inclement weather, and probably are all overloaded to start with.

For example, in 2008, 37,000 illegal migrants managed to reach the small Italian island of Lampedusa from North Africa, according to the IOM (New York Times, 2009), after great but unknown loss of lives when overloaded boats capsized or sank. The loss of life of migrant streams which cross seas contributes to the political difficulty of controlling the sea borders (Madorin, 2020).

## **10. Managing Land Border Control**

The South African land borders are a challenge as Home Affairs officials has been said to receive bribes from crossing border illegal migrants. This appears as risky to the lives of South Africa citizens to live with undocumented immigrants from many foreign countries. The issue of lack of resources and unemployment in South Africa is one problem but illegal immigrants posing a threat in killing, kidnapping, selling drugs, illicit goods and victims are children and women in South Africa without trace of such criminals as they are not known. In the EU, land crossings are not very likely to lead to people dying (though this is a major issue at the Mexico-USA land border). But when deaths occur, control policies and border guards will be accused of contributing to or causing the deaths of migrants by their activities, which force migrants to seek longer and more dangerous routes of entry into the EU. Since not all borders are alike in terms of ease for crossing illegally, dangers experienced by crossers and vulnerabilities to threats, a one-size-fits-all border management regime is not likely to work well (European Union, 2017).

## **11. The Basic Tasks of Border Management**

The two basic policy issues and operational tasks at the border are the detection and filtering out of the small number of security risks and illegal crossers from the large numbers who crosses the border legally; and balancing out the openness and closure of borders. The basic goal is building filtering policies and skills which are accurate, efficient, and fair before, at and after border crossings. Out of millions of migrants who cross into South Africa legally, many have become serious security risks after the COVID-19 pandemic, because a lot of businesses have been closed. There are many companies in private sector that have retrenched workers and the easiest way for citizens and migrants to survive is through social grants and crime. The difficult task

is detecting the (most likely) tiny number of people who represent serious security threats and are concealed in the vast maelstrom of people entering and leaving South Africa. Some illegal immigrants will try to cross at established crossing points using fraudulent papers, but the large majority cross in the spaces between checkpoints. Aas (2005:2000) emphasises, 'how to discern between "good" and "bad" global mobility thus becomes the vital task of contemporary governance' at the borders. There are verbal nods to the need to not overdo controls, but those are minor sections and use fewer words compared to the descriptions of the necessary control tasks. The managing of borders in South Africa needs state intervention at all types of borders. As the airports has also been a target for illegal migrants to cross the borders illegally. They have been seen boarding through illegal channels at the airport and police had them arrested in South Africa. The minister of transport and Home Affairs had to intervene on the matter and made sure the airport security is tightened and the new laws of crossing air borders are restricted in South Africa that even those who are boarding to another country passing through South Africa needs to provide documents.

## 12. Conclusion and Recommendations

The border control in South Africa in post-apartheid period has been very weak since 1996 and the country is full of illegal immigrants who are a threat to its citizens. Due to their respective countries political and economic crisis, these immigrants are not willing to return to their countries. The Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions, had asked immigrants to volunteer to be deported to their respective countries, whether they came into South Africa legally or undocumented. This was a great opportunity for many immigrants to return to their countries with peace, safe and free. The most burning issue is when immigrants come to South Africa claim to be refugees in the beginning of the year but returns to their countries in the end of the year by seeing many cars at the border gates of South Africa leaving the country to respective Southern African Countries and others fly to West African countries.

- South Africa needs to implement its laws as these migrants' actions takes jobs of South African citizens and it contribute to the higher percentage of unemployment.

- The border laws must be tightened. The scarce skills immigrants should be allowed to work in South Africa and spare the rest jobs and businesses to be solely for its citizen.
- All corrupt officials who collect bribes from the immigrants' crossing borders and those South African official issuing fraudulent documents to illegal migrants needs to be prosecuted.
- There is a need for building a hall between South Africa and neighbouring Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Mozambique borders for migrants to cross the border on one gate that must have 24 hours camera surveillance for safety migrants to cross the border safe without to be harassed by officials.
- The state needs to implement the BMA in action without hesitation for the security of the country from migrants that poses threats in South Africa.
- The searching of migrants on the borders needs to consider a technological biometric system that will technologically detect if the migrants are known or not.
- There has been a burning issue of South Africans to build refugee camps for refugees from other countries stay in the camps to separate them from citizens of South Africa.
- The refugees in South Africa must stay in their own area and avoid unnecessary movements especially at night for safety and to be able to identify their whereabouts. This will end xenophobic claims by immigrants and South African media to South Africans patriotic citizens who stand up to protect their country.
- The refugee camp will help donors to know where they are to help them with food, clothes, and other essential needs because they are known where they are and can be traced easily.

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# Managing Violence of Public Transport and Logistics Industry in South Africa

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**Abstract:** The paper seeks to address challenges pertaining taxi and truck violence in the transport and logistics industry in South Africa. The taxi owners rose against government to demand COVID-19 taxi relief funds. The private car drivers were also blocked on the road carrying passengers, it was not considered whether they were carrying family or friends. The trucks violence occurred when immigrant truck drivers employed in South Africa and import goods from other countries to South Africa had free movement while the South African truck drivers are prohibited by foreign countries to get employment and drive freely. Taxi violence and truck violence is a burning issue for the department of transport, logistics and taxi industry in South Africa. Both logistics trucks and taxi industry play a vital role in transporting movement of goods and passengers. The violence started about routes and innocent passengers are caught in the crossfire. The inability by African National Congress led government to regulate taxi industry is a serious problem amongst taxi operations, passengers, and communities. The deregulations of taxi industry have brought many challenges such as violence and conflict in South Africa. This paper adopted a qualitative methodological approach to interrogating taxi violence in the chosen study location, using semi-structured interviews as a research instrument. The respondents were consenting drivers of minibus taxis who were selected using a nonprobability sampling technique. Interviews were conducted with 14 males and one female participant. The violence between truck drivers is rife, where foreign trucks are blocked, and truck drivers are assaulted. This paper conclude that there is a need for the South African government to regulate taxi industry, control of routes and prioritise South Africans as for employment in logistics industry in order to manage violence in transport industry. What emerges from this research is that the success of government's attempts to restructure and regulate the minibus-taxi industry is severely hampered by the nature of the relationships that exists within the industry and between the industry and government. There is a general feeling of hostility, fear, and lack of trust among all the parties, and the fragile nature of these relationships threatens to adversely affect the formalisation, restructuring and regulation processes.

**Keywords:** Violence, Regulate, Passengers, Driver, Transport

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## 1. Introduction

Progressive transport system is essential to the development of a region as well as the whole country. It is what builds networks among nations, and it is crucial for the drive of the market and businesses. It is what aids commuters to get to their workplace and to their families. South Africa is in dire need of a sustainable and safe public transport. Although the country is making tremendous progress in terms of infrastructure and providing transport for the public, it is merely not enough as there are still problems concerning the usage of trains and buses and majority of the poor still do not have access to adequate transport Truck and taxi drivers' livelihood is in the taxi industry and logistics environment The violence in the industry has a negative impact on the drivers, passengers and goods carried in the trucks. They escalate to affect the economy of a

country because that causes food price increase. Transport industry violence is not a new phenomenon; it started during apartheid in South Africa. There were many different causes of transport industry violence that included fighting for routes and passengers. Many passengers lost lives caught in the crossfire of transport industry wars. After 1994, the transport industry violence continued to take place where logistics industry truck drivers in South Africa are involved in violence with foreign national truck drivers. The cause of the violence was when South African truck drivers were controlled and given rules where and when to drive when entering foreign countries. The biggest challenge is that South African logistics companies employ foreign truck drivers whilst South Africans are neglected. South African employers are said to be employing foreign drivers so that they can be easily exploited, and they do not affiliate in labour unions.

The logistics industry went on strikes and started burning violence against foreign truck drivers. The transport industry in South Africa is facing multiple challenges of dramatic transformation to ensure that all the needs of stakeholders are incorporated. After 1994 towards 1999 the taxi industry provided transport for 5 to 10 million people every day and has a daily turnover of R15 million (Weekly Mail & Guardian, 1999). After 2020 the number of commuters had declined extensively due to COVID-19 and a lot of people lost their jobs and others are working from home. The transport is now costing passengers since the war between Ukraine and Russia. The war took too long, and it has affected third world countries negatively. The transport industry had to increase fees after the continuous petrol hikes in South Africa. This has affected the transport industry and the passenger's resort to other means of transport like trains and working from home. The public transport taxi industry was once perceived as a success story of black economic empowerment, it has recently become violent and lawlessness, conflict, and death. The act of violence is caused by the means of protecting economic interests in a market that is overcrowded and has limited resources. The taxi owners, drivers, passengers have been killed in the bloody taxi wars that erupted between rival taxi associations and hired assassins to kill each other and the violence affected the passengers (Sekhonyane & Duggard, 2004). In 1960, the apartheid regime instituted policies that prevented entrepreneurs from operating minibus taxis. The government refused to issue road carrier permits to them. The competition between the rail and buses, which was and is subsidised by the government, also played a role because taxis were losing commuters. The refusal by the government to grant permits constrained the growth of the taxi industry as it made the operation of most taxis illegal and subjected its operators to prosecutions and confiscation of their vehicles (Molefe 2016).

## **2. Background**

In the beginning of 1900s, the road transport existed without state regulation. The railway has been the most available means of public transportation in the societies (Smith, Dehlen, de Haan, Mare & Naude, 1994). The taxi industry revolutionary growth in South Africa began in the 1980s whereby the taxi association had a strong bargaining power in mobilizing the involvement of big business in the industry and the financial means (Khosa, 1995). The taxi

industry has been a long operating form of public transport that was predominantly used by the black community, and it was the only transport industry that the black race could be employed in during the apartheid era (Lomme, 2008). During the nineties mini-bus taxis were operational due to the Motor Carrier Transportation Act of 1930. The industry did have its difficulties when it started expanding leading to the government to prevent taxis from operating. They deregulated the whole taxi industry with the Transport Deregulation Act of 1988. Taxis were to only operate using the 16-seater policy, as the industry continued to grow the Taxi Association joined the South African Black Taxi Association in 1979, during that time only 21 taxis joined (Sey, 2008). The taxi industry formed informal and formal taxi ranks, the growth of individuals entering the taxi industry resulted in illegal operation of unregistered taxis and because the government was not paying attention to the industry there was a lot of taxi violence (Barrett, 2003). When the African National Congress came into power in 1994, they came up with policies to end taxi violence by establishing the National Taxi Task Team (NTTT) in 1995 (Sey, 2008).

Relationships within the industry and between the industry and government and law enforcement agencies remained volatile, with effective communication between the parties virtually non-existent. In 2020, during COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa, taxi owners invited the Minister of Transport, Mr Fikile Mbalula, and he declined the invite publicly on national television. The minister explained that he is not coming due to the anger of taxi owners and their known violence because they needed COVID-19 relief funds. The taxi industry needed relief funds based on the government mandate that each taxi must reduce the number of passengers they are carrying from 16 limited to the maximum of 7 passengers.

## **3. Research Methodology**

This paper adopted a qualitative methodological approach to interrogating taxi violence in the chosen study location, using semi-structured interviews as a research instrument. The respondents were consenting drivers of minibus taxis who were selected using a nonprobability sampling technique. Interviews were conducted with 14 males and one female participant. The lady was the only female taxi driver operating from the Mpumalanga taxi rank when data was collected. The semi-structured interviews

were used to obtain information on the prevalence of taxi-related violence in Mpumalanga township. The researcher used semi-structured interviews because these questions allowed the interviewer to probe for more in depth answers which thus "expanded the interviewees' responses" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005:88). The major intended outcome of these interviews was to understand how taxi drivers interpreted their experiences and observations of taxi related violence in the Mpumalanga taxi rank with regards to the meanings they ascribe to the terms and concepts associated with exposure to taxi-related violence. The results entail that violence has been increasing as more owners buy additional taxis and new owners increase the high competition which resorts to taxi violence due to fighting for routes.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The empirical findings of this study revealed different opinions and attitudes towards the nature and extent of taxi-related violence in the new democratic dispensation in South Africa. Thirteen of the drivers felt that the levels of violent conflict in the industry have increased when compared to the 1980s and the 1990s. The current incidents of taxi violence are inappropriate. What makes it worse is the fact that Government officials and traffic inspectors have their taxis operating with different taxi associations. The numbers of taxi violence have gone up – taxi violence has worsened. It will never end because of corruption and lawlessness taking place in South Africa post-1994. The government officials keep introducing new tactics of further perpetrating this violence by not issuing permits easier and not regulating taxi industry, than introducing measures to end violence in public transport industry.

The situation is bad now, the violent of transport industry during apartheid era used to be better, as owners would attack one another with pangas (a broad heavy knife) and knobkerries (a short stick with a knob at the top). Today they shoot each other mercilessly. In the past the incidents of taxi violence were very few. Government should be blamed for the increased levels of taxi violence that we now face because before 1994 there were vehicle certificates called infinities. With those certificates a driver could transport passengers from Durban to Johannesburg. However, government decided to do away with these certificates and instead created boundaries which fuelled taxi violence. Whereas in the past taxi violence was more about taxi routes,

presently it is about hate, greed and revenge. The perpetrators of taxi-related violence according to the drivers of minibus taxis, is usually perpetrated by the same individuals. In other words, known stakeholders in the taxi industry initiate this form of violence. This study revealed that taxi owners and bosses are alleged to be the predominant perpetrators of taxi-related violence. Reasons that fuel hitmen for control of regulating that transpire in the taxi industry is because of taxi violence. The tendency of the pattern of finding hit men easier emerge because there are a lot of weapons accessible for hit men to use for killing.

##### 4.1 Violence Amongst Public Transport Industry

In the period leading up to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, incidents of violence in the taxi industry increased dramatically throughout the country and continued to rise following the elections. Political affiliations came to play a key role in the ongoing conflicts in many areas around the country with the emergence to eliminate competitors. As the death toll, along with the number of injuries, kept rising it soon became apparent that the taxi industry had spiralled out of control. The worse part of the scenario is that the commuters are caught in the crossfire. It has been a coincidence that trail transport has stopped operating due to stolen of cable and rails. Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) has removed its security that used to safeguard the rail transport properties. That has given taxi industry more passengers as trains are no longer operating in the South African townships.

##### 4.2 The Violence Situation in Logistics Industry

The trucks drivers had been consistently on protest in South Africa and up in arms against government. The main challenge was when government has been ignoring to check the number of foreign truck drivers employed in each logistic company. There has been a lot of truck operated by foreign employees within South African logistics industry. The violence began when South African truck drivers were prohibited or given some rules to minimise their movement in other foreign countries in the Southern African countries. There were conditions in those foreign countries that the logistics industry must employ their own citizens whereas South Africa has been employing everyone including immigrants across the world. This has triggered violence amongst South African truck drivers and foreign



truck drivers in South Africa. The South African government has been blamed for failing to implement its laws of regulating labour to employ foreigners on scarce skills jobs only.

### **4.3 The Taxi Industry Violence in Contemporary South Africa Post-Apartheid**

South African taxi violence is shaped by both apartheid and the mechanisms of transitioning from apartheid to democracy (Dugard, 2006); in this context, the current violence-related problems being experienced in the taxi industry in present-day South African societies. In the post-apartheid era, taxi violence has become more common, decentralised, and violent in nature when compared to the period prior to 1994 where taxi wars were rather few. The incidents of taxi-related violence have escalated and often result in the death of people, including children (Dugard, 2001). The number of people who die on the road is less than those who die during taxi-related violence (Fourie, 2003). The major causes of the persistent taxi violence are the contestation of lucrative routes. The competition for the control and domination of routes in the industry often results in an upsurge in violent occurrences, especially gun-related murders. Taxi owners have an interest in busy routes (Sekhonyane & Dugard, 2004), and those that already control the busy routes hinder new drivers who want to join and work the same routes through violence.

The taxi violence erupts, it affects innocent people as the gun-for hire men do not take careful consideration about the lives of commuters (Molefe, 2016b). Violence in the taxi industry does not only affect the associations who are in disagreements with the routes, ranks or poaching of passengers, it also affects the community at large. According to the Gauteng Province legislature (2016), some of the problems in the volatile South African taxi industry involve several stakeholders: departmental officials, taxi operators, taxi associations and law enforcement officials. Some civil servants' own taxis and meddle in the issuing of operating licences and the approval of routes to benefit themselves (Ngubane, 2020). Xaba (2016) emphasises that there is corruption in the allocation of routes and issuing of operating licences, forcing people to kill each other as routes are saturated. Any person that transports passengers must obtain a public operating licence, this applies to taxi drivers, bus drivers or any driver who is transporting people for payment

(Western Cape Government, 2019:1). According to the Western Cape Government (2019:1), a public operating licence is a permit or document giving drivers permission to transport people for public gain. There are enormous endemic problems and challenges facing the process regarding the application, granting, and issuing of taxi permits and licenses (Gauteng Province Legislature, 2016). In part, this is largely attributed to corruption manifested through undue influence, forgery, fraud, conflict of interest, abuse of authority and a culture of impunity and lack of consequences management prevalent within the entire system (Gauteng Province Legislature, 2016:3). The transport fights usually break out when drivers cross their boundaries into other territories. Jealousy and greed also perpetuate the violence in this industry. Taxi associations have routes that are considered their areas of operation.

### **4.4 The Shortage of Law Enforcement in the Taxi Industry**

The problem of control and regulation that takes place in the taxi industry is in relation with a country like South Africa being lawlessness. There is lack of law enforcement implementation. The taxis do hike the taxi fees anytime when petrol increases with their own prices determined by themselves without government intervention on how many percent the price hikes should be determined. The taxis regulate themselves and never decrease the price when the petrol price decreases. Taxis can stop anywhere on the road even on the middle of the road and on the green light to stop for offloading or carrying passengers. The other private car drivers cannot complain on the spot because this can turn to a huge violence and others might lose their lives or injured. If the private car drivers value their lives, they need to keep quiet and wait for whatever the taxi does on the road patiently. The taxi can overtake on the bridge or on the wrong side anywhere and police have gotten used to this inappropriate violence by taxi owners in South Africa. There were many incidents where private cars that were carrying their families were stopped and punished by taxi owners. Some paid money and others were beaten to say, they are taking their passengers. That happens without a need to understand if they are family or colleagues driving together. The COVID-19 lockdown has fuelled this kind of violence by taxi drivers as taxis were running empty, people were working from home and others lost their jobs. The

taxi had to patrol on the road to target private cars carrying passengers. The state needs to intervene and come to rescue private cars from taxi drivers violence and regulate this industry.

#### 4.5 The Taxi and Truck Violence Impact on Passengers and Goods

The South African taxi industry is not regulated by government and the violence arising from taxi do affects commuters. The Public transport plays a critical role in the transportation system as they assist commuters to and from work, and different destination but it has its own challenges when taxi owners are fighting over routes between taxi associations which put the lives of the passengers at the crossfire as these taxi operators are killing each other. It affects the jobs of passengers as they arrive late at work due to fighting of taxi drivers. The fears about crime-related personal safety on taxis and truck drivers can have an important impact on commuters and goods. The taxi industry in South Africa is not regulated by the South African government and is controlled by taxi associations which create major problems for commuters as they fight for positions and territorial dominance in their associations. Even the hitmen are being hired to kill other rival taxi operators, which in turn causes passengers to be caught in the crossfire between rival taxi operators. Khosa (1995) argued that most of the taxi owners in the association hired hitmen in order to kill the rivals who were contesting with them for the same route or positions in the associations as they benefit more from those positions unlike just operating a taxi. Despite the available of different modes of transportation, being trains, taxis, buses, air transport and sea transport and logistics trucks, South African transport is still facing several challenges.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The taxi industry in South Africa has been a challenge for government to regulate the whole past 28 years of democracy in South Africa. The logistics industry is also becoming a huge challenge after the continued protests by truck drivers. The recommendations having carefully considered the findings of this research study, the following recommendations are offered:

- The clearing of demarcation of taxi routes to avoid excessive competition and conflict between rival taxi owners and associations. There must

be relevant guiding principles on how the routes are allocated. The authority board should make clear distinctions of the rightful taxi association to be given the authority to use a specific route. This will prevent issuing the same route permits to different associations.

- The South African department of transportation should consider undertaking lifestyle audits of all the officials within the Department who are involved in the process of issuing operating licenses as part of its corruption prevention measures.
- The South African government in the transport department should also consider establishing a process or system to determine whether all stakeholders in the process of issuing of operating licenses are competent enough to hold office.
- Corruption within the taxi industry internal investigations should be made with an objective to identify and remove all government officials who are involved in the taxi industry. This would make dealing with taxi-related crimes more effective. Corrective actions should be taken against officials who are selling routes.
- The logistics industry in South Africa needs to prioritise truck drivers from South Africa. The foreign truck drivers require to be employed based on scarce skills in South Africa. The South African government needs to intervene and strengthen the immigrant truck drivers' laws to stop the violence between South African truck drivers and immigrant truck drivers.

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# The Prevailing Views of the Buffalo City College Merging on Managers and Educators

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**Abstract:** Post-1994 Public Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, formerly known as Technical Colleges, were faced with the consequences of the merger process. One of the merger challenges was the resources provided to the merged institutions as there was an insufficient amount of money to run successful programmes. The study aims to explore the views prevailing from the operational plans and working conditions of managers and educators in Buffalo City College (BCC). To achieve the aim, a qualitative case study approach was employed, where interviews were used for data collection in the BCC campuses. It was discovered that the merger policies were not properly addressed as according to the FET Act no. 16 of 2006. This led to some educators not choosing to work for the College Council. Furthermore, some had grievances of accountability issues that were escalated from the College Council to the Department of Education at provincial level. Senior managers were retained under the Department of Education while other employees were appointed by the College Council. Salaries influenced decision on other educators to leave the College for industrial sector. It is recommended that the college should apply the FET Act to formulate credible and transparent policies for effective and efficient operations.

**Keywords:** TVET College, Merger, Transparency, Efficient operations

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## 1. Introduction and Background

In the Republic of South Africa, there are nine (09) provinces, and the Eastern Cape is regarded as one of the poorest provinces (Moyo, Mishi & Ncwadi, 2022). In the post-apartheid government, the Bantustan regions were among the regions which were ruled by their leaders according to their tribes. The democratic government came up with a plan to redress the imbalances of the past. In this case, the then Technical Colleges were merged to form the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to meet the demands of the South African Context (Daniels, 2018; Mathonsi & Sithole, 2020). TVET colleges were reporting to the Eastern Cape Provisional Department of Education (ECPDoE) and supported TVET in terms of finance according to the number of students they had (Daniels, 2018). In support of TVET, it is necessary to have sound financial muscles to drive vocational education. The college to fulfil its mandate, the following factors must be taken into consideration: it is noted that the following factors were not taken into consideration; working conditions were not stated clearly; to take informed decision-making it is therefore important that an effective management information system be considered (Mathonsi & Sithole, 2020).

The aim of the study was to seek whether the circumstances of managers and educators related to the working conditions had improved and to check that policies or Acts aligned with the functions operations of the college were interpreted in a proper way at BCC. Nundkumar & Subban (2020) mentioned that all the colleges of South Africa must be able to govern their colleges through the implementation of the Further Education and Training (FET) Act, No. 16 of 2006, for the improvement of the management of the college to build up the strong human relationship between the staff members from different colleges.

In South Africa, TVET colleges were struggling to attract learners as the institution of the first choice referring my argument to the implementation of effective and efficient performance. The government of the day has tasked the TVET colleges to fulfil the challenges facing South Africa as a country through its National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 to register at least 2.5 million students in TVET colleges based on plan NDP by 2030. In line with the government initiative, the purpose is to address inequality, poverty, and unemployment (Mathonsi & Sithole, 2020).

The legislation and policies for TVET colleges were formulated by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to achieve the development goals and objectives of the South African government (Sithole, 2019).

The government's aim is to support the vision of the TVET sector by providing a national plan in South Africa, the researcher concurred with other scholars (Motala & Pampallis, 2020). The TVET colleges in nature were to produce a high calibre of skilled students who in turn will meet the needs of the community by doing quality work and realistic programmes which in turn talked to the community demands (Msibi, 2021).

The researcher sought to establish what other researchers said about the literature as far as the TVET colleges concerned in the South African context. The most important part is to add value to the existing knowledge by filling the gap. The researcher would like to found the impact of mergers on managers and educators in BCC on the following issues:

- New laws and policies bring new ideas to the change the government is expected to TVET colleges through the new officials will be employed by the government.
- The implications in the functions of the organization the way it operates previously and its impact on the new system of governance.
- All stakeholders involved in the running of the organisation are expected to be in the planning phase and all the necessary steps to be taken must be articulated.
- Change brings a lot of speculation to the employees about their future related to the transition taking place.
- Transition is not always nice; employees associated it with retrenchment, even if there is a bright light in the tunnel.

In concur with other researchers, African children in the government of apartheid were trained to be labourers only under the governance of the Minister of Native Affairs in the 1950s (Khumalo, 2022). As a result, most African children did not have an interest in their hearts to do technical subjects to equip themselves with skills.

The then government of apartheid believed that the African child had to receive as little education as possible. For this reason, the African child was discouraged to do Mathematics and Science subjects. The apartheid government passed the Bantu Education Act, Act No. 47 of 1953 for them to fulfil their mission (Thumbran & Sacks, 2022).

Technical Colleges were divided into two categories, namely, Urban State Colleges and Rural State Colleges. Urban State Colleges were supported by sponsors and donors and the government allocated huge amounts of money for these colleges even though the Rural State Colleges were receiving the money from the government only (Aina & Ogegbo, 2022). Urban State College, in this case, was East London Technical College where it belonged, and the Rural State College was John Knox Bokwe Technical College situated in the Mdantsane Township. TVET Colleges merged into one Buffalo City College in 2005. The three Technical Colleges in East London, namely, John Knox Bokwe, St Marks, and East London Technical College merged to form Buffalo City College (BCC). The merger was focused to redress the imbalances of the past, where racial and equity issues of the education system were addressed. Therefore, the study addressed several issues such as improvement of the working conditions and implementation of the FET Act on managers and educators. Additionally, it was imperative to establish if there was assistance given to managers and educators for excessive decision making in the merger process. Also, the interesting point is to determine if colleagues were working together across campuses.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Literature**

The study adopted an organization theory, which focuses on an explanation of what an organization is, and how it functions, from a range of different perspectives, such as management, human resource management, organization, structure, and change management (Waddington, 2018; Baloyi, 2019). This is applicable to the transformation process of TVET colleges and links to this study to establish whether the benefits related to the working conditions of managers and educators at the BCC had improved. As the colleges guided by the FET Act, No. 16 of 2006 to govern the college has the college implemented in a satisfactory way to improve its operational functions.

In addition to the organization theory, some legal issues are discussed. The political atmosphere had a positive impact in South Africa which shifted the country from apartheid to a democratic state.

In education, system change was driven by the political sphere in the country (Jansen, 2002). Molele (2007) argued that the ushering in of drastic changes in the formation of one department of education forced the appointment of a second post-apartheid Minister of Education. A legislative process is needed for the transformation process to take place. It means therefore, the following Acts will be considered: FET Act No. 98 of 1998 for merging the College with a single council, principal and combining all assets (DoE, 1998); FET Act no. 16 of 2006 that declared appointed of managers by the Department of Education (DoE) and all other employees by Council (DoE, 2006). Most academics decided not to transfer their services to the College Council and remained under their current employer (DoE). They believed that there was uncertainty about the security of their jobs.

## 2.2 Empirical Literature

The FET Act, No 16 of 2006, gives specific powers and functions to the Executing Authorities responsible for TVET college education within the two levels of power (FET Round Table, 2010). "A meeting of the Council of Education Ministers in July 2009 considered the position of TVET colleges as a concurrent legislative competence between the Minister of Higher Education and Training (Minister) and the nine Members of Executive Council (MECs) responsible for education in a province and recommended that the TVET colleges should be made a special national competence but acknowledged that this can be achieved only through an amendment to Schedule 4 of the Constitution. This amendment was needed as Section 40 of the Constitution specifies that the different levels of government are distinctive, interdependent, and interrelated. The different levels of government must respect the competence to feature in the functional area and cannot deny the principle of coexisting legislative authority by absorbing all powers and functions to a specific level of government and leaving the other level of government with no powers to perform (FET Round Table, 2010)".

The Governance and management capacity in the TVET sector is uneven. "The inadequacies were

highlighted by the recent transfer of college staff (with the exception of the principals) from the employ of the provinces to the colleges. This change caused an exodus of college lecturers who did not have confidence in the Councils as an employer and preferred to stay in the employment of the State. FET Round Table (2010:47-48) mentioned that "The Unions have suggested that the exodus may have been as high as 36% of staff employed at Colleges which represents a massive loss of experienced staff at a time of curriculum and governance transition". As the Round Table Working Document highlighted there are tensions in the current dual accountability of college principals, who have a performance agreement with the state (or should have, this is largely unimplemented) but need to respect the strategic priorities set by the College Council".

The shift with the employer from the State to the College Councils was meant to provide a governance structure flexible enough to accommodate the flexibility required for maximum responsiveness of individual colleges. It has had major unintended consequences which have more than any other factor destabilized the system massively. The following factors include:

- The key staff chose to remain in the employment of the State.
- The College Council employees have not benefited from the multiple conditions of service benefits negotiated in the ELRC for teachers.
- Conditions of service of staff employed by College Councils must be led in a collective bargaining process by FETCEO which is a voluntary organization of people who agreed to serve on College Councils as a civic duty. The Department of Education provided support and a special chamber was created in the ELRC. The substantive technical information in the provinces was further complicated (FET Round Table, 2010).

The model for allocation of workload to staff members was controlled by the number of students admitted based on the facilities the colleges had. The researcher argues that there was a need because of the courses they registered. The purpose of TVET was to produce a quality of workmanship, which is why there was an undesirably low student: staff ratio.

Many colleges claimed that they do not have specialized facilities where practical learning can be simulated successfully as the NC(V) programme demands simulated work.

The researcher concurred that one of the challenges is the lack of data in support of the FET Round Table (2010). The DHET's initiative is to provide colleges with a reliable centrally hosted management information system to contribute immensely to the effective planning and budgeting.

Transformation of institutions like technical colleges and universities should take place to decolonize the thinking that African children cannot think for themselves, they will depend on the education infused by the Europeans the Africans (Dandala, 1996). Transparency is one of the features of transformation and is treated as a separate concept in this study. Be sufficient to say that the concept deserves an explanation. In Public institutions, higher learning means handling matters in such a manner that things are done openly either in the presence of all affected stakeholders, sometimes allowing the stakeholders to demand explanations or documentation or both where necessary (Dlova, 1993).

Studies in different countries show that higher education institutions were not motionless units; the institutions were very sensitive to changes in their environment and they adjust to these quickly. The Research Council of Norway (1998) states that, in general, mergers led to an improvement in management, organisation and administration. In support of the Research Council of Norway (1998), mergers led to an improvement in management, organisation, and administration specifically to the administration which usually became more professional and efficient.

In international countries, Norwegian state colleges thought that the reform had resulted in an increase specifically in efficiency and professionalism in the administration of the affairs of the organisation. The researchers highlighted that bureaucracy was a negative effect on the merger. The main purpose of mergers is to save money and resources might be shared among the affected stakeholders (Andersson & Getz, 2008). In the planning process, coordination, and physical infrastructure, a lot of resources are required. The researcher concurred with other scholars that indeed, it is often expensive in the

short term but in the long run, there may be changes in terms of economies of scale (Bryson, 2018).

Song (2017) argued that the higher institution in other countries had problems in maintaining their heritage and identity in the newly merged institution. The researcher supported American merger studies with regard to their experiences in terms of maintaining their dignity and avoiding bankruptcy and total closures and they achieved less than they had originally expected (Bakalian, 2017). Evans (2017) stated that the institutions were in a subordinate position during the merger transitions due to the financial problems that might be the possible reason for these difficulties.

One of the intentions of mergers was to create better academic institutions. This pertains to both teaching and research. In this respect, experiences were mixed. The original goals for this had not been achieved in Great Britain or in Germany regarding the polytechnics and the Gesamthochschulen (Williams, 2017). These institutions were intended to be alternatives but, regarding the 'level', they should be equal to existing universities. There were many reasons for this failure, but status and prestige were two important factors (e.g. Cerych, 1981; Goedegebuure, 1992). There were, however, clear indications that mergers improve the future academic position (in the long run) of new institutions, especially in regard to the breadth of different educations. Mergers in Australia, the USA, and the Netherlands had created broader and more multidisciplinary course programmes that still function well today. It is true that there had been tensions connected to the expansion of new academic profiles and new course programmes, but at many of these institutions, the tensions had been characterised as creative.

Mergers were often connected to problems, stress, and fear, and in part, inadequate planning at all levels has created tensions that usually have a long-term effect on the academic development of the new institution (up to ten years). Such tensions were related to issues about teaching versus research, different competency profiles, identity and autonomy, and especially for the Australian and Norwegian reforms, professional education versus academia. But the degree of tensions and conflicts with regard to academic development was to some extent dependent on the kind of strategy that has been chosen. Especially in mergers where the main strategy was to increase academic integration

and collaboration, problems were often created between different academic cultures, which again hindered positive academic development. At some institutions the integration goals have been attained to a certain degree, but – on the whole – the strategy has not been successful. There were many complex reasons behind this lack of academic integration and collaboration. First of all, it is difficult to establish coordination between different cultures and traditions. Second, for network institutions especially, it is also difficult to establish coordination over distance. Third, more academic integration also requires more investments. During the reorganization process in – for instance – Norway, the Netherlands, and Australia, educational authorities tightened the budget (Johnes & Tsionas, 2019).

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Methodological Design

The paper addresses the aim by using a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research uses words to narrate facts and tries to understand each situation uniquely as an element of a given context. Qualitative research seeks to understand the nature of a specific setting and the meaning derived by participants in that setting. The researcher decided to use the case study (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

#### 3.2 Sampling

The sample of this study is made up of 10 managers and 30 educators from the different campuses of the College. Of the 10 managers 6 were chosen from

East London, 2 from St Marks, and 2 from John Knox Bokwe Campuses. East London had a large number of managers as it is the BCC headquarters and has executive management to facilitate the operational plans of the merger. Figure 1 represents the structure of the BCC for ease of reading.

#### 3.3 Data Collection Techniques

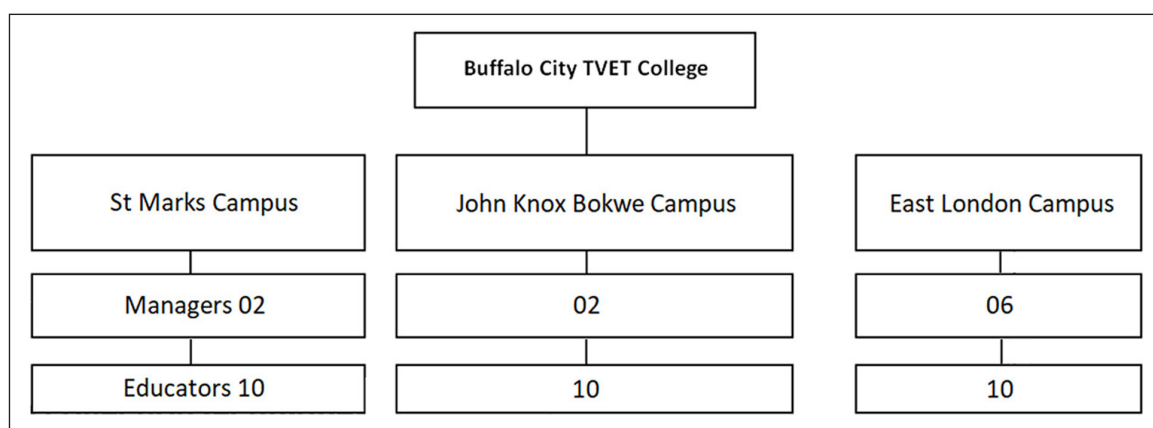
The structured interviews were used to collect data, audiotape and handwritten notes were used to support the recordings. Permission was granted by all the participants to use the audiotape during interviews (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006).

#### 3.4 Administering Instruments

The interview schedule was used to gather information from the participants as well as observations. Audio tapes were used for recordings when listening to the respondents, and permission was granted to participants to do so. There were in-depth interviews inside and outside, the researcher accommodates those who were comfortable being interviewed outside and inside the college.

The researcher was collecting data within the duration of 5 days, participants were given approximately 15 minutes to participate in the interview. The Buffalo City TVET College campuses were used to conduct the interviews. Based on the interviews which were conducted differences between the three campuses of the College were interpreted and inferences were drawn to determine the implications of mergers on managers and educators at BCC.

Figure 1: Buffalo City TVET College Structure



Source: Author



## 4. Findings and Discussions

The aim of the research study was to investigate whether the merger had an impact on managers and educators in BCC and its effect on the development of the college.

### 4.1 Management Response Concerning the Impact of the Merger

The FET Act no 16 of 2006 focused on the operations of the merger in the colleges. The views of the participants indicated that the merger did not address the aims of the Act. Hence, some educators left the college for the Department of Education to remain with the colleges. The research revealed that most participants were dissatisfied with the merger.

*Manager 1: "we're not happy with the division of powers, where top management was employed by the Provincial Department of Education, and middle management and educators down to the administration staff were employed by the College Council".*

*Manager 2: "There is a contradiction in terms of accountability, where the employees had grievances. The Provincial Department of Education refers the matter to the College Council. Nobody would like to deal with the challenges of college. The merger affected both the managers and educators because the ideal situation where the institution meets the required standard is not taking place because of the many challenges facing the institution. Most of the challenges are based on teacher dissatisfaction and basically salary benefit and other issues. The participants were promised in a meeting that all conditions of employment will change once they transfer their services to the college, but to date, nothing had happened".*

*Manager 3: "The colleges are not individually run like they used to be before the merger. If one considers that one college (previously advantaged college) will have all the financial resources, while the two other disadvantaged colleges do not have any than one can deduce that the one college will be in a position to misuse its power. Considering that all FET educators, after 2008 decided to transfer their services to the college".*

Participants said that they were robbed when it comes to payment, as the salaries were not standardised across campuses. There was no stability as

some were threatened to lose their jobs if in conflict with their supervisors. There were so many uncertainties especially when others were supposed to be paid. There were no policies followed or given to employees to be transparent about salaries and about 37.5% of the participants claimed that the College Council did not show employees how compensation of employees will be done at the time of the merger. Hence some remained with the Department of Education and left the college. This was referred to as a form of discrimination leading to inequality.

Participants highlighted the undesirable way the new curriculum (National Certificate Vocational) was introduced. They had trouble with the implementation thereof. Most of the time is spent on the paperwork that needs to be done.

The college has a subject-level co-ordinating structure for the smooth running of the department in terms of planning, monitoring, and assessment of the delivery of the curriculum.

The participants mentioned that the college is struggling to attract the best candidates from industries to join the TVET sector. As a result, the college is too far to achieve the objectives of the DHET as it is expected.

Working conditions must be considered by the DHET, for the TVET sector to be able to attract highly competent staff. The nation will be affected indirectly if the employer cannot consider the salary scales for college employees. The teacher-pupil ratio was raised as a concern. The educator will be difficult for him/her to take special attention to the individual if the class has many learners in the classroom. The participants raised the issue of inadequate resources to be considered and one can understand the frustration of the participants.

Regarding financial and human resource management, some participants reported that the merger was lacking. This was seen by fears that were expressed by participants when they handled the government subsidy. This was shown by the mismanagement of funds for college activities. Also, the employees that are employed by the College Council were not treated well resulting in threats that lead to dismissal. The success was in the consolidation of the 152 Technical Colleges into 50 TVET Colleges in South Africa.

## 4.2 Educator Response on the Impact of the Merger

Educators responded as follows:

*Educator 1: "Almost all educators agreed in one voice that managers of BCC had focused on developing the educators and meeting their needs in a way that enabled them to effectively deliver on the curricula".*

*Educator 2: "Since the colleges had been consolidated from 03 Technical Colleges to 01 Buffalo City TVET College, which is Buffalo City College, no improvement in terms of conditions of service, like salary improvement and benefits had taken place".*

*Educator 3: "Facilities were not up to scratch in regard to teaching facilities and infrastructure".*

Most of the respondents, about 50% alluded that the merger was not transparent, while about 35% suggested that the merger served what it aimed for. Some of the respondents said that "there was cooperation after the merger of these colleges". However, some claimed that a lot of empty promises emerged. Then, the college management introduced some workshops to empower them.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper aimed to improve the operational plans and the conditions of benefits for managers and educators at (BCC). To achieve these aims, a qualitative case study was employed, where structured interviews were used for the data collection on the BCC campuses. It was discovered that the merger policies were not properly addressed according to the FET Act no. 16 of 2006. The conditions of benefits for managers and educators at BCC had not been properly interpreted according to the FET Act, Act No. 16 of 2006 to improve the operational functions of the BCC.

Therefore, it was established from this paper that the Provincial Department of Education did not want to be accountable for TVET colleges instead they referred the matter to the College Council or vice versa when the employees had grievances. Nobody would like to deal with the problems of college. Conditions of benefits were not clear, and because of that qualified personnel were not interested to join the TVET sector instead most of them decided to remain in the DoE. Some of them joined

the industrial sector. There was nobody who wants to be accountable for the implications of the merger. The results indicated that there was dissatisfaction about different appointments between managers and other employees. The study recommended that for efficiency and effectiveness of the operation in the college, there should be credible policies that are transparent and according to the FET Act no 16 of 2006. The College should have fundraising strategies to maintain the finances of the merger and be given the liberty to govern its affairs.

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# Exploring Student Leadership Participation in Institutional Policy Making and Governance

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**Abstract:** Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, the government, through various policies, has sought to democratise most of its sectors, including higher education. The Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) mandates higher education institutions to open the broader involvement and participation of student representative councils (SRCs) in university governance by contributing to policy making through memoranda of understanding between the university and the student populace. While students and student leaders are not deemed policy experts in university governance platforms and are not expected to possess the necessary professional training and skills to deliberate and make meaningful contributions at the executive management level, SRC members are required, by legislation, to be the collective voice of the larger student population, and thus their views are embedded in institutional policies. Not only does this stretch their limited professional understanding but it also poses impossible demands on them to meet a certain standard. This situation is, to a large extent, endorsed by mandatory government regulation which must be complied with by institutions of higher learning in South Africa. Yet these regulations and institutional statutes are silent on the ways in which the capacity and training of student leaders should be facilitated, raising the question of how their knowledge will be developed and how their contributions during the term of SRC will be measured. This paper seeks to address two important aspects relating to the institutionalisation of SRCs' involvement in policy decision-making. First, to delve into the regulatory framework which outlines student governance, and, secondly, to scrutinise the participation of student leaders in governance structures at institutions of higher learning.

**Keywords:** Governance, Institutions of higher learning, Student Representative Council, Policy making, Student leadership

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## 1. Introduction

Student leadership participation in higher education and, particularly, university governance is a reality throughout the South African education context and is in line with national policy as contained in the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997). This Act accords with the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) which underscores the equal rights of participants in various public platforms. Act 101 ensures that equal representation of all stakeholders in higher education is promoted and implemented without discrimination. This suggests that both professionals in the education fraternity and students must be granted equal rights of participation in this sector concerning all educational matters including policy-making and the amendment of such policies. The presence of students ensures the full representation of students' voices and to have these voices heard (Antonelli, 2008). This goes beyond the mantra that says nothing for us (students) without us, and thereby affirms the importance of their inclusion as students in matters which relate to and affect them.

Despite the increased attention placed on student participation in the governance of universities, there is a gap in practices and programmes which seek to support student leaders' meaningful contribution in committees as part of various governance structures at universities (Shattock, 2006). In support of this opinion, Barnard (1938) postulates that the formulation of formal and informal networks of communication with stakeholders to attract, develop, and retain talent is paramount. Sparks and Wait (2011) urge that universities should collaborate with external constituents to stay relevant and effective, much like a public relations strategy to build goodwill with stakeholders, instead of fighting or ignoring government's policies. Universities ought to engage with students for funding and directions that help to develop graduates with employable skill sets. In terms of the South African regulations mentioned above student leaders do sit on various governance groups and/or committees such as university councils, institutional forums and other governance structures which involve student affairs. Perrow (1970) issues a clarion call for the university

to stay relevant amidst changes in the environment. Academic institutions ought to conduct regular self-assessments to enhance their strengths, exploit opportunities, and overcome their weaknesses in order to manage threats. For instance, the management bodies of academic institutions need to set goals and formulate strategies, informed by university governing authorities, to help prepare student leaders develop a set of skills to ensure their meaningful participation in university governance.

Student leaders are, first and foremost, just students, and do not possess the prerequisite policy knowledge and experience as compared to their counterparts (management), with whom they must interact on strategic policy issues, and who are grounded professionals with years of professional experience. On a national level, the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) encourages South African universities to adopt democratic principles of equity and shared decision-making. The Council on Higher Education (CHE), established through the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997), promotes quality assurance through committee audits. This implies an understanding that all stakeholders have made equal contributions to the resultant work. Furthermore, the CHE enhances collaboration and cooperation with universities as the main stakeholders. In addition, CHE evaluates universities on the scale and scope of student representation (National Commission on Higher Education [NCHE], 1996; CHE, 2019).

Student activism through student representative councils (SRCs) is prevalent in all South African universities (Koen, Cele & Libhaber, 2006). However, there is a growing concern that the roles of the SRCs, including the widespread practices and governance mechanisms which involve students across the national universities, are merely tokenist and superficial (Sebola, 2019). For example, while the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) advocates for student representation, there is little or no clarity on what the role of the SRC is. It is also not clear how student representation can and should be measured in terms of its corresponding roles and responsibilities.

The aim of this paper is to speak to the significance of SRCs at higher education institutions with specific reference to the University of South Africa (UNISA) as a mega institution with campuses in almost all the South African provinces. The argument in this

article is informed by the existing literature, documents and reports regarding student leadership and governance at higher education institutions. Aspects to be covered in the discussion include the background which sets the scene and provides a context for issues of governance and student representative councils. The discussion then illustrates issues concerning the application and scrutiny on principles of governance and the importance of student leadership. This is followed by a narrative on issues of policies and what regulates student representative councils. Concluding remarks are then supplied in summary to wrap up the discussion.

## **2. Background and the Context on Governance and Student Representative Councils**

Students are invariably responsible for some of the effort involved at all levels of higher education, since the requirement for some action on the part of the learner is inherent in the process of learning. So, at the individual level co-production is already happening because new skills, knowledge and understanding are produced through a combination of student effort, pedagogy, and the learning environment. A model of co-production also implies student involvement at the collective level. This suggests that institutions should include students in decision-making processes, underscoring the role of student representation in influencing institutional policy by adding a student viewpoint in various contexts.

Streeting (2009:3) is of the opinion that a model of co-production could bring numerous benefits including increased student satisfaction, reduced student anxiety, and a greater understanding of students' needs, which improves educational outcomes. This, however, can present difficulties because at its heart is the intent to place more responsibility in the hands of students who are not, by definition, experts, nor trained in the theory and practice of management. This new expectation that they should now share responsibility for the management of services could be too challenging. Indeed, for institutions to convince such students that they must now want to be co-producers might be the greatest challenge facing management. Coffield (2008:7) argues that an alternative approach should be explored through what may be termed a 'community of practice' in learning. The concept of the community of practice approach involves a process of induction which is

a journey for students on their way to becoming active participants and practitioners in a trade, profession, discipline, or discourse (Hughes, Jewson & Unwin, 2006). With this approach, the emphasis is on building relationships, and calls for cross-disciplinary interaction that involves students at every level, including debates about the direction of policy and strategy to which all members can participate and contribute. Further, the approach takes a collectivist, flexible and organic view and asks us to think critically about how such an approach might be supported and stimulated. It then becomes incumbent on institutions to take the concept a little further with a relatively practical indication of what this approach means for policymakers and practitioners in higher education (Trowler, 1998).

University governance is a powerful concept that reflects the way a university is governed in each political, social, and economic context (Antonelli, 2007:5). Governance refers to broad-based structures and processes that are used to ensure a level playing field in an institution or organisation. The main objective of governance is to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, the rule of law, stability, equity inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation based on the precepts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2017). This can positively impact student leadership and other stakeholders when making decisions that improve the relationship between students and the university administration. Governance also provides the rules, norms, and values of the game through which student affairs are managed in a transparent, responsive, participatory, and inclusive manner (Washington, 2017:16).

Governance interacts with internal and external stakeholders in striving for a dynamic equilibrium. From a larger perspective, governance encompasses the structures, relationships and processes through which, at both national and institutional levels, policies for testing education are developed, implemented and reviewed. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2008), governance comprises a complex web including the legislative framework, the characteristics of the institutions and how they relate to the whole system, how money is allocated to institutions and how they are accountable for the way it is spent, as well as less formal structures and relationships which steer and influence behaviour.

Carnegie (2010:431) asserts that governance means decision, power, and authority considering that governance is the way power and authority are exercised in organisations in the allocation and management of resources. While management is focused on the effective and efficient use of resources, governance is focused on the dynamics of internal and external stakeholders.

University governance can be defined as the constitutional forms and processes through which universities govern their affairs (Shattock, 2006:1). From the process point of view, university governance devolves through the institution from a governing body, down through senates and academic boards, to faculty boards and departmental meetings. Governance has an important role not just in ensuring accountability for funds received from the government, but in opening the university toward the wider needs of society. The university governance model in South Africa is similar in many aspects to corporate governance, which creates an effective strategic driving force. However, in the African continent, and South Africa specifically, university governance has primarily a responsive function and is far from being a strategic driving force. Bratianu and Pinzaru (2015) argue that for governance to become a strategic driving force of the university and a powerful integrator able to transform potential capital into operational intellectual capital, universities should switch from creating adaptation knowledge to producing generative knowledge. It seems timely then for universities to adopt a new perspective on university governance, as Bratianu & Pinzaru (2015:1) maintain.

Little, Locke, Scesa and Williams (2009:32) are of the view that the involvement of student representatives in institutional governance committees should be viewed as a positive route for student voices to be heard by those responsible for the overall governance of the institution. This opinion is held by Magolda (2005:2) who suggests that student leaders can contribute much to the quality of the learning environment, the experiences of their peers, and the larger campus community. It is unfortunate, then, that too often these potential effects are not fully realised in most universities. This is because student governance gets side-tracked on trivial issues, and established institutional governance structures ignore or limit active, meaningful involvement by students. It is important to take seriously the essential perspectives student leadership brings

for creating a success-orientated learning environment, in line with Lizzio and Wilson (2009) who suggest that the value of actively involving students in university governance is generally described from one of three perspectives: functional (how does it benefit the university), developmental (how does it benefit the students), and social (how does it benefit society). Based on the views of the aforementioned research, it is safe to say that the role and contribution of student leaders in the governance of university committees is a relatively neglected area of enquiry.

Student leadership, in this study, refers to the work of student representative councils, through which universities have a perceived role of instilling leadership knowledge and practice in students (Barsi, Hand & Kress, 1985). Student leaders are students who occupy positions of responsibility in coordinating the activities of other students in the institution of learning. In so far as students are concerned, poor preparation at school level for university admission, and the lack of student financial aid and accommodation remain their principal concerns. SRCs often see government and management of universities as being insensitive to their plight and needs. Hay and Dempster (2004) argue that having quality leadership experiences during university years allows students to easily transition into the community and the world of work and adult responsibility. Higher education stakeholders have emphasised the need for effective higher education practices and the creation of a culture composed of values and behaviours that are supportive and sensitive to the ideals of inclusivity. Student leaders are considered a vital link between institutional administration and fellow students; this ideal permeates the vision and mission statements of all universities in South Africa. The role of engaged and innovative student leadership, amongst other roles, is to effect inclusivity by translating student struggles and interrogating policies and practices.

The Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) establishes governance structures in higher education, which includes students as stakeholders participating in institutional activities. Embedded in this is leadership development which includes the empowerment and preparation of individuals to be agents of social change by developing their understanding of others and self-awareness of their roles and responsibilities as leaders in different contexts. The SRCs in the South African context

are an important mechanism that ensures that students receive quality higher education in a safe and healthy environment, and this is underpinned by the principles of access, success, and equity which are critical areas of focus in the transformation process (Mthethwa, 2018). The SRC as a well-organised body with the necessary skills can channel its capability and commitment towards improving university life for students. SRCs form a major part of student governance, hence it is important to scrutinise some principles of governance.

### **3. Scrutiny on Principles of Governance and the Importance of Student Leadership**

A framework for transformation laid the foundation for the governance structure of the post-apartheid public higher education system. It calls for 'established forums that would be advisory bodies where representatives of all stakeholders could meet, identify problems, mediate interests, and advise relevant structures such as the SRC, senate and council' (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2017:21). In line with the framework on transformation (DHET, 2017:21) one of the statutory structures is the students' representative council (SRC) which is the highest decision-making structure of student governance. In line with the definition of governance, the roles and responsibilities of the SRC include:

- Participating in institutional decision-making structures.
- Advising and supporting the delivery of effective and efficient student support services; managing and administering student representation at different levels.
- Advising on the development of academic programmes and student learning experiences.
- Participating in the development and implementation of institutional and national policies on higher education.

The legislation also outlines matters which council can perform after consulting with the SRC. This includes the establishment of a student support services council which is to advise on the policy for student support services; as well as disciplinary measures and procedures relating to students.

Effective student leadership is considered one of the major elements that guarantee sustainable development and success for student bodies. Good governance principles are significant ingredients for aspiring student leadership (Okeyo, 2018). Whereas the overall objective of this study is to determine the contribution of student leadership in university governance, the principles of governance on effective student leadership cannot be overlooked. This is because student leadership is mostly associated with unrest. Ojo (1995) refers to unrest as a student crisis and defines it as the effects caused by students as they demand their rights from university authorities. This definition is qualified by Adeyemi (2009) who portrays student unrest as demonstrations by students arising from their protest to pressurise the university administration for their demands leading to the destruction of lives (loss of academic time) and property. Falua (2004) explains student unrest as protests undertaken by the student community in the process of confronting university authority over their dissatisfaction with the way their issues are handled. These authors seem to endorse effective student leadership and the importance of governance principles as inseparable areas of consideration in university governance structures.

According to Hufty (2011), corporate governance relates to 'the processes of interaction and decision-making among the actors involved in a collective problem that led to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of social norms and institutions. Further, governance includes the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members (with associated accountability) and their primary duty of enhancing the prosperity and viability of the organisation (OECD, 2004). Student governance is seen as a purposeful and important element in higher education, particularly as a conduit to reach, teach, and serve the students enrolled in higher education institutions (Bambenek & Shifton, 2003).

The available literature, according to authors Planas, Soler, Fullana & Vila (2013) has noted that awareness about student participation through student bodies in governance is low and that this extends across universities. Zuckweiler (2016) supports this view and states that the concept of leadership and the educational goals of leadership development have been given very little attention by most institutions of higher learning. These authors further postulate that there is scant research to address these concerns. The absence of a pilot project or a

collaboration between the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and higher education institutions to explore practices that can support students' engagement in institutional decision-making seems to exacerbate the existing challenges faced by student bodies and the SRCs. Hendrickson (1999) explains that the governing structure and functions of the institution are central to decision-making. Further, Hendrickson suggests that governance structures should be guided by what he calls 'critical parts' of institutional governance.

First among these critical parts is the reasonable expectation for the university to stay relevant amidst changes in the environment. Academic institutions ought to conduct regular self-assessments to enhance their strengths, exploit opportunities, and overcome their weaknesses in order to better manage threats. For instance, they need to set goals and formulate strategies (Perrow, 1970), and build formal and informal networks of communication with stakeholders, with students and student leadership in mind (Barnard, 1938; Simon, 1967). Secondly, Hendrickson urges universities to collaborate with external constituents to stay relevant and effective, much like a public relations strategy to build goodwill with stakeholders. Further, instead of fighting or ignoring efforts of inclusion, universities ought to engage with leadership in public government institutions, for instance the governance of Higher Education, and, as laws/policy evolve, university governance leaders must keep abreast of legal developments to manage potential crises with student leadership (Hendrickson, 1999). University governance leadership needs to overcome the ivory tower stereotype (Jacoby, 2009). Thirdly, the role of governing structures should be examined and boundary spanners identified, including how they work towards meeting the institutional mission while responding to changes in the environment. Most important are the critical qualities necessary to lead members of governance towards a culture of evidence and enduring change. These are creativity, commitment, collaboration, delegation, and courage (Ikenberry, 2010).

The Higher education Act (Act 101 of 1997) section 35, as amended, obligates all institutions of public higher education in South Africa to establish the existence of student representative councils (the SRCs) as significant role players in institutional governance. Hereby, students enrolled in line with the enrolment policies of various institutions should



and must be mandated to serve in different university governance structures. The Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) further obligates universities to affirm this step through the institutional statutes which must be approved or endorsed by a designated higher education minister. Thus, compliance with this instruction by the higher education Act is compulsory (DHET, 2017:21).

The institutional statute of the University of South Africa (UNISA) (No. 108, 3 February 2006) recognises the SRC as part of governing structures of the university, which then fulfils the institution's obligation as imposed by the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997). UNISA, through a unit called Student Development and Student Affairs, developed a constitution of the SRC (Student Representative Council Constitution, 28 July 2006, revised 9 October 2013). This constitution governs and regulates SRC activities and all other student organisations recognised through a policy on the recognition of student structures at UNISA (Directive: recognition of student organisations and structures). The King IV report on corporate governance for South Africa, part 5, makes reference to the fact that organisations have to abide by certain standards. For the purposes of this study, four principles of governance are noted (King IV, 2016:15):

- Competence.
- Responsibility.
- Accountability.
- Fairness and effectiveness.

Succinctly, the discourse of these four principles of governance could be summarised as follows:

- **Competence**

On 'competence' the King IV report urges that members of the governing body should take steps to ensure that they have a sufficient working knowledge of the organisation, its industry, the triple context in which it operates, and the key laws, rules, codes, and standards applicable to the organisation: to act with due care, skill, and diligence, and take reasonably diligent steps to become informed about matters for decision and develop their competence to lead effectively (King IV, 2016:20). The King IV report correctly suggests that the professionals in governance structures should take steps to equip student representatives with enough knowledge to enable them to partake in or contribute meaningfully to strategic

and operational decision-making in the institution. This could be done through programmes and workshops. According to Oketch (2004), student leaders champion, defend, articulate, and represent the interests of students in the university. In this regard, student leaders should be examples of discipline, diligence, academic performance, and humane moral values and be a bridge of dialogue between students and university administration OECD (2014). Student governance is seen as a purposeful and important element in higher education, particularly as a conduit to reach, teach, and serve students.

- **Responsibility**

Governance includes the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members and their primary duty to enhance the prosperity and viability of the organisation. Therefore, Graham, Amos and Plumtre (2003) note that the nature of governance – both the means and the end – needs to be understood; only then does it make sense to elaborate the principles in order to create a meaningful analytical tool. In terms of 'responsibility', the governing body members should assume collective responsibility for steering and setting the direction of the organisation. They should also be responsible for approving policy, and planning, overseeing, and monitoring instances of implementation and execution by management.

- **Accountability**

A crucial responsibility is ensuring accountability for organisational performance: anticipating, preventing, or otherwise ameliorating the negative outcomes of the organisation's activities and outputs in the triple context in which it operates (King IV, 2016). It is necessary to attend meetings of the governing body and its committees and devote enough time and effort to prepare for those meetings. This executive function cuts across and overflows the expected active contribution of SRC. In most cases, SRCs are found wanting in meetings due to their lack of executive knowledge. Here again, the King IV report advises institutional management serving in governance committees to extend a helping hand to the less knowledgeable for optimum participation. However, in practice, this level of responsibility seems lacking on the executive side.

Langford & DeJong (2008) argue that student leadership participation in institutional training programmes

helps students maximise their university experience by staying focused on their educational purpose and being constructively engaged in student life. In this context, students are also achieving their educational and career goals. Collaboration with the student affairs department is necessary for effective student leadership involvement and to ensure that student roles are well defined and support the overall initiative's mission and goals. Student leaders could be recruited and selected with attention to students' interest in and skills for the role they will play during their term of office in the SRC. They would in turn receive initial and ongoing training and supervision appropriate to the role, to ensure that their work effectively serves programme needs. This university programme or educational training will attend to students' personal and professional development and their goals for participating. Accountability also entails that governing bodies demonstrate a will to answer for the execution of their responsibilities, even when these are delegated (King IV, 2016). However, it is frequently the case that executive members of universities view accountability to mean being accountable for organisational strategic objectives only. It is therefore strongly argued that accountability should not be limited to the execution of organisational goals but should also involve the necessary equipping/mentoring of the less experienced. This is especially important when a greater degree of responsibility is expected in terms of mandates.

- **Fairness and Effectiveness**

Fairness is an expectation that members of the governing body will direct the organisation in such a way that it does not adversely affect the natural environment, society, or future generations (King IV, 2016). Ezekwem (2009) believes that students' participation in university governance is necessary for effective university administration. Further, the author argues that students' participation in the higher education decision-making process would enhance a high level of institutional effectiveness.

According to Akomolafe and Ibijola (2014), when students participate in university governance, leadership skills, policy formulation and character development are built up, and the student body representation in university governance makes the process of democratic representation and participation in the universities' decision-making bodies easier. The authors (Akomolafe & Ibijola, 2014;

Ezekwem, 2009) postulate that representation in university governance could also serve as a training ground for leadership in civil society because the skills acquired in the university could immediately be transferred to organised civil society. This is given credence by Enu (2012) who believes that preparing today's students for success and eventual leadership in the new global market is the most important responsibility in higher education today.

Ezekwem (2009) supports the view that student representative councils are very effective as they offer some ideas for the good administration of universities in South Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to him, students as critical stakeholders in university governance cannot be ignored. This is because they can initiate moves that can be a source of hope for addressing the problems of university governance in the country. Maseko (1994) affirms this argument and asserts that the limited understanding and knowledge of student representatives in relation to strategic decision-making in institutional committees carries a burden wherein actions from the student body may, in many cases, impact negatively on the operations of the very same institutions they are expected to help rebuild. This, in turn, may hamper future generations due to the destruction and replacement of scarce and expensive infrastructure, for instance, in the case of mass strike action outcomes. 4As noted, the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) ensures that SRCs exist in all institutions of higher education in South Africa. The SRC at UNISA, however, has a unique context considering the university's footprint which covers all nine provinces in South Africa (Moja & Hayward, 2000).

#### **4. A Narrative on Issues of Policies and What Regulates Student Representative Councils**

Astin (1984) proposes that student involvement refers to the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy that students invest in the university experience. Such involvement takes many forms, such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel. According to the author, the greater the student's involvement in the university, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal development. According to Hamre & Brackett (2013), the effectiveness of any governance policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy

or practice to increase student involvement, for example, student time and energy as institutional resources, albeit finite resources. Thus, university governance policies and practices should be evaluated in terms of the degree to which they increase or reduce student involvement. Similarly, student leaders can assess their own activities in terms of their success in encouraging students to become more involved in the university experience.

In the African continent and across the world UNISA enrolls over 373 000 students annually (UNISA Integrated Report, 2018). All other universities in the country have a defined limited scope which allows them to enrol between 25 000 and at most 70 000 students annually as deemed mandatory by the DHET (DHET Annual Report 2019/20). In order for UNISA to be fully compliant with the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997), the institution's approach has been to decentralise SRC structures across the provinces where UNISA has footprints or campuses, and retain one national structure based in Pretoria closer to its headquarters. In terms of the SRC's constitution, all student structures that successfully contest elections must be represented in the SRC (UNISA SRC Elections Announcement Report, 2021). This representation is voluntary and done through organisational internal deployment rules (Recognition of Student Organisations and Structures, 2011).

The UNISA Students Charter (Student Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, 2007) raises the importance of students' voices and elaborates that in order to enhance student support and service, and to ensure the provision of a student's voice, an establishment of a duly elected student representative council in line with a world-class African university value is primarily important (Student Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, 2007). Furthermore, the creation of a nurturing environment is necessary for the promotion of student well-being and having their voice heard by university management.

While the prominence of students' voice has increased in the post-democratic dispensation in South Africa, audits addressing the engagements of the diverse groups of students to identify areas of good practice and areas needing improvement are non-existent. This limits not only the engagements but also the assessment of student's voices in improving the quality of their experience. Obiero (2012) submits that the establishment of a

framework focusing on maximising student leadership participation is a necessity in higher education institutions, as this will assist institutions of learning to shift from being compliance regimes that pay attention only to regulating student participation to fully inclusive organisations that genuinely engage students' leadership involvement. The rationale that students and student leadership are key stakeholders is fundamental in improving all facets of institutional governance. This approach is supported by Langford and DeJong (2010) who strongly assert that it is critical that students-like any other employees-receive training on the mission, goals, and underlying rationale of the projects they will be working on so that they can make informed contributions to the work and also receive the greatest benefit. Such training should include information about evidence-based strategies and best practices in institutional governance. The professional staff should teach students basic principles allowing students to work creatively within those parameters. For example, programmes involving students strategically and effectively reconceptualise student leadership relationships with other students as an opportunity to mentor the next generation of leaders.

A well-planned programme of leadership development puts more demands on the professional staff, but also means that students can maximise their contribution while gaining useful experience, learning new skills, and perhaps developing a long-term professional interest in broader institutional governance work. It is then a requirement that student leaders read institutional governance policies and familiarise themselves with the organisation's philosophy and approach. Further, DHET (2017) displays that the advantage of student groups (i.e. the student representative council, student leaders leading student organisations) is that they can utilise the strength of the student's voice to take on controversial issues or promote policy changes that the professional staff cannot undertake. The staff's role in this case, according to DHET (2017), is to help the students develop their voice and use it as an instrument of change. DHET (2017) further indicate that the inclusion of planned intermittent additional training and the use of a survey to assess their experience in three ways. Firstly, whether being involved has helped them make better decisions or benefited their social relationships. Second, whether and how they had a positive effect on other students, and lastly, whether the work has improved their

leadership skills, prepared them for future jobs, or led them to rethink their career choice.

In practice, institutions of higher learning operate through sophisticated governance systems which have proved over a long period to be effectively unfair to student leadership participation. The objective of this article was to evaluate the current governance systems in institutions of higher learning and provide a strategic direction for the future that addresses the prevalent gaps and strengthens these structures by expanding governance models through transparency. Along these lines, it is important to delineate how decisions are made and who makes them, and to provide pathways for student leadership to weigh in on decisions that are under consideration, or that affect them directly as representatives of broader student populace, as seen in studies such as Student Participation in University Governance (Acharya, 2015). Additionally, with the inclusion of a new governance training framework for student representatives, it is hoped that governance in higher education institutions may close the gaps in the system through these proposed formal training initiatives.

Moja and Hayward (2000) observe that the process of higher education policy development in post-election South Africa during the period 1994-98 should, amongst other things, focus on and examine aspects of the policy development process that speak to eliminating the legacies of apartheid and those that are typical of quality higher education. Additionally, it is important to investigate those aspects of higher education policy development that pose challenges and provide insights into the political realities of the transformation process, for example, the involvement of students' voices through their elected student representative councils and the perceived challenges this may represent. Pasarella & Terenzini (2005) argue that the amount of time and energy expended on student engagement can be linked positively with the desired outcomes of a process of policy development in higher education. Kuh (2009) supports this idea and states that student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to the desired outcomes of a university. He further elaborates on what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities. Further, the author argues, student involvement in university processes should not just be considered as a theoretical historical antecedent, but rather attention is drawn

to the quality of effort, and positive associations of a range of desired outcomes of the university. Additionally, the inclusion of students in institutional processes for purposeful activities also helps to level the playing field and promote institutional democracy.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the literature on the experiences or factors which student representatives perceive to help or hinder their effectiveness as student members of governance committees. Role ambiguity appears at the top of their list of challenges, and the overall effectiveness of their role is perceived to be reliant on the willingness and ability of academic managers and staff to engage in constructive dialogue with students. It is argued that universities need to adopt a more proactive approach to the development and support of student leaders and representatives. This article suggests that the lack of institutionalised formal student leadership training undermines and/or contradicts various regulatory initiatives by the government and compromises vast student interests advocated by student leadership in governance structures.

It must be emphasised that widening the training of student representatives on decision-making is a necessary enabler as opposed to consulting students on decisions already made. This will hopefully eliminate possible tokenist gestures and promote the authoritative student voice essential for genuine participation. Crucially, this will lead to the recognition of student leadership as an equal partner in institutional governance rather than just a regulated meaningless available body of bystanders. A specified governance and leadership training curriculum should be designed and offered to students who already hold student representative council positions, as well as those who may be interested in occupying similar leadership roles in the future.

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# Afrocentricity as a Theory for Good Governance in Africa

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**Abstract:** Corruption and poverty persist in many African countries despite over two decades of implementing the donor's good governance agenda. The ineffectiveness of western approaches in Africa makes the case for institutional reforms based on theories that are compatible with African culture. The problem, however, is that while there is a proliferation of western theories of governance and development, there are few well-articulated theories emanating from African indigenous knowledge systems. In recent times, Afrocentricity has emerged as a scientific paradigm that is based on African culture and that serves African interests. Consequently, the objectives of the paper are to describe the characteristics of Afrocentricity and to present the Afrocentric principles of good governance. The methodology adopted relies mainly on secondary sources. The findings show that precolonial Africa has many democratic governance systems to learn from, and based on Africa's cultural democracies, some Afrocentric principles of good governance are brought forward.

**Keywords:** Afrocentricity, Good governance, Indigenous knowledge systems, Theory

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## 1. Introduction

In his famous article "The End of History," written in 1989, the American political analyst Francis Fukuyama proclaims that the end of the cold war is "*the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.*" This claim exemplifies the concept known as "Eurocentrism," which promotes the idea that European culture is superior to other cultures and that European principles should be applied universally. Liberalists like Fukuyama (1989) usually insist that western liberal democracy is the only appropriate governance system to achieve development. Not surprisingly, immediately after the end of the Cold War, the policy focus of the World Bank changed to the promotion of good governance in Africa and other developing countries. It needs to be emphasized, however, that the Western development partners' good governance agenda mainly comprises the implementation of neoliberal economic reforms. Despite the adoption of western liberal democracy and the liberalization of African economies, poverty, conflict, unemployment, and corruption continue in Africa. Put differently, the good governance agenda has failed to lift Africa from underdevelopment, just like other earlier development strategies imposed on Africa by the West.

It must be mentioned that since the time of independence, the development efforts of most African

countries have been guided by theories and strategies emanating from the West. Examples include modernization theory, structural adjustment programs, and the good governance agenda. What these development approaches have in common is that they are all rooted in the European ideologies of individualism and neoliberalism. Moreover, instead of helping Africa escape underdevelopment, their implementation has increased Western capitalism's stake in the continent (Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2020; Idrissa, 2018; Brohman, 1995). Consequently, Asante (2003) criticizes the use of Western theories and strategies to analyze African situations, particularly because European culture and history are very different from those of Africa. Thus, Africa needs to promote indigenous strategies that reflect African reality, are rooted in African culture, and function in African interests. As regards good democratic governance, Africa has many valuable cultures and indigenous institutions to learn from.

The problem, however, is that while there is a proliferation of western theories of governance and development, there are few well-articulated theories emanating from African indigenous knowledge systems (Nwagbara, 2012; Basheka, 2015). However, in recent times, Afrocentricity has emerged as a scientific approach well suited for African reality as it is based on African culture and history rather than an imitation of any foreign theory or approach (Asante, 2003). The position of this paper is that to

improve governance and welfare in Africa, institutional reforms must be based on theories that are compatible with African culture. Afrocentricity is "the theory in which the centrality of African interests, principles, and perspectives predominates" (Asante, 2003:2). Consequently, the primary research topic of this study is: What are the Afrocentric principles of good governance? The objectives of the paper are therefore to describe the meaning and history, to show that Afrocentricity is a scientific paradigm, to describe Afrocentric philosophy, its epistemology, and its ontology, and to suggest Afrocentric principles that can contribute to the achievement of good governance and improved welfare in Africa.

This paper adopts a secondary research method. This article is significant because it adds to the body of knowledge on Afrocentricity as a theory to analyze African institutional realities. The paper has eight parts. The introduction is provided in the first section. The second provides Afrocentricity's background and definition. The third discusses Afrocentricity as a scientific paradigm. The characteristics of Afrocentricity are covered in the fourth section. The fifth section talks about how African culture is important for good governance in Africa. The sixth section outlines some Afrocentric governing principles. The conclusion is in the seventh section.

## 2. Afrocentricity: History and Definition

Afrocentricity was born out of the need to restore the self-esteem of black people and to rebuild the image of Africa, which was defamed and degraded by European colonialists and Western capitalists (Chawane, 2016). Thus, the history of Afrocentricity is rooted in the works of Afrocentric scholars and pan-Africanists such as Marcus Garvey, Cheikh Anta Diop, W.E.B. Du Bois, Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, David Walker and Alexander Crummell. These scholars contend that ancient Egypt contributed to the development of world civilization and also demonstrated many other African civilizations, thereby invalidating the European racist claim of black inferiority. However, Molefi Asante revives the Afrocentric idea, especially as academic theory and methodology. According to Asante (2003:2), Afrocentricity is the "placing of African people at the center of any analysis of African phenomena." Afrocentricity is thus an effort in which an African phenomenon is understood through an African

lens. Afrocentricity validates African culture, history, and ways of knowing as the best method to solve African problems, whether social, economic, or political (Mkabela, 2005).

Afrocentricity revives African knowledge, customs, and ethics that were intentionally displaced by whites during the European colonization of the continent. Afrocentric scholars such as Koutonin (2014) and Mazrui (2005) have demonstrated that in order to retain their dominion over other races, the Europeans plundered many significant components of African knowledge, such as mathematics and astrology, and also ensured that the rest of African civilizations were destroyed. Examples of African civilization include Egypt, Carthage, Nubia, Mali, Great Zimbabwe, Zanzibar, and Timbuktu (Falola & Fleming, 2009). These great African cities were later invaded and destroyed by colonial interests. Europeans also invented a malicious history of Africa, presenting it as a dark continent without history or civilization, and subsequently imposed their way of knowing on African people (Mazrui, 2005). The aim of Afrocentricity is to correct these disparaging misrepresentations of African history by European racial scholarship as well as bring to the fore the contributions of African people to the world's civilization.

Moreover, it is observable that through the capitalist international trading system and the adoption of neoliberal policies in poor countries, the plundering of African resources persisted in the decades following colonization. This is one reason Asante (2013) argues that the challenge of governance in Africa is more about finding leaders who are culturally immersed enough to defend African interests in the face of Western hegemony. An Afrocentric notion of good governance would therefore involve an investigation into African culture to comprehend governance through the African lens and discover the cultural principles of governance necessary for societal welfare. The next section examines Afrocentricity as a scientific paradigm.

## 3. Afrocentricity as a Scientific Paradigm

One important question is whether Afrocentricity is a scientific theory usable for comprehensive academic research. The answer is yes, Mazama (2001) has shown that Afrocentricity complies with every aspect of Kuhn's scientific paradigm. Kuhn (1962)



introduced the concept of a "paradigm" as a framework for scientific inquiry. Even though Kuhn's model was mainly created for the natural sciences, the social sciences and humanities have extensively utilized it (Mazama, 2001). A paradigm, according to Kuhn (1962, 1977), is a research culture that a group of researchers share with regard to the purpose and methods of their research (Kuhn, 1977). According to Kuhn (1962), a paradigm has two components: the cognitive component and the structural component. The metaphysical, social, and exemplars are the three dimensions of the cognitive component. The metaphysical element is described by Kuhn (1962) as the organising principle necessary for the perception of reality. Afrocentricity has a metaphysical dimension as it espouses the cosmology, axiology, and epistemology that typify African culture (Asante, 1988; Mazama, 2001). The sociological dimension of Kuhn's paradigm is the disciplinary aspect of the framework. Africology, a discipline that studies African phenomena through the unique cultural lens of the African people, is one example of an Afrocentric discipline. (Asante, 1990). Moreover, Asante (2007) argues that several Afrocentric theories can be generated from within the Afrocentric paradigm. Thus, we can have Afrocentric governance theories, Afrocentric development theories, and Afrocentric gender theories.

Afrocentricity also fulfils the "exemplar" dimension of Kuhn's paradigm through the Afrocentric research works that have been published by Afrocentric scholars. According to Kuhn (1962, 1977), the exemplars deal with problems and solutions encountered by students. The structural component of Kuhn's paradigm denotes the community of researchers and practitioners who use it. In the same way, the global community of Afrocentric scholars, who have grown over the years and have been challenging conventional theories through their scholarly works, fulfils the structural part of Afrocentricity (Mazama, 2001). But in addition to complying with the cognitive and structural aspects of Kuhn's paradigm, Afrocentricity also possesses a functional dimension. According to Mazama (2001), from an Afrocentric point of view, knowledge is created not only for its own sake but also for the purpose of emancipation and the awakening of consciousness. The functional paradigm indicates the need for action. The cultural and political liberation of Africans is the goal of the Afrocentric paradigm. The Afrocentric theory of governance is a functional aspect of the Afrocentric paradigm because it emancipates and re-centers

African political systems for improved governance and development.

## 4. Afrocentric Philosophy, Epistemology and Ontology

### 4.1 Afrocentric Philosophy

Afrocentric philosophy is the critical examination of how Africans interpret their existence and the universe in light of their cultural experiences and realities (Ekanem, 2012). African philosophy is rooted in pre-colonial African tradition and culture. Afrocentric philosophy embraces the African ideas of collective identity, communalism, humanness, spirituality, interdependence, and the interconnection of all beings in the universe (Asante, 1988). The precolonial society was based on mutual aid and sought the common good of every member. This is exemplified in the Zulu philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which posits that a person is only a person because of other people (Johnson & Van Schalkwyk, 2022). Afrocentric philosophy is a total departure from Eurocentric philosophy, which is based on the European culture of individualism, materialism, and competition. The exploitative economic systems of feudalism, slavery, colonialism, capitalism, and neoliberalism in Europe were all products of the European philosophy of individualism.

African philosophy, however, is rooted in oral traditions such as proverbs, folklore, myths, and ethical maxims, for which reason it has been criticized (Wiredu, 2008). Nevertheless, scholars such as Vansina (1985) and Anthony (2014) have argued that the African oral tradition of philosophy does not make it inferior to written philosophy because, in the African context, oral tradition is a valid means of knowing. Moreover, writing cannot establish the philosophical nature of African ideas, especially because even in the text-based European philosophical tradition, great ancient philosophers, like Socrates, are known entirely for the oral arguments imputed to them by others (Appiah, 1998). Hountondji (1996) also argues that African philosophy is uncritical when compared to Western philosophy, because it mainly concentrates on the narratives of an idealized past. Hountondji's (1996) comparison, however, has been criticized. According to Agada (2015), the validity of African philosophy cannot be judged by western standards of philosophy. Instead, to be considered valid, African philosophy must find its foundation within the African thought world rather than the European thought world.

## 4.2 Afrocentric Ontology

Afrocentric ontology is about the perception of Africans about the nature of beings occupying the universe. A major assumption in this regard is the belief in the spiritual nature of beings and the interconnection of all beings in the universe (Ekanem, 2012; Ngangah, 2019; Teffo, 1996). Africans in particular think that the spiritual side of life is just as real as the material side and that the material world can only be understood in the context of the spiritual (Etta, 2019). African ontology proposes that all beings exist as forces, and these forces exist in a hierarchy with God at the top. According to Temple (1969), "being is that which has force." That is, everything that exists is perceived as a force in African philosophy. Therefore, the term "force" includes all "beings": God, living and deceased humans, animals, plants, and minerals (Temple, 1959). Another assumption in Afrocentric ontology is the interconnectedness of all beings. Thus, individuals are part of an interconnected web of people, both living and deceased. Arguably, this consciousness of connection with the spirit promotes good moral behaviour and good governance. This is one reason religion, or the spiritual, was a source of political legitimacy in the pre-colonial era (Ekeh, 1975). Specifically, in pre-colonial African society, the belief in the spiritual was an important principle for governance that promoted accountability, and the current disregard for this principle in the postcolonial era contributes to public sector corruption and bad governance (Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2018, 2020).

## 4.3 Afrocentric Epistemology

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge. Afrocentric epistemology refers to the manner in which reality is understood within an African cultural setting. According to Nkulu-N'Sengha (2005), the African approach to knowledge can be understood through the culture, such as the oral tradition; the manner of seeking truth in social, political, and religious institutions; the work of healers; the channels for identifying guilty parties in traditional justice systems, and the methods of resolving family disputes and other social conflicts. Moreover, African epistemology is also rooted in African metaphysics. Thus, the spiritual is very important in our understanding of the world because African theories of knowledge consider the spirit world to be as real as the empirical world (Etta, 2019). In this regard,

Afrocentrists propose that there are supernatural and natural paths to knowledge. In the supernatural epistemological path, knowledge is gained through divination and revelation, as well as through the intervention of diviners, spirits, and ancestors (Nkulu-N'Sengha, 2005). In the natural epistemological path, knowledge is gained by logical reasoning, natural investigation, and intuition. African epistemology of governance, which is holistic, can serve as a sound framework for transforming the values of democracy in Africa.

## 5. The Relevance of African Culture for Good Governance

"Culture" is the way of life of a people. Moreover, culture is made up of many different values held and practiced by society (Idang, 2015). Thus, embedded in a culture are political, social, moral, religious, and economic values. In Africa, these values are important to achieving a well-ordered, peaceful, and prosperous society. According to Asante (1990), culture is important to understanding human society. Culture determines individual moral development as well as the nature and degree of a citizen's participation in political matters. Thus, to achieve good governance and development, Afrocentricity argues that culture matters. This position is in contrast to Eurocentric theories, especially modernization, which argue that culture hinders development. Every institutional structure necessary for achieving African development is ingrained in the continent's culture. Consequently, development approaches that advocate eradicating African culture first in order to improve the lives of African people are misleading and might even be harmful.

In many African cultures, like the Yoruba and Akan, political institutions are democratic because they are representative and participatory and have adequate checks and balances (Fayemi, 2009; Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2018). These democratic attributes are important for good governance. Moreover, African culture is entrenched in strong moral or ethical values (Idang, 2005). Moreover, many African political systems have mechanisms such as cults, various classes of chiefs, societal norms, and traditional symbols to hold the leadership accountable (Idang, 2015). Often, traditional rulers are not only accountable for the management of public resources, but they are also accountable for environmental issues and natural disasters, including famine, floods, and epidemics. Two interrelated cultures that ensure

peaceful coexistence and good governance in African cultural society are communalism and humanness. As noted by Igbokwe-Ibeto *et al.* (2015), traditional African values are humanistic and communal at their core. Africans place a high value on personhood, cooperation, harmony, community, and human wellbeing. African communalism is a social theory that emphasizes interdependence and collectiveness. According to this viewpoint, a person cannot exist outside of their community. It is an individual's participation in the community that makes him a man. According to Mbiti (1969), *'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.'* Thus, everyone in the community is expected to seek the communal good rather than their own self-interest. This is in contrast to the individualistic view of European societies. Politically, communalism promotes individual responsibility for public goals, access to public resources, mutual help, democratic participation, inclusiveness, and consensus decision-making (Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2018; Etta *et al.*, 2019).

Humanness or personhood, describes the epitome of African morality. In Africa, "a person" is defined as an individual who meets societal moral standards. Thus, personhood is attained by good moral conduct and good relations with other members of the community. An individual with good morals, who is kind, polite, and generous is described as "a person," while an individual who is disrespectful, unruly, selfish, and wicked is considered "not a person" (Gyekye, 1997; Igbokwe-Ibeto *et al.*, 2015). Thus, personhood is embedded in communalism, especially because humanism and morality are not innate but learned through participation in the community. In Afrocentricity, the notion of personhood is presented with the idea of "Maat," which is a moral order among ancient black Egyptians. According to Asante (2011), Maat is associated with truth, harmony, reciprocity, balance, righteousness, justice, and the search for perfection. Maat is a natural law in all African societies. In Southern Africa, personhood is presented as Ubuntu, and to possess Ubuntu is to be virtuous, kind, and humane (Idoniboye-Obu & Whetho, 2013). Maat also connotes the idea of "Iwa" or "Omoluwabi" among the Yoruba of West Africa. "Iwa" is the epitome of good character (Asante, 2011; Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2018).

Arguably, the selflessness, truth, and communal attributes of Maat, or African personhood, are important attributes for achieving good leadership, good followership, and good governance in Africa.

According to Obioha (2021), the failure of governance in Africa lies at the root of individualism and self-centeredness among public office holders. Whereas, if the communal sense of identity and solidarity is resuscitated in government and in contemporary African societies, good governance and improved welfare will be achieved. Moreover, the spiritual component of African culture makes it unique and also played a role in establishing rules for social and political behavior. For instance, among the Yoruba, it is held that breaking societal norms and taboos can result in punishment from the ancestor gods. The fear of sanction from the gods is a motivation for good behavior (Odejebi, 2013). Arguably, colonialism, modernization, and the subsequent subjugation of African culture contributed to the abuse of power and corruption by political leaders in Africa today.

## **6. Some Afrocentric Principles of Governance**

There is a growing body of literature describing African traditional governance systems (Fayemi, 2009; Basheka, 2015; Igbokwe-Ibeto *et al.*, 2015). However, there is still a dearth of literature on a culture-based governance framework. Two Afrocentric scholars have been able to bring forward some Afrocentric principles of good governance. These are the Afrocentric Theory of Political Systems by Okafor (2006) and a culture-based good governance model by Adejumo-Ayibiowu (2018, 2020). The Afrocentric theory of political systems by Okafor (2006) proposes that to achieve good governance in Africa, the philosophical viewpoint, strategies, and actions of political leadership must seek and advance Africa's interests. Political leaders must also promote the welfare of the people as well as their victorious consciousness. According to the theory, an effective political system that will guarantee good governance must be purposeful, benevolent, communicative, concordant, populist, maatic, and historically conscious.

Adejumo-Ayibiowu (2018, 2020) developed a culture-based good governance model based on the cultural principles that ensured good governance in precolonial Yoruba societies. The Yoruba are predominantly in southwest Nigeria, although they are also found in other parts of the country and in West Africa. According to the study, the effectiveness of precolonial Yoruba traditional governance is achieved because the system is participatory,

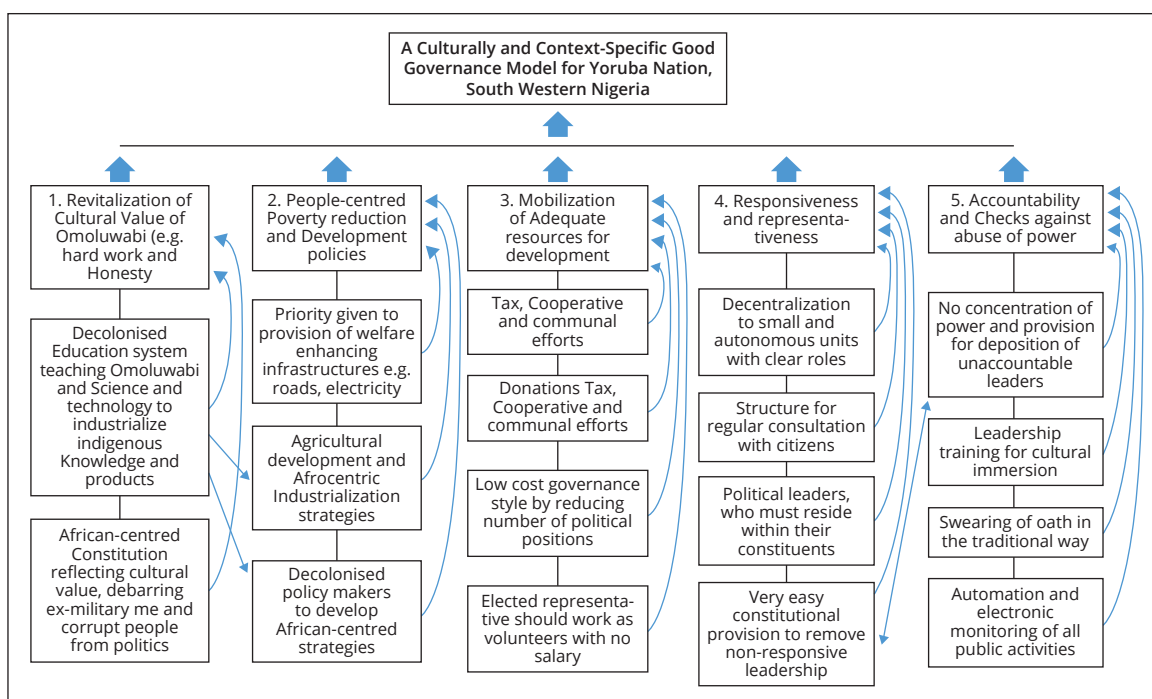
accountable, and responsive; highly decentralized; consultative; and based on a high moral standard for leaders. Moreover, the power to elect and depose the leaders belongs to the people, while the oracle, that is, the inclusion of the spiritual, gives the political systems their cultural credibility. The study also shows that public services are provided through a communal approach. Moreover, to fight against poverty, the Yoruba government had a culture of hard work and equal access to economic resources. Based on these principles, the author created a culture-based good governance model for the Yoruba nation, Southwest, Nigeria, as shown in Figure 1. According to the model, achieving good governance in Nigeria will require the revitalization of Omoluwabi, that is, African personhood, the implementation of people-centered poverty reduction and development policies, functional and representative decentralization, accountability, checks against abuse of power, and cultural legitimacy of governance (See Figure 1).

### 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

It must be mentioned that Afrocentricity theory has received criticism, especially from mainstream scholars. Ferguson (2011) has criticized Afrocentric

scholars for romanticizing the past instead of taking action to solve African development challenges. Some scholars opine that African traditional norms are too archaic to fulfil the needs of the modern scientific world (Gyeke, 1997). Such criticisms did not consider the many years of suppression of African thought systems by European interests. This study has shown that precolonial Africa had many advanced civilizations that, if they had not been disrupted by European colonialism, would have evolved to meet today's demand and would compete with other advanced civilizations. The aim of Afrocentricity is to study African culture with a spirit of inquiry so as to advance the African knowledge system. Moreover, to address African development challenges, Afrocentricity provides the appropriate methodology for African-centred research and African-centred solutions. Moreover, because different nations have unique histories and cultures, the application of universal Eurocentric approaches can be counterproductive. For the African situation, Afrocentricity has emerged as a scientific paradigm that is based on African culture and that serves African interests. The benefit of using Afrocentricity theory to study governance is that it includes contextual considerations that the universalized mainstream framework typically leaves out.

**Figure 1: A Culturally and Context-Specific Good Governance Model for the Yoruba Nation, South Western Nigeria**



Source: Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2018

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# Environmental Barriers Affecting Students with Disabilities at a Selected South African Institution of Higher Learning

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**Abstract:** South African students with disabilities have and are still experiencing various challenges in their institutions of learning. These ills include environmental challenges such as lack of architectural structures like ramps, elevators, and others, which affect the students with disabilities' academic success. These barriers work contrarily with the notion of inclusion in education which seek to uphold equality as well as fair provision of services to maintain successful education for all. Additionally, the effect of environmental barriers towards students with disabilities is overlooked yet their influence has an enormous impact on these students' academic progress. Hence, there is a need to investigate the extent to which these environmental barriers affect students with disabilities in South African higher institutions of learning by using the University of Limpopo as a case in point of such institutions. A qualitative descriptive design undergirded the study; and semi-structured interviews were adopted as a data collection method. Further, six students with physical disabilities from the University of Limpopo were purposively sampled and data was analysed through a thematic content analysis (TCA). Furthermore, the environmental barriers affecting students with disabilities were identified, analysed and the possible recommendations were provided. The findings indicate that the inaccessibility of buildings and uncomfortable surfaces within the university premises are the major environmental barriers which lowering the students with physical disabilities' sense of belonging, self-esteem as well as inhibiting their academic performance. Thus, the study recommends that the institutions of higher learning should provision the students with disabilities with reasonable accommodation for successful learning purposes.

**Keywords:** Environmental barriers, Students with disabilities, Institutions of higher learning, Maslow' hierarchy of human needs

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## 1. Introduction

Students with disabilities experience various challenges across the globe. Schneider (2006) avers that based on the International Classification of Functioning (ICF); environmental factors play an influential role on individuals including persons with disabilities. The ICF maintains that the environmental factors can either enhance or inhibit one's functional capabilities. In the context of disability, ICF asserts that persons with disabilities encounter more environmental barriers in developing countries as they have limited resources; thus, South Africa is not immune to such barriers as one of the developing countries. Notably, the study of Masoga and Maoto (2021) on challenges faced by students with disabilities at university of Limpopo and university of Venda indicate that most of the students with physical impaired experience challenges that revolve around attitudinal, environmental, and organisational factors. However, the results indicate that the environmental factors such as user-unfriendly environment appeared to

be more dominant as compared to the attitudinal and organisational factors.

Equally, Schneider (2006) describes the environmental factors as all aspects within an environment that can either limit or ease one's functional capabilities. In the context of disability, the environmental factors are described based on the three categories namely, physical world, attitudinal world as well as social world. In the physical world, the focus is on the assistive technologies, accessibility of buildings and the educational resources such as study materials, lesson contents and other study related resources that the students with disabilities may need to succeed in the process of learning; while the attitudinal world refers to the perception of the society towards persons with disabilities and how they view disability. Whereas, the social world includes how the world is organised in terms of services, the societal standards, the set policies of which includes how they are implemented and monitored. Nevertheless, this paper will focus only on the physical world of the environmental factors

as the paper aims to unveil the level in which the environmental barriers affect students with disabilities in the South African institutions of higher learning. Therefore, the physical environmental factors and its barriers will be scrutinised through the lens of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs theory.

## 2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs as the Theory of the Study

Maslow's hierarchy of human needs serves as a theoretical lens for this study. The hierarchy has derived from a humanism theory of which the fundamental principles is to fulfil an individual's basic needs until the level of self-actualisation. These basic needs are a need for survival, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation (Mishra, 2000). The hierarchy is shown in Figure 1.

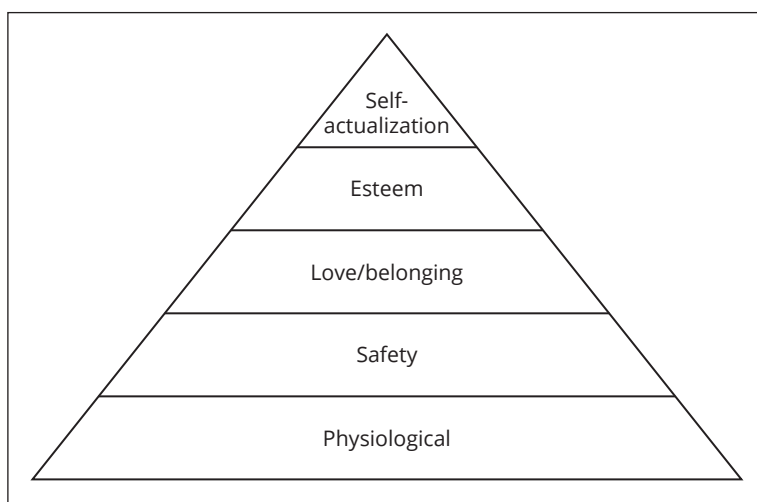
According to McLeod (2018), the above illustrated hierarchy explains these needs as follows; the physiological need known as a survival need refers to a need to satisfy the body, example, with food, warmth, shelter, and others. A need for safety involves protection, security, and freedom from fear. A need for belonging defines as a feeling of being loved, accepted and belonging. A self-esteem need refers to a feeling of independence and confidence. Self-actualisation need involves potential realisation and self-fulfilment. These basic needs are said to be influenced by the contextual influences which later determines one's motivation to perform certain tasks.

In the context of this study, these basic needs will be understood as the need for survival looking at the environmental factors; a need for safety considering the protection based on the law and the freedom of fear within the academic setting; a need for belonging in respect to the feeling of worthiness, loved and be part of the group; a need for self-esteem reflecting on the feeling of self-confidence and valued about others; whereas self-actualisation need involves a need to exercise potential and making difference in life (Moleke & Montle, 2020). This hierarchy will serve as a theoretical lens and a guiding principle for this study to assist in examining the impact of the environmental barriers on students with disabilities.

## 3. The Influence of Environmental Factors

Each environmental setting has its own factors which can influence an individual's functioning either in a positive or negative way. Looking at the environmental settings in the South African higher institutions of learning, each institution has its own factors that affects the students' function in their learning process specifically the students with disabilities (Masoga & Maoto, 2021). Drawing from Schneider's (2006) disability and the environment perspective, the physical environmental factors such as the quality of assistive technologies, the accessibility of buildings and academic resources as well as the level of distractions within the context affect the functional capabilities of students with

**Figure 1: Maslow's' Hierarchy of Needs**



Source: McLeod (2018)



disabilities in the educational context. These environmental factors affect these students in two ways, positively or negatively, based on the standard of the setting. For instance, if the assistive technologies are in decent quality and the buildings as well as academic materials are accessible then it affects the students in a positive way, enhancing their academic functioning and performance. On the other hand, if the assistive technologies are not effective and the buildings as well as academic resources are inaccessible then these factors will affect the students with disabilities negatively, for example, creating disabling barriers which inhibit their functioning.

Numerous findings in literature show that the students with disabilities experience countless environmental barriers at the institutions of higher learning (Moleke, Montle & Mogoboya, 2020; Moleke, 2021; Gore, 2021). According to the findings of Moleke, Montle and Mogoboya (2020), assistive technologies such as special computer software like jaws has its own limitations in terms of enabling the students living with blindness to navigate through their academic activities. The limitations of this software include the inability to detect pictorial symbols which result in denying the students the opportunity to reach an advanced level of knowledge and understanding about certain content in their learning process. Thus, alternative special software must be implemented if not updating the currently used one to meet the needs of these students.

Likewise, Moleke, Montle and Mogoboya (2020) continue to point out that some of the academic buildings do not have elevators and the alternative to access other floors is to take stairs. This creates a disabling barrier on students with disabilities more particular those using wheelchairs. The inaccessibility of such buildings denies these students a sense of independency and forces them to continuously depend on their classmates for whatever information that must be acquired from such buildings. Hence, Mutele and Odeku (2014) recommend that the invention of the appropriate infrastructure that promotes a conducive environment is required for the educational success of the students with disabilities. Similarly, Moleke (2021) discovers that students with disabilities at most institutions of higher learning depend on assistive technologies such as recorders, laptops with jaws software, non-visual desktop access (NVDA) screen reader and Braille machine. These assistive technologies

found to have limitations with respect to enabling the students to function well in academic related activities. These limitations became more visible when the remote learning was introduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic of which most of these students experienced academic delays; that being the case, effective assistive technologies that can meet the demands of the needs of the students with disabilities have to be put in place for inclusive and successful education for all.

Moreover, Gore (2021) indicates that inaccessibility of residence and academic buildings in the South African institutions of higher learning is an alarming situation as it creates shortcomings towards the implementation of inclusivity in education. The author continues that the inaccessibility of buildings is a fundamental cause of exclusion as the students with disabilities opt for isolating themselves whenever they feel unwelcomed in a particular environment. For the reason of this isolation, the researcher saw a need to assess the extent on which the environmental barriers affect students with disabilities in the South African institutions of higher learning.

#### **4. Students with Disabilities at Institutions of Higher Learning**

Most South African institutions of higher learning, advantaged and historically disadvantaged ones, have established units for students with disabilities to monitor and find solutions for the issues that affect the students with disabilities (Tugli, Zungu, Ramakuella, Goon & Anyanwu, 2013). The authors further mention that several employees under the disability units assert that they feel overwhelmed at some point as they receive a little support from the management; as a result, they work understaffed and render services to these students with inadequate resources if not outdated ones (Tugli, Zungu, Ramakuella, Goon & Anyanwu, 2013). These are one of the rare findings of which one may turn a blind eye and begin to put blames on the units rather than looking at where the problem emerged. That is, it is a challenge for the disability units to meet their objectives without a proper support from the universities management; hence, appropriate provision of resources is needed beforehand for successful support services to take place. Henceforth, Gore (2020) recommends that the development of the quality of teaching and the creation of enabling environments at the universities should be continuously promoted to maintain equality in education for all.

Mutanga and Walker (2017) find that lack of disability awareness creates misconceptions between the students with disabilities and the lecturers, for example, these students expect their lecturers to be cautious about their special needs and respond; accordingly, While the lecturers also expect the students with disabilities to cooperate like any other students without making their job difficult. In other words, both the lecturers and the students with disabilities have expectations towards each other with little or no knowledge about their responsibilities to promote inclusive education and this result in misunderstandings and pointing of fingers. Hence, the authors recommend that disability awareness should be promoted to maintain inclusiveness in teaching and learning activities so that both the students with disabilities and the lecturers should be aware of their responsibilities and corporate accordingly.

Sefora and Ngubane (2021) assert that the success of inclusive education depends on the 'provision of reasonable accommodation' which involves changes in terms of academic materials, the setting, teaching methods as well as assessment techniques. The provision of reasonable accommodation will assist in maintaining equal educational access to all students including students with disabilities. However, the authors found that lack of will in terms of implementing reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities remain a constrain to make inclusive education a success. Hence, the present study aims to take another angle and unpack how this struggle affects the students with disabilities' wellbeing through the lens of the hierarchy of human needs.

## 5. Methodology

This paper employed a qualitative descriptive research design to obtain and provide the in-depth knowledge about the level in which the environmental barriers affect students with disabilities at institutions of higher learning. This design is helpful to this study as it will help the researcher to explain the nature of the situation and to determine new meaning about the phenomenon being studied (Dulock, 1993). The researcher further purposively sampled six (6) students with physical disabilities to attain detailed information about the phenomenon being studied. These sampled participants were selected based on their disabilities, physical impaired, as they are affected mostly by the environmental factors. The participants were selected from the University of Limpopo as a miniature for

the South African historically disadvantaged institutions. In addition, Masoga and Maoto (2021) investigated about the challenges that students with disabilities faced at university of Limpopo and Venda; ergo, this study selected the university of Limpopo students with disabilities to determine the extent on which the environmental barriers affect the students with physical disabilities. Further, data was collected through interviews to obtain detailed information from the participants through follow-up questions. The interview questions were asked based on the objectives of the study. Furthermore, thematic content analysis served as a method of analysis which helped the researcher to identify, discuss and analyse the findings as well as generating themes based on the objectives of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The objectives of the study are to determine the environmental barriers affecting the students with disabilities, and to unveil their effects towards the students with disabilities based on the hierarchy of human needs.

## 6. Results and Discussion

The following findings from the interview responses are categorised based on the objectives of the study. Inaccessibility of buildings and uncomfortable surfaces found to be major barriers on the life of students with disabilities. The responses are as follows:

### 6.1 Inaccessibility of Buildings as Environmental Barrier

Inaccessibility of buildings found as a foremost obstruction to students with physical disabilities. Most of the participants mention that limited access to both academic and residential buildings due to the lack of elevators restricts their freedom of movement. These constrains affect the physical impaired students, wheelchair users as they cannot be accompanied through stairs as alternative way like the ones living with blindness. The students continue to indicate that this inaccessibility limit their level of independence and give them no other option but to depend on others. This is the gap that was also realised by Mutele and Odeku (2014), hence they called for the invention of appropriate infrastructure to accommodate students with disabilities by creating a disability friendly environment.

Disability unfriendly environment makes students with disabilities to feel inferior to their peers. One

of the participants indicates that "it is not good to be reminded that you are not like others" as she indicates that at some point when they are given a group task and the classmates decided to choose a certain wheelchair unfriendly user residential space to work on the task. As a result, she was forced to not be part of the discussion as she was unable to reach that specific place. Although she said that the group mates did not have a problem of collecting her ideas for contribution, writing in her absence, and coming back to update her; however, she just felt alienated which affected her sense of belonging. The participant asserts that this is not only about group discussions but also for socialisation which is beneficial for academic success through informal learning; however, due to environmental limitations these students are being denied the opportunity to socialise with their fellow students.

Another challenge that the participants highlighted is the issue of unavailability of elevators in some of the academic buildings. The participants aver that although buildings like disability units and administrative buildings remain accessible however they still feel isolated when they are unable to access all other buildings within the campus like other students without disabilities. One of these participants mentions that these environmental barriers within the university affect them more than how we could think of. She said that at a certain point she was left with no choice but to specialise with a course that she was not interested in it at an honours level, because the one that she was good at the department does not have an elevator. She continues that her classmates were surprised that she opted for something that she never shows interest in it not knowing that she is forced by the environmental limitations. She then concludes that "we end up accepting what is available to avoid being called attention seekers although it hurts." This alumni participant is hurt and broken because she is now a master's dropout since she did not manage to continue to specialise with something that she was not interested in. This response shows how deep the environmental barriers affect the students with disabilities. Hence, Masoga and Maoto (2021) recommend that the university context should be accommodative for all students with no exception to students with disabilities to maintain successful education.

It is challenging for the students with disabilities to succeed smoothly in education due to the environmental obstruction that inhibits their academic

progress. One of the wheelchair users indicate that it is understandable when an elevator takes few days or a week not operating but it becomes unbearable when it goes beyond a month not operating. He continues that this kind of limitation affects their freedom of movement and their level of independency as they must keep on relying on other students if not disability unit staff members for accessing whatever they may need from the needed departments. On other thing the participant mentioned is that the problem is that the messenger would not present the exact given information, in that, there will always be a feeling that something is missing and the what ifs. This response displays an inside cry for independency as the participant is not satisfied by the information given by the messenger. This accord with the findings of Moleke (2021) who states that although the students with disabilities appreciate the assistance they get from others; however, they long for independency to unlock their inner potential and display their capabilities.

## **6.2 Uncomfortable Surfaces as Environmental Barriers**

Uncomfortable surfaces are also found to be environmental constraints that inhibit the movement of students with physical disabilities. The participants who are using crutches, special shoes and angle caps are experiencing difficulties on unfriendly surfaces such as rocky pavements, slippery surfaces, and inappropriate ramps. One of them indicates that it is difficult to walk on the rocky pavement because it causes imbalances and movement difficulties. The participant states that this kind of environmental barriers are overlooked, hence they choose to avoid such places ask for assistant to avoid being called attention seekers. Another one said that he asks for assistant especially on the slippery surfaces and he really appreciate the kind of assistant he gets from his mates but at the same time he wishes to do things on his own as independence boosts confidence. The participant concludes that situations such as this demotivate them to be actively involved in academic activities and lowers their motivation to attend classes. As Sefora and Ngubane (2021) stress that students with disabilities are drowning in the process of learning due to the lack of will by those who are in power to implement reasonable accommodation for the students' academic success.

Unaccommodating university environment imposes students with disabilities to isolation. One of the

angle cap participants indicates that she limits her movements around the campus especially during winter because it is painful to walk on rocky surface. "I make a point that I study in my room and avoid going to the library by all means" she said. The participant further mentions that it is not that she does not want to go to the library, but she is just avoiding the discomfort because not everyone will understand that a mere rocky pavement can give a person movement challenges. This participant was further asked a follow up question about the level of attendance by persons without disabilities. The response was that persons without disabilities within the university community rarely attend disability events hence they have a limited knowledge about disability issues. This is consistent with the findings of Zongozzi (2020) who proclaims that lack of attendance for disability awareness by the university community lead to misconceptions which result in lack of will for the implementation of reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities.

Another challenge faced by students who are using crutches is to climb ramps and the slippery surfaces. One of the participants indicates that it was very embarrassing to require assistance because the only assistance that one can get while on crutches is to be lifted. The participant further mentions that it became better when the disability unit borrow her a wheelchair although is still facing ramps issues, but it is better because the assistance that she requires does not involve being lifted like a baby. The findings show how these students are affected by the barriers within the environmental setting of which they affect them deeper than one may think because when they refrain from going to certain place, they remain affected. Thus, it is not a solution but a way of avoiding reality. That being the case, Masoga and Maoto (2021) suggest that the institutions of higher learning need to hasten the provision of reasonable facilities to accommodate students with disabilities.

### **6.3 The Effect of Environmental Barriers and the Hierarchy of Human Needs**

The participants were further given a chance to express how the inaccessibility of buildings and uncomfortable surfaces affect them based on their basic needs, a need for survival, safety, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualisation. Below are the responses:

#### **6.3.1 Survival Need**

Based on the environmental obstructions that the students with physical disabilities encounter, the fulfilment of their survival need is at moderate. The participants indicate that alone they cannot survive as the environmental constraints limit their movement. For instance, unavailability of elevators at certain buildings forces them to seek for assistance which affects their level of independence and the fulfilment of survival need. Additionally, one of the participants mentions that the fact that they avoid certain uncomfortable surfaces it means that they cannot survive on their own due to unfriendly structured environment. Hence, the findings of Moleke (2021) emphasise that freedom of independence will remain a dream to the students with disabilities if they are still facing a paramount obstacle that are related to their academic needs.

#### **6.3.2 Safety Need**

The safety need involves a feeling of being protected and the freedom of fear. The participants were asked to rate their safety need level based on the environmental factors that affects them within the campus premises. The participants' responses were divided on this matter as most of the wheelchair users mention that their inaccessibility of buildings does not affect their level of feeling protected if not safe. Whereas others, special shoes and angle cap users indicate that their fear of walking around uncomfortable surfaces affect their safety need as one of them emphasised that, "there is no way that I can feel safer on rocky and slippery surfaces." In this regard, the safety need was rated both poor and moderate due to divided responses. Thus, the inclusive education policy argues that the community in education should be knowledgeable about the students with disabilities' individual difference for better mediation, understanding and provision of reasonable services (Gous & Mfazwe 1998).

#### **6.3.3 Belonging and Self-Esteem Needs**

The above needs involve the feeling of worthiness, loved, belonging, valued, and self-confidence as previously defined. The participants rated their belonging and self-esteem needs poor as they mention that the fact that they still experience challenges in terms of accessibility of buildings and other challenges that are not part of the scope of this study such as assistive technologies, their sense of belonging will remain a dream. For example, the fact that they are unable to join their classmates for either socialisation or group discussion in their respective

residence due to environmental constraints it shows that they are staying in the environment that is not accommodative. As a result, this lowers their sense of belonging as well as reducing their self-esteem because one cannot feel confident in an environment that threatens his/her safety and sense of belonging. One of the participants avers that "the fact that a lesson and group discussion proceed in my absence because I am unable to reach the chosen setting affects my sense of belonging and makes me feel less valued, which also drags my confidence down." From these responses, it shows that the environmental barriers not only affect these students only physically but also emotionally and psychologically. Hence, there is a need for urgent intervention. This was realised by McKinney and Swartz (2020), who assert that the students with disabilities are underrepresented, and their challenges are overlooked at higher education level despite the non-discrimination legislative and inclusive policies that promote equality.

#### 6.3.4 Self-Actualisation Needs

The self-actualisation need refers to a need to exercise potential and have influence in life. The participants indicate that there is still a lot to fix before they can think of making a difference through their potential. There are still mountains of barriers that need to be levelled for their potential to be unlocked. One of the participants states that she knows very well that she is good in singing but with the stigma that is attached to disability she is struggling when coming to boost her self-esteem and come out of the closet to show the world her potential. She further states that she believes that there are many people with disabilities who recognised their potential but unable to bring them out due to attitudinal and environmental constraints those persons with disabilities face in day to day living. Another one mentioned that he was involved in a certain society within the campus for academic development purposes, but he had to withdraw due to the majority rule decisions that were always taken based on the procedural arrangements of settings and other activities related to the organisational objectives. "We really want to make a difference in life, but the challenges related to disability needs always haunt us back even when we are trying to bury them" he said. This response shows that when these students avoid certain things to cover up the barriers should not be taken as a solution because it does not solve but build more barriers than before. Thus, their needs must be met, and the

barriers must be removed for them to have a sense of belonging and able to reach their level of self-actualisation. As Lee (2019) stresses that the learning context should be accommodating to all students including those with disabilities to meet their needs, enhance their motivation to learn, unlock their inner potential which will help them to reach their level of self-actualisation.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study intended to investigate how the environmental barriers affect students with disabilities. These students found to be disturbed by the inaccessibility of buildings and uncomfortable within the university premises. These environmental obstructions compel them to solitude to avoid embarrassment and the feeling of not belonging. The idea of isolation helps them to run from the problem but not solving the problem as they continue to be affected psychologically and emotionally. As a result, these students turn to become demotivated and perform poorly in their studies. Thus, the institutions of higher learning should pay attention to their infrastructure to assess how accommodative they are towards the students with disabilities with respect to their basic needs, survival, safety, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualisation.

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# Enablers and Constraints Women Encounter in Advancing to Senior Managerial Positions: Case of South African Military Health Institutions in the Western Cape

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**Abstract:** South Africa has made notable progress in narrowing the gender gap in managerial positions since 2004. The percentage of women members of parliament (MP's) has increased from 33% in 2004 to 46% in 2019. However, women appear to remain underrepresented in senior management in one of South Africa's historically male-dominated departments, the Department of Defence (DOD). This study aimed to determine the enablers and constraints that women encounter in advancing to managerial positions in Military Health Institutions in the Western Cape. A mixed method was employed to answer the main research question: "What are the enabling and constraining factors women encounter in advancing to senior managerial positions"? Qualitative data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires and through SANDF document analysis. Biographic and background information was collected and reported as frequency statistics. The questionnaire was completed by 36 participants. Interviews were conducted with Officers Commanding (OCs), Heads of Department (HODs) of Human Resources and Regimental Sergeant Majors (RSMs) from Military Health Institutions in the Western Cape. The results were analysed according to the Micro-individual, Meso-organisational, and Macro socio-cultural levels of the multi-relational framework. It has been found that women are relatively well represented in Officer in Charge (OIC) and HOD positions, but no women to date had held an OC post. Gender equality policies are in place, and it is expected all organisations and businesses comply, including the SANDF. The SANDF neglects to comply with the legislative prescripts, as compliance ensures gender parity and diversity on all senior managerial levels, thus giving women the opportunity to contribute to the strategic objectives of the country, the DOD, and the SANDF. One limitation of the study is the low response rate, which may be attributed to the participants' busy schedules, as they were compelled to provide essential services during the national COVID-19 pandemic. It is recommended that future studies include one of South Africa's major Military Health Institutes, 2 Military Hospital in Wynberg, Cape Town, and all women officers in all areas of specialisations.

**Keywords:** Enablers, Constraints, Gender equality, South African Military Health Institutions

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## 1. Introduction

The South African National Defence Force has made great strides post-1994 in improving race and gender composition within its ranks, which may be largely attributed to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. However, twenty-seven years later, women are still underrepresented in senior management in the DOD as reflected in the 2019 DOD macrostructure (DOD, 2019). The macrostructure of the DOD (2019) only has three (25%) women compared to nine (75%) men that formed part of the highest executive function of the DOD. On level 2 in the SANDF there has been no woman between 1994 and 2019 (DOD, 2019). This macrostructure begs the question, why are there so few women in managerial positions?

Senior managerial positions in the current study refer to officers serving as Officer Commanding (OC), Head of Department (HOD) and Officer in Charge (OIC) regardless of their rank. It therefore does not make reference to senior officers only, but to the senior position the incumbent holds. No data is available on how diversity is managed in the Military Health Institutions in the Western Cape. However, since joining one of the Military Health Institutions the researcher observed that possible disparities exist across race and gender and associated occupations and positions with only two women in the senior officer group currently to serve as Heads of Department. It begged the question whether this is the norm in other Military Health Institutions, or whether it holds true only of military health institutions in the Western Cape.

The purpose of this study was to determine the enabling and constraining factors that women encounter in advancing to senior managerial positions in South African Military Health Institutions in the Western Cape. The objectives of the study were: a) to determine the factors that women experience as constraints and enablers in advancing to senior managerial positions in Military Health Institutions in the Western Cape; b) to highlight implications of advancement of women to senior managerial positions for reaching the strategic objectives of Military Health Institutions.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The current study adopts a feminist approach within a multi-level relational framework in order to address the enablers and constraints women encounter in advancing to managerial positions within health institutions in the Western Cape (Taylor & Wells, 2017). Coe (2019:243) posits that a feminist is a proponent for the liberation of all people from discriminatory practices, dominations, and oppression. Therefore, conducting research through a feminist lens, allows researchers to explore and gain insight into understanding the views and experiences of women faced with within the context of a research study on the micro, meso, and macro levels (Lay & Daley, 2007).

## 3. Literature

### 3.1 Diversity Within the South African National Defence Force

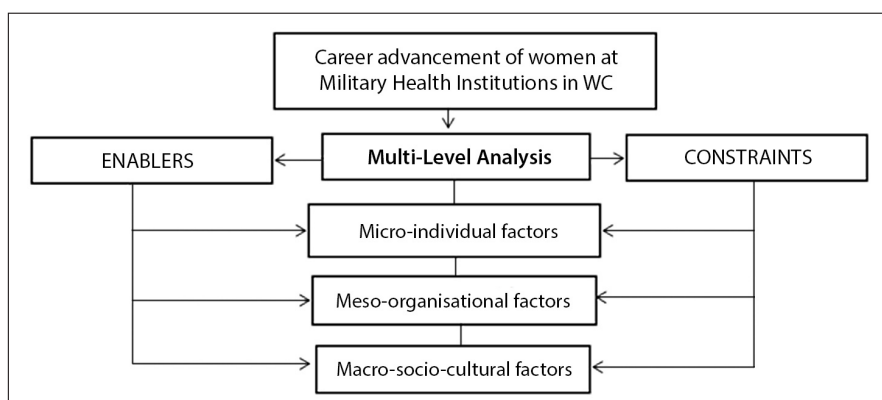
During a Parliamentary Committee meeting on Defence in 2015, the Chief Director of Transformation

Management of the SANDF indicated the SANDF focus was on mentoring, coaching and leadership training that would assist in the increase of women at the decision-making level. The Chief Director advised that diversity programmes should be presented in all units. It is disappointing that of the eight Lieutenant Generals/Vice Admirals, none was a woman; of the 40 Major Generals/Rear Admirals, 7(17.5%) were women and of the 170 Brigadier Generals/Rear Admirals (Junior Grade), only 61(35.8%) were women (defenceWeb, 2019). No woman features on level 2 (DOD, 2019). Only 25% (n=3) of officers on the macrostructure of the DOD level 0 to 2 (DOD, 2019) are women compared to 75% (n=9) being men.

### 3.2 Enabling and Constraining Factors for Women to Advance to Leadership Positions

The enabling and constraining factors have been analysed using a multi-level approach (Taylor & Wells, 2017) through which the macro socio-cultural, meso-organisational, and micro-individual levels are integrated. Diehl and Dzubinski (2016) argue that studies around the challenges women face are primarily focused on barriers within organisations, thus not considering the wide variety of barriers and their prevalence across all societal levels. Micro-factors include individual agency, motivation, identity and various forms of human capital that influence individual capabilities and opportunities. The meso level involves the organisational processes that mediate employment opportunities according to individual abilities and contextual circumstances. The macro level involves structural conditions, including social values, social stratification, the conception of law, family and work; is the all-encom-

**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework**



Source: Taylor & Wells (2017)



passing domain within which all other layers exist (Syed & Ozbilgin, 2009:237).

### 3.3 Women in STEM Careers

The World Economic Forum states that women are underrepresented in STEM-related fields; only 30% of the world's scientists are women; less than a third of women choose to study higher education courses in fields like science and engineering; and women working in STEM fields publish less often and receive less pay (Wood, 2020). Women are overrepresented in STEM fields, such as medical services. They further assert that women's career choice is influenced by gender norms and stereotypes even beyond observed gender differences in interests (Su & Rounds, 2015). It is argued that cultural influence determines the choice of work and the field of education women pursue (Haveman & Beresford, 2012).

STEM-related occupations constitute eight of the top ten scarce skills in South Africa (Moleko, 2018). Moleko (2018) asserts that by addressing stereotypes which perceive STEM-related careers to be the work of men, and by providing TVET with the necessary resources to deliver technical, engineering and artisan skills to women, the growing gender gap in South Africa would be narrowed.

The concentration of women in communal occupations continues as result of gender stereotypes that consider men to be more agentic than women (Heilman, 2012). Society has influenced and assigned specific roles which are perceived as gender-appropriate behaviours to both men and women. Fear of backlash from others also attributes to the lack of interest from women to pursue careers perceived to be exclusively for men (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Glick & Phelan, 2012). Men and women switching societal gender roles are more likely to receive backlash than those conforming to stereotypes (Rudman *et al.*, 2012).

According to Stats SA (2017:34), seven in ten of all women students (70.7%) studied education compared to 29.4% of men students. Despite the fact that there are more women in the labour force, role segregation remains a reality in the labour market. Women are still concentrated in occupations that require communal traits. The statistics released by the South African Nursing Council (2017) indicate the total nursing workforce for women to be 259 495 (90.39%) compared to 27 584 (9.61%) for men.

## 4. Research Design and Methodology

The mixed-method approach formed the overall design of the study (Creswell, 2014) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). The study is grounded on interpretivism epistemology that argues that truth and knowledge are subjective, culturally and historically situated based on lived experiences and understanding of participants (Ryan, 2018:9). For this study, qualitative data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews with key informants, open-ended questionnaires and SANDF document analysis (Policies, Instructions), and quantitative data was collected through post profiles of personnel, Unit post structures and biographical information of Military Health Institutions. Approval was granted by the SANDF and Stellenbosch University (Ref MIL-2020-14785).

The study was concentrated in the Western Cape and includes two Military Health Units, namely Institute for Maritime Medicine (IMM) situated in Simon's Town, and Area Military Health Unit Western Cape (AMHU WC) situated in Wynberg. IMM and AMHU WC (five Health Centres and six sickbays) are the only two units that provide health services to military members and their dependents in the WC as illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 on the following page.

IMM is commanded by an OC with HODs in charge of the various Departments as illustrated below.

AMHU WC is commanded by an OC but comprises five Health Centres, each of which is managed by an OiC, who is also responsible for the management of the respective Sick Bays as illustrated in Figure 3.

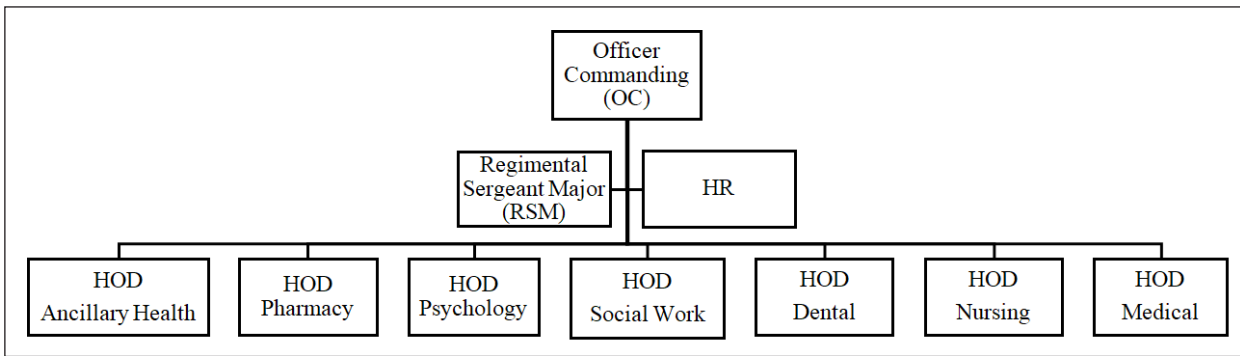
### 4.1 Interviews

Due to COVID-19, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted via telephone with two key informants (OCs, HODs of the Human Resource Department, and RSMs) from each site called KI 1, KI 2, KI 3 and KI 4. Interviews took approximately 30-45 minutes. Consent was obtained to record the interviews. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher.

### 4.2 Questionnaire

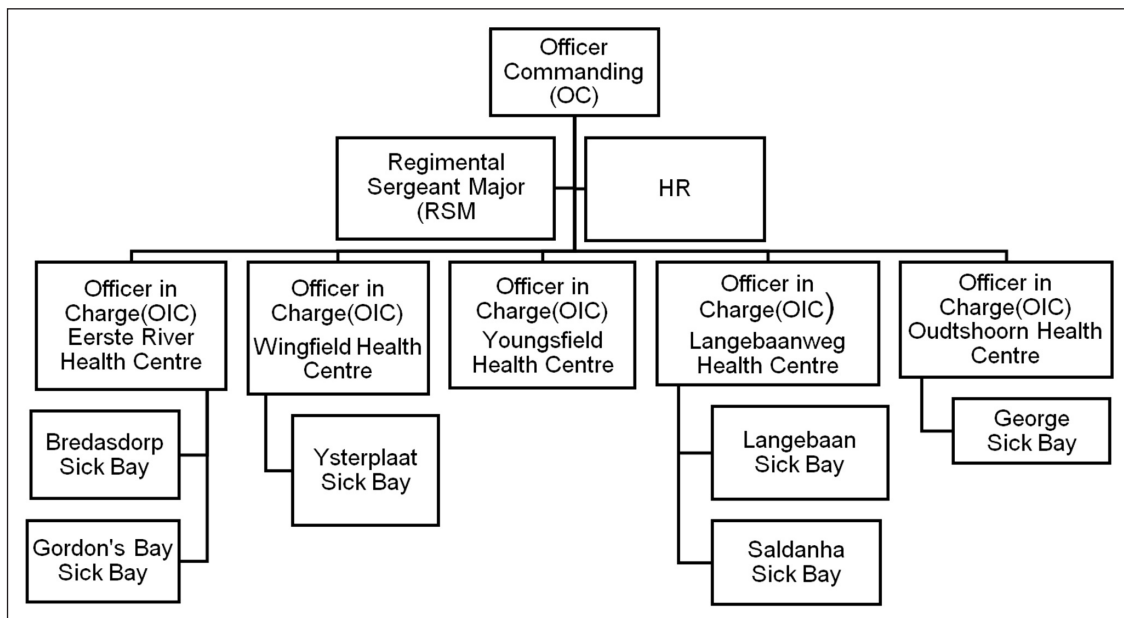
Questionnaires were only administered to senior and junior officer women from "SAMHSI 1" and

**Figure 2: Organisational Chart IMM**



Source: Authors (2022)

**Figure 3: Organisational Chart AMHU WC**



Source: Authors (2022)

"SAMHI 2" as they are potential candidates to progress to senior managerial positions. As a result, civilian women and women as non-commissioned officers were excluded from this study. The questionnaire was completed online. Sixty-seven potential survey participants indicated their willingness to take part in the survey, but only 36 completed the questionnaire.

### 4.3 Documents

The SANDF Transformation policy and Macro-structure of the DOD were retrieved from the DOD intranet portal. The latter documents were used to

determine whether, and to what extent women have made progress in advancing to key senior positions in the DOD and SANDF. Unit structures, which only include OCs HODs, OiCs and RSMs as these are the senior managerial positions according to this study and Ancillary Health, Pharmacy, Psychology, Dental, Nursing, and medical departments, were requested and subsequently provided by the respective HR departments. Structures of the various departments were also obtained from various OiCs at the Health centres, and these structures were corroborated with primary structures of Units. The Unit structures and respective profiles of members against posts held are relevant SANDF documents to determine the

ratio of men to women in various departments; their education, skills, experience, and position.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was applied to analysing and reporting themes from qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Codes were generated and subsequently categorised into potential themes according to the multi-relational framework (Micro-individual, Meso-organisational and Macro level) (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). Quantitative data was analysed by using tables and graphs as well as statistical analysis by means of two-way frequency tables and the Logit and Probit models. Information sourced from the unit structures and post structures were tabulated according to the position, the total men/ women in various positions and within each department.

##### 4.4.1 Trustworthiness

In this study credibility was achieved through triangulation and member checks (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

Transcribed interviews were emailed to participants to confirm authenticity of their responses. The summary of the findings was also emailed to the participants.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Managerial Positions

Gender is equally (50%) distributed in the RSM position; three women (60%) and two men (40%) for OIC, and four men (57.1%) and three women (42.9%) occupy HOD positions.

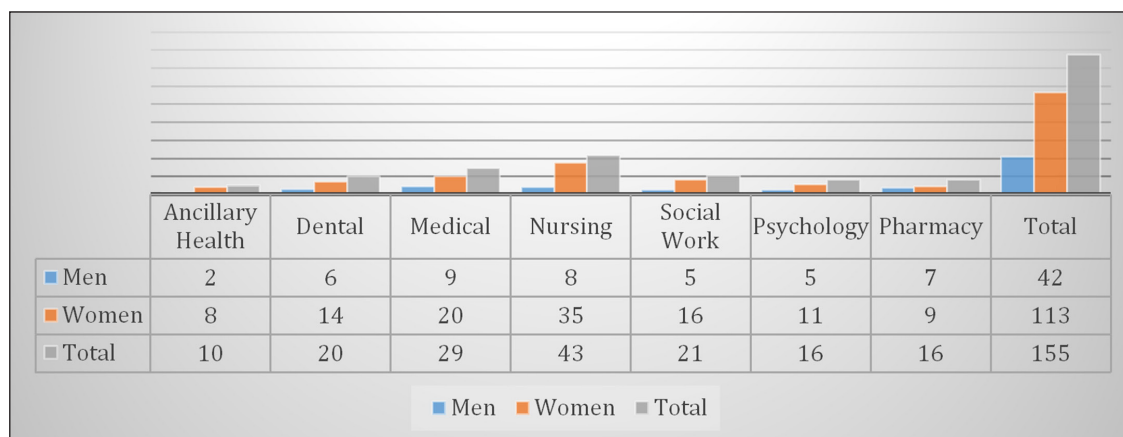
### 5.2 Gender Composition Per Department of the Military Health Institutions

The total number of women officers in the departments is 113 (72.9%) and 42 (27.1%) for men.

### 5.3 Findings From the Questionnaires

Table 2 on the next page shows a summary of the biographic and background information.

Figure 4: Departmental Gender Statistics



Source: Authors

Table 1: Gender Representation of Managerial Positions of Officers in SAMHS in the WC

Position	Men	Women	Total	%
OC	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	2	100%
RSM	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2	100%
OIC	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	5	100%
HOD	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	7	100%
Total	9 (56.25%)	7 (43.57%)	16	100%

Source: Authors

**Table 2: Demographic and Background Details of Survey Participants**

	Senior	Junior	Total
<b>Race (n=35)</b>			
Blacks	1	4	5 (14%)
Coloured	4	10	14 (40%)
Indian	0	1	1 (3%)
White	4	11	15 (43%)
<b>Marital Status (n=35)</b>			
Married	5	17	22 (63%)
Single	3	8	11 (31%)
In a relationship	1	1	2 (6%)
<b>Children (n=35)</b>			
1 Child	0	7	7 (20%)
2 Children	3	8	11 (31%)
3 Children+	2	1	3 (9%)
None	4	10	14 (40%)
<b>Children's Age (n=27)</b>			
0-5 years	2	7	9 (33%)
6-13 years	1	3	4 (15%)
14-18 years	0	5	5 (19%)
19+ years	3	6	9 (33%)
<b>Experience (n=35)</b>			
Less than 5 years	0	2	2 (6%)
5-9 years	4	8	12 (34%)
10-19	3	8	11 (31%)
20-29	1	6	7 (20%)
30-39	1	2	3 (9%)
<b>Educational Qualification (n=33)</b>			
Diploma	0	3	3 (9%)
Degree	3	15	18 (55%)
Postgraduate degree	4	8	12 (36%)

Source: Authors

**Table 3: Position and Educational Level Two-Way Frequency**

Educational Level	Position	
	Junior Officer (n=26)	Senior Officer (n=10)
Matric Certificate	0	0
Certificate/Vocational Diploma	3	0
Degree	15	4
Postgraduate	8	4

Source: Authors

Biographic and background information prompted the researcher to report frequency statistics to encompass statistical analysis. Hence data analysis was conducted through two-way frequency Tables, and the Probit and Logit models.

### 5.4 Statistical Analysis

The analysis of a two-way frequency table between position and educational qualification shows that it is statistically insignificant with Chi-Square of 5.23 and a probability of 0.155. Junior officers have more Higher Education (HE) qualifications with a total of 15 (75.7%) degrees compared to only 4 (40%) degrees held by senior officers respectively. Eight (30.8%) junior officers are in possession of a postgraduate qualification compared to the 4 (40%) postgraduate qualifications held by senior officers. Three (11.5%) junior officers are in possession of a vocational diploma or certificate.

Table 4 two-way Chi-Square of 2.58 and probability value of 0.763 shows that the frequency table is statistically insignificant. It makes sense that the total of senior officers is less than the total of junior officers. Therefore, not all junior officers will ascend to senior posts. There is only one senior officer and

two junior officers with work experience of between 30 and 39 years of service. Six of the junior officers and one senior officer reported 20 to 29 years of service. Junior officers with years of service from 10 to 19 years are eight, senior officers are three. Those with between five and nine years of service are eight junior and four senior officers. Only two junior officers have experience of less than five years of service.

The two-way frequency table of marital status and position was analysed. There were about 35 women officers surveyed, of whom 22 were married. The variable was dropped due to one member not indicating marital status. Table 5 is statistically insignificant in explaining the two-way frequency table with a Pearson Chi-Square of 1.14 and with a probability of 0.564. There are 17 junior officers who are married and five senior officers. There is one junior officer and one senior officer who are in a respective relationship. There are eight junior officers and three senior officers who are single.

#### 5.4.1 Assumptions of the Study

The nonlinear regression applied to the surveyed 36 women officers in Military Health Institutions in the Western Cape. The dependent variable Y

**Table 4: Years of Service and Position Two-Way Frequency**

Years of Service	Position	
	Junior Officer	Senior Officer
Less than 5yrs	2	0
5-9 years	8	4
10-19 years	8	3
20-29 years	6	1
30-39 years	2	1

Source: Authors

**Table 5: Marital Status and Position Two-Way Frequency**

Marital Status	Position	
	Junior Officers	Senior Officers
Married	17	5
In a relationship	1	1
Single	8	3

Source: Authors

in the study is the Job position of all surveyed women officers. The value of variable Y equals 1 if the women officer is in a managerial position. The Probit and Logit models have been used to determine dependent variables of values lying in the two extremes of 0 and 1. The variable selected to be used in the dataset is "Years of Service", which means that the criteria for "experience of years of service" was created from 0 to 39 years of service, starting from 0 to 5 years of service, 5 to 9 years of service, 10 to 19 years of service, 20 to 29 years of service, and lastly, 30 to 39 years of service. A midpoint for the interval was created. For example, for years of service between 0 and 5, "2.5 years of service" was used. For years of service between 5 and 9, "7 years of service" was used as the midpoint of the year of service. For years of service 10 and 19, "15 years of service" was used. For the category year of service between 20 and 29 years of service, "25 years of service" was used, and 35 was used in the years of service for the category of 30 to 39.

"Married" is another variable that was used as a constraint because women officers who are married will not necessarily leave their homes as they prioritise family responsibilities above to attending courses in another province. If a respondent selected "married", it is assumed that it meant the person is in fact officially married, and then their variable is equal to 1; if not married, then the person is assumed to be either single, or in a non-formalised relationship, therefore, to be classified as zero.

Educational qualification was classified as equal to 1 if the woman as an officer had a minimum of a first degree. If the individual did not have a first degree, then her entry was classified as equal to zero. That is inclusive of women officers who have a postgraduate degree. The majority of the women officers surveyed have at least a first degree. Out of the 36 women officers surveyed, only 5 were not in possession of a first degree. The personal attribute variable assumes that when women officers agreed that any form of motivation, determination, willpower, endurance and anything agreeing to the importance of personal attribute is an enabler, it will equate to 1; if nothing is reported, it is to zero. The woman officers who reported that military courses were important in getting a managerial position were equated to the number 1; non-responses or blank spaces were classified as zero. All respondents classified as number 1 were agreeing that studying for a formal academic qualification and

attending military courses will be beneficial to their getting a managerial position.

### 5.4.2 Logit Model

The assumptions listed by Christensen (1990) of the probability function is:

$$P_i = E(Y = 1 | X_i) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta X_i)}}$$

The equation was modified for the purpose of the study:

$$P_i = E(\text{JobPosition} = 1 | X_i) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Qual} + \beta_2 \text{Married} + \beta_3 \text{YrsOfService} + \beta_4 \text{PerAtt} + \beta_5 \text{MilitCourse})}}$$

Where *i* is the (*i*)<sup>th</sup> woman employee.

### 5.4.3 Probit Model

To estimate the unknown parameters of the Probit model, the cumulative distribution function of the standard normal distribution after substitution for the purpose of this study was used:

$$F(\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Qual} + \beta_2 \text{Married} + \beta_3 \text{YrsOfService} + \beta_4 \text{PerAtt} + \beta_5 \text{MilitCourse}) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Qual} + \beta_2 \text{Married} + \beta_3 \text{YrsOfService} + \beta_4 \text{PerAtt} + \beta_5 \text{MilitCourse}} e^{-\frac{z^2}{2}} dz$$

On both the Logit and Probit models *Qual* represents educational qualification, *YrsOfService* = Years of Service *PerAtt* = Personal Attribute, and form the cumulative distribution function of the standard normal distribution after substitution for the purpose. *Militcourse* represents military course taken by the woman employees.

### 5.4.4 Estimation Results

Below is a discussion of the estimated parameters of the nonlinear regression models. The Logit and Probit models are estimated, and the results concluded. The dataset shows that 62% of the participants are in managerial positions. Woman officers reported that educational qualifications contributed 97% to job position, personal attribute contributed 34%, and military course were the lowest contributor at 30%. The average years of service for respondents was 15 years. Based on information provided by the 35 participants on questionnaires, 13 (36.1%) women were not in any form of managerial position; 22 (61.1%) were in fact in a managerial position. One (2.8%) officer did not provide any information.

The Logit model shows that the constant coefficient will less likely decrease, and more likely to decrease for the Probit model. Results show "Years of service" for the Logit model is more likely to decrease, and less likely to decrease for the Probit model. Results for both the Logit and Probit model show "Educational qualification" will more likely increase. Marital status shows a less likely increase for the Probit model and less likely for the Logit model. Woman officers consider military courses as a constraining factor. Based on the Probit and Logit models, results show that for both the Probit and the Logit model it will less likely increase. "Personal Attribute" is more likely to increase for both the Probit and Logit models.

The marginal effects interpretation concludes that "Years spend in the service of Military Health

Institutions in the Western Cape" is less likely to decrease by 10% of the jobs position for the Logit model, and less likely decrease by 1% for the Probit model. Educational qualification shows that for the Probit model, the marginal effects will more likely increase by 36.6%, while the Logit model marginal effects will more likely increase by 37.5%. Marital status will more likely increase by 6.0% for the Probit model of marginal effects at means, while the Logit model will more likely increase by 6.6%, for that are in managerial position. "Military course" will less likely decrease by 0.02% for the Probit and less likely increase by 3% for the Logit model.

Table 8 with classification for "Job position" shows the results correctly predicted at 66.67% for both the Probit and Logit models respectively. The rest of the percentage falls under misclassification.

**Table 6: Probit and Logit Results for Job Position**

Job Position	Model Results	
	Probit	Logit
Constant Coefficient	-0.388	-0.614
Years of Service	-0.029	-0.042
Educational Qualification	0.966	1.582
Marital Status	0.003	0.280
Military Course	0.178	0.014
Personal Attributes	0.309	0.490

Source: Authors

**Table 7: Probit and Logit Marginal Effects Results for Job Position**

Job Position	Marginal Effects at Means	
	Probit	Logit
Years of Service	-0.010	-0.110
Educational Qualification	0.366	0.375
Marital Status	0.060	0.066
Military Course	-0.0002	0.003
Personal Attributes	0.107	0.1163

Source: Authors

**Table 8: Classification for Job Position**

Job Position	Model Results	
	Probit	Logit
Correctly Classified	66.67%	66.67%

Source: Authors

## 6. Discussion of Findings

In total, 537 codes were generated, which were then clustered into fifteen into six themes, but are interdependent and interrelated. The results and summary of findings are presented and discussed within the multi-level relational framework.

### 6.1 Micro-Individual Level

#### 6.1.1 Personal Attributes and Agency

It has been found that agency, education, and military courses are regarded enablers, as participants spoke of: "Being eager to learn and advance in my career that led me to doing Officers Formative almost immediately after joining" (SO5, 2020). They pointed out that they studied at own cost, and not only wait to study at state expense. Nine (25%) survey participants and two (50%) interviewees affirmed that lack of agency constrained their career advancement, reporting "I'm actually still not course qualified for ... post, but the fact remains that was self-imposed, I didn't nominate myself for the required courses, because I was not really interested in doing the courses as I felt that it was a waste of time" (KI 2, 2020). Some pointed out the impact of having done the military courses saying "I have not done Senior Staff Course that would be the biggest hurdle for me being promoted is not having Senior Staff Course. I however have declined the course on more than one occasion because of social reasons" (KI 4, 2020). It should be noted, however, that eagerness to learn does not necessarily translate into promotion, because 30% of participants with postgraduate qualifications are still junior officers. Findings from this study support the findings by Hora (2014) who asserts that individual factors such as lack of education, lack of adequate skill, lack of confidence and willingness of women themselves, and lack of years of service, affect women participation in leadership and public institutions.

A study by Tlaiss (2013) affirms that personality characteristics, agency and persistence and desire for advancement are all factors that contribute to career advancement. Betron, Bourgeault, Manzoor, Paulino, Steege, Thompson and Wuliji (2019) dismissed factors such as lack of interest, difference in career commitment, or years of education as reasons for the absence of gender equality in healthcare leadership. Instead the existence of engrained gender bias, lack of opportunity to advance to leadership positions, and a glass ceiling within health-care and

other sectors constrain females from advancing to leadership positions.

#### 6.1.2 The Role of Continuous Professional Development

It was evident that both military and academic qualifications were considered as enablers, as participants spoke of "Obtaining battle handling and Primary Health care" (SO 1, 2020) and "Officers Formative military course advanced my Defence Force career" (SO 2, 2020); "Completing Officers Formative course allowed me to be promoted at the unit I am currently" (SO 6, 2020). The DOD Transformation policy makes provision for equal opportunities and exposure to training for all DOD officials regardless of age, gender, disability, culture. However, qualifications did not guarantee promotion, because of limited managerial positions available in military units.

These views are consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Vong, Ros, Morgan and Theobald (2019) wherein healthcare workers identified capacity and qualifications as enablers. The views of participants seemed contrary as 40% of senior officers held first degrees as well as postgraduate degrees, while 57% of junior officers held first degrees, and 30.8% held postgraduate degrees. However, 27 years into democracy, the SANDF through its Transformation Policy acknowledged that potential barriers in managing diversity could adversely affect the image and working relationships, confidence and work performance and pointed out unfair distribution of developmental and promotional opportunities as one of the potential barriers (DOD, 2014). Yet, one participant in this study reported "Access to promotional courses are [sic] zero" (SO 4, 2020). Conversely, it appears that even though the DOD provides individuals opportunities to attend courses, family commitments appeared as a constraint saying "I have not done Senior Staff Course that would be the biggest hurdle for me being promoted is not having Senior Staff Course. I however have declined the course on more than one occasion because of social reasons" (KI 4, 2020).

They prioritised family responsibilities over promotional courses "I'm actually still not course qualified for ... post, but the fact remains that was self-imposed, I didn't nominate myself for the required courses, because I was not really interested in doing the courses I felt that it was a waste of time" (KI 2, 2020).



### **6.1.3 Deployment**

Deployment, and willingness to participate in organized military exercises and operations were considered as enablers saying "Being open to deployment and attending courses" (JO 21, 2020); "...willingness to do courses, partake in exercises and operations, and I think most importantly, willingness to be a Staff Officer..." (KI 4, 2020). Participants had conflicting views on deployments saying "None. I have deployed five times, from Burundi two times to DRC three times. Last deployment was in 2015/16. No recognition except a medal 10 years after my first deployment. No career advancement or rather payment for post occupied" (JO 5, 2020). Mlambo-Ngcuka and Zewde (2020) point out a blunt implementation gap concerning women's participation in peace processes that exists at the highest levels, although existing evidence suggests that gender perspectives drive the sustainability of peace and security processes, saying women constitute only 4% of signatories of peace agreements, 2.4% of chief mediators, 3.7% of witnesses or observers to peace negotiations, and 9% of negotiation team members. Increasing women's participation in deployments would probably result in complying with legislative prescripts by "getting the numbers right", not necessarily for advancement to higher positions as set out in the AU Gender Policy (2009).

### **6.1.4 Family and Domestic Responsibilities**

It was clear that family responsibilities are viewed as constraints, participants saying "As much as a good father brings to the table in terms of family structure there are just some responsibilities a mother has to take on for her children, especially in the early years. Most woman I have spoken to who deployed or did promotional courses that were mothers, regret the effect it had on their children as they were separated for many months. Many are just not willing to make these sacrifices" (JO 4, 2020); "As a mom it's my choice to put my relationship with my kids first and to rather not progress in rank. It's a choice I happily make, but I am sure many struggle with" (JO 20, 2020).

Conservative social norms and androcentric career pathways pose a challenge for women to find a balance between the pressures and demands from maternity leave, child-rearing, caregiving, domestic responsibilities and leadership (Bismarck, Thomas, Loh, Phelps & Dickinson, 2015:7) as confirmed by one participant: "The time it takes for a woman versus a man to become a manager is many more

years, due to childbearing and their roles as primary caregivers... she fulfils many roles" (JO 8, 2020) of being a mother, wife and career woman (Chinyamurindi, 2016).

Hora (2014) too found that 80.28% of women participants consider domestic responsibilities as a constraint. This was evident from the responses from current participants who reported: "Since having children I haven't been as ambitious about advancing, because I need more time with my kids" (JO 20, 2020); "Once a member has a family, many chose to stagnate their career and opt to forego promotional courses and responsibilities in order to attend to their family needs" (JO 4, 2020).

Although marriage is perceived as a constraint, available data does not seem to support this as marriage is not statistically significant. Discriminatory cultural values, gendered social roles and expectations are constraints to the career advancement of women (Tlairs, 2013). Women are expected by their families and themselves to keep their role of care-giver unchanged, irrespective of their work obligations, whereas men perform activities associated strength and force (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

## **6.2 Meso-Organisational Level**

According to Gouws (2019), the establishment of various structures in coalition with feminist activists and academics were seen as intentional means of enforcing gender equality. Participants reported: "There are also political reasons, quotas based on race and gender put in place that may put some members at a disadvantage" (JO 4, 2020); some reporting "Socio-cultural and organizational conflicts, and gender discrimination" (JO 9, 2020); claiming that "Some people advance to management positions before any experience either based on connections". It has been found that women are fairly distributed amongst managerial positions, with more women than men employed across the departments. It can be said Military Health Institutions in the Western Cape are compliant in terms of legislative prescripts. However, gender diversity in terms of higher managerial positions, such as OC of Unit positions is skewed, as no woman occupies any OC position.

Patriarchy has been identified as a barrier. Dunn (1999) asserts that the integration of women in the military has been interpreted by men as intention to dilute male culture (Van Creveld, 2000). As a result,

women have to prove their masculinity by adopting masculine personality (Sasson-Levy, 2003), yet when women display masculine traits, they face backlash, as they spoke of "military continuing to be a strong patriarchal environment. It at times seems as if females are not acknowledged for their own strengths, but unconsciously required to show more 'male' characteristics to be accepted in the environment, e.g. an assertive female manager is seen as a 'bitch', whilst a male manager is seen as a 'good leader' for the same characteristic" (SO6, 2020). This perception is confirmed by Egnell (2013) who sees the inclusion of women in the military as a reduction of military performance and fighting strength, because it is assumed that women do not have fighting skills. One participant reported affirmatively: "Overall the environment is military and needs more males than females" (SO 8, 2020).

Patriarchy can be attributed to socio-cultural factors, such as that the military is designed for men (Heinecken, 2016). The concentration of women officers in the respective departments of Military Health Institutions in the Western Cape can be attributed to social roles assigned to men as being innately agentic, while women are still concentrated in the occupational roles that require communal qualities (Bryce, 2017).

### 6.3 Macro Level

It was evident that posts and post structures hinders women to progress to managerial positions, as 13 participants say "Overall ... post structure in Western Cape has only x 2 Lt Col posts, meaning very few" (SO 1, 2020); "There is limited posts available to be occupied by junior officers in my context" (JO 12, 2020), some claiming "The selection of a candidate best suited for the position is not always based on merit" (JO 11, 2020). However, when an opportunity for promotion is available, some members decline due to family commitments. In many instances in the military, it is expected of members to relocate when promoted. Although there is a limited number of senior managerial posts, and although some women decline posts for reasons given, it does not explain why there are more men than women occupying senior managerial positions.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Continuous professional development, specifically improving professional qualifications and

attendance of military courses have been cited as enablers. However, due to the limited number of posts, not all members eligible for promotion, can be promoted. In this study, there are only two OCs posts, two RSM posts and twelve OIC/HOD posts, which could explain why women who are eligible could not ascend to management positions. From the results of this study, it is evident that factors on the three levels of the multi-relational framework are interdependent as enablers and constraints for women to advance to senior managerial positions.

There exists opportunity to expand the study to military health institutions in all other provinces to explore the enablers and constraints women encounter in advancing to senior managerial positions, ultimately, gaining a holistic view of the experiences and perceptions of all women at the different institutions across all provinces. This will be determined by means of comparing which enablers and constraints are shared across all provinces, and which are geographically unique to a specific province. The implications in compliance with legislative pre-prescripts will ensure gender parity and recognition of diversity on all senior managerial levels, thus giving women the opportunity to contribute the strategic management of the country, the DOD, the SANDF, its affiliated institutions, inter alia MHIs nationally. Furthermore, it will lead to inclusive decision-making through women and men collaborating in the creation of an environment accommodative of all citizens, which will dispel the myths that certain positions are the exclusive domain of a particular gender.

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# An Analysis of Internal Auditing as a Mechanism for Detecting and Preventing Supply Chain Management Fraud in the Public Sector

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**Abstract:** Amongst some of the challenges confronted in South Africa is wasteful expenditure in the public service, which has resulted in massive loss of public funds. The main problem is systemic lapses when it comes to internal processes. This is particularly seen in relation to the supply chain, where internal lapses are fully expressed. Public financial management policies such as the Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56, 2003) and the Public Finance Management Act (No. 1, 1999) requires that public organisations to implement internal supply chain management controls which include an internal audit as a management control to evaluate the systems of supply chain management and processes. These policies aimed to ensure that processes are followed to minimize lapses and inconsistencies in supply chain management. Despite all of these measures, there has been a huge spike in terms of fraud and therefore the effectiveness of supply chain management needs to be re-evaluated. This paper argues that the major problem has to do with monitoring and evaluating the supply chain management process; and ensuring that processes are followed. The systems, policies and procedures for supply chain management are in place; however, the lapse appears to be in the monitoring thereof. The question, therefore, arises whether internal audit rules are clear, sound and implementable. This paper analyses the effectiveness of internal audits in preventing and detecting fraud in supply chain management. Fraud prevention and detection have been part of the internal audit function's responsibilities, and yet internal auditors do not have sufficient skills to understand the fraud risks as they are not expected to have the proficiency of an individual whose main responsibility is identifying and investigating fraud. The latter is possible if internal auditors could work together with but are not limited to Forensic Auditors; investigators; supply chain officers and risk officers.

**Keywords:** Wasteful expenditure, Supply chain management, Fraud prevention, Fraud detection, Public sector

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## 1. Introduction

This paper builds on and contributes to work in the field of financial management in the public sector environment. Although a number of studies have examined the challenges associated with supply chain management (Lambert & Enz, 2017; Bizana, Naude & Ambe, 2015; Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012; Hamisi, 2011; Peck, 2006), there has not been a strong focus on the major problem which is monitoring the supply chain management process and ensuring that processes are followed. The systems, policies and procedures are in place; however, the lapse appears to be in the monitoring thereof. As such, this study provides additional insights into monitoring the supply chain and that it should not only be the responsibility of the supply chain custodians but internal audit as well. When the supply chain is effectively monitored, not only will it result

in effective supply chain management, but also a reduction in unnecessary expenditure. Bringing in an internal audit can assist in the effectiveness of the supply chain management process. It is also important to assess the effectiveness of internal audits in fraud prevention and detection in supply chain management. Fraud prevention and detection have been part of the internal audit function's responsibilities, and yet internal auditors do not have sufficient skills to understand the fraud risks as they are not expected to have the proficiency of an individual whose main responsibility is identifying and investigating fraud (Mui, 2018). The latter is possible if internal auditors could work together with but are not limited to Forensic Auditors; investigators; supply chain officers and risk officers. Managing fraud is therefore crucial to effective supply chain management. Organisations should have the ability to maintain continuity even in instances where

they are impacted by supply chain fraud. However, research has shown that one in seven organisations do not fully recover from supply chain fraud (Patterson, Goodwin & McGarry, 2018).

The Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56, 2003) prescribes that each and every municipality should have an internal supply chain management, including an internal audit as well. This is in line with the Public Finance Management Act (No. 1, 1999), which provides for the establishment of internal control mechanisms across the public service including the establishment of audit committees. The aim of the PFMA (No. 1, 1999) is to ensure that processes are followed to minimize lapses or/irregularities in supply chain management (Munzhedzi, 2016). The role of internal audit in fraud prevention and detection is not only crucial in the public sector, but in the private sector as well. Fraud impacts the economy as a whole, brings about huge financial losses and compromises economic and social institutions (Tamas, Petrascu & Toader, 2018). The objective of the study thus examines the role of internal audit as well as its effectiveness in detecting supply chain management fraud. It starts by first conceptualising internal auditing, evaluating its effectiveness thereof as well as its role in fraud detection and prevention.

## 2. Problem Statement

According to the World Bank (2017), the best way in which public sector organizations can mitigate fraud is through the maintenance of internal controls. Several literature reviews have highlighted internal audit role in preventing and detecting fraud in the public sector (Motubatse, 2015; World Bank, 2017; Petraşcu & Tieanu, 2014; Coram *et al.*, 2008). However, fraud and corruption remain more prevalent in the public sector of South Africa. This is mainly due to a lack of transparency in supply chain management, poor procurement processes, weaknesses in internal controls and a lack of decisive leadership to address the lack of accountability by ensuring disciplinary action against those who flouted basic processes (Kakwezi & Nyeko, 2019). Hence, the problem addressed by this study is the ineffective use of internal audit in supply chain management as a management control to identify and recommend improvements in supply chain management processes. Although internal audit has a role in improving the governance, internal controls and risk management in the South African public

sector (National Treasury, 2009), there has been no research that has empirically investigated how internal audit can prevent supply chain management fraud in the public sector. While the above problem has been identified, there still exists corruption in supply chain management even after considerable measures to prevent fraud and corruption have been taken into consideration. Therefore, this study will address the apparent gap in the South African literature on the role of internal audits in preventing supply chain management fraud.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Conceptualisation of Internal Auditing

Internal auditing has advanced in recent years and has obtained a very crucial role within organisations. With this development of internal auditing, the internal audit function has a wider responsibility towards the organisation itself and its stakeholders. By providing extended services of assurance and consulting to the organisation, particularly to the audit committee and top management, the internal audit function efficiently contributes to improved organisational governance (Jones, Baskerville, Sriram & Ramesh, 2017; Raiborn, Butler, Martin & Pizzini, 2017). Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes" (Institute of Internal Auditing, 2012; Turetken, Jethefer & Ozkan, 2020). However, recent studies argue that the services provided by internal audit may vary and stakeholders in the profession question whether internal audit is able to fulfil its allocated role at all (Heesakkers, van Noorden, Vermeij-de Vries & de Vos-Vermulm, 2019). Eulerich and Eulerich (2020) indicate in their research that the internal audit role and position can be quite complex when looking at the interests of stakeholders as there are sometimes different and unclear expectations on internal audits. The different internal audit stakeholders follow several specific objectives, which require specific activities of internal audit. For example, the audit committee requires a very high level of assurance and needs an internal audit function that strongly focuses on internal controls, risk management and governance processes. On the other hand, the Chief Executive

Officer (CEO) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) might need an internal audit function that has added consulting or advisory activities which might directly affect the resources of internal audit. Based on the CEO or /CFO and the audit committee requirements, the strategy and activities of the internal audit function have to be aligned with organisational goals. Furthermore, based on the advisory activities of the internal audit function, additional value may be added by improving the processes and information to support decisions of management. However, there may be influencing aspects that can weaken the potential added value of internal audit, more so in the case of an unsuitable positioning within the organisation (Eulerich & Eulerich, 2020; Botha & Wilkinson, 2019). From the above analysis of the concept of internal audit, it is evident that internal audit is an instrument for measuring the efficient and effective functioning of management control, providing support to management in aligning the control mechanisms that assist in achieving goals and objectives of an organization as outlined by Postula, Irodenko and Dubel (2020).

### **3.2 Effectiveness of Internal Audit in Detecting Supply Chain Management Fraud**

Organisations usually incur huge financial losses in cases where an employee has committed fraud. However, it may be very difficult to identify or detect fraud in instances where employees conspire with competitors or external parties. Generally, an organisation is at a high risk of fraud when three (3) aspects of the fraud triangle are present. The three (3) aspects are rationalization of fraud, opportunity to commit fraud as well pressure to commit fraud (Schuchter & Levi, 2016).

Organisations do not always have the resources which allow rapid fraud detection and as a result fraud risk in organisations is often considered immaterial and no preventative measures which could reduce the potential occurrence are taken. However, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in the implementation of an independent internal audit which is a basis for good management. Fraud is a serious problem globally as it usually implies huge financial losses. It is almost impossible to determine the magnitude of losses caused by fraud. This is because it is not known how much fraud is undetected. However, determining the magnitude of losses caused by fraud might assist in alerting management about the estimated

magnitude of losses incurred and thus decide to take action to effectively detect fraud and counteract it (Burzyńska & Jabłońska, 2018).

It is often more difficult and more complicated to manage fraud risk than managing any other type of threat. It requires the need to involve several employees as well as several organizational units. A crucial element of the fraud risk management strategy involves setting up the scope of work for individual units, for example, internal audit, company management and supervisory board. The aim of an internal audit is to support management in the decision-making process. This is done by providing management with regarding the areas or units under investigation (Winiaska, 2005; Burzyńska & Jabłońska, 2018).

Internal audit is an alternative channel of communication which is external to the fraud risk management supervision system. If an organisation has a fraud unit, then the internal audit functions become independent from any pressure from management or the supervisory board. Internal auditors thus embark on numerous activities and various methods to detect fraud. To ensure they are effective in this area, they need to obtain appropriate knowledge in the fraud aspect, investigative methods and applicable legal provisions. There are various programs globally which provide training and certification to fraud detection specialists. If the responsibility of an internal audit is to detect fraud, it can carry out its activities by use of internal personnel, outsourcing or a combination (Mui, 2018; Haron & Khalid, 2018).

According to Mashele and Chuchu (2018:127), the lack of compliance to regulations can have major effects on the supply chain such as manufacturing shutdowns; failure to meet customer demands; poor quality products and service; damage to brand and reputational loss; and loss of market share. Therefore, any irregular practices on the supply chain can easily distract management from business focus as well as negatively affect the productivity of the organisation. It is thus important for organisations to understand the vulnerability of the supply chain to fraud and take proper actions to deter and detect fraudulent activities in the supply chain.

### **3.3 Effectiveness of Internal Audit in Preventing Supply Chain Management Fraud**

Generally, the risk is inevitable in every activity in the organization. Every organizational activity

has some sort of uncertainty that is similar to risk including fraud (Karyon, 2013). Fraud comprises irregularities and illegal acts and is committed for a particular purpose such as deceiving other parties. Karyon (2013) further states that the perpetrators of fraud may be from within and from outside the organization. Fraud thus takes advantage of opportunities that may appear to be dishonest and harms other parties. Handoyo and Bayunitri (2021) explain that fraud prevention eradicates opportunities to commit fraud by establishing and implementing fraud risk management, internal control and honest corporate governance. Improving the effectiveness of internal audit is also a way to minimize fraud in the organization as internal audit helps the organization to accomplish its goals by taking a systematic and disciplined approach to assess and improve risk management, control, and governance processes (Institute of Internal Auditing, 2012).

Fraud risk needs the internal auditor to develop fraud prevention measures. Weak internal controls open the way to fraudulent activities. One of the most activities in fraud prevention is to establish an internal control system in every movement of the organization. A good internal control system ensures that the activities of the organization are effective and efficient (Handoyo & Bayunitri, 2021; Tugiman, 2014). An important step in safeguarding and detecting fraud is a comprehensive internal control system that is implemented thoroughly and regularly monitors the activities of the organization. This implementation can at least reduce management conspiracy with regard to fraud. Thus Priantara (2013) explains that fraud may be prevented by the following methods:

- *Building a good structure of internal control:* The task of management to control the organization's operations becomes progressively heavy as the organization grows or develops. A good internal control structure will thus help ensure that organizational goals are achieved, fraud prevention can be carried out effectively and efficiently as well as securing the organization's assets.
- *Effective control activities:* This can be affected by conducting employee performance reviews, providing accurate and complete information, safeguarding the organization assets and lastly ensuring segregation of duties to avoid duplication of work and authority.
- *Improving the organizational culture:* This can be achieved by implementing the principles of good corporate governance to encourage employees to work efficiently.
- *An effective internal audit function:* Although an internal audit cannot guarantee that fraud will not occur, it is important to use the proficiency of the internal auditors' position carefully so that fraud detection is expected and are able to provide recommendations to prevent fraud.

One of the most effective ways to prevent and mitigate fraud is to improve internal audits. Internal audit assists the organization in implementing significant internal controls by evaluating the level of efficiency and effectiveness thereof and encouraging continuous improvement. Internal auditors are thus the most appropriate custodians to assist in improving the effectiveness of internal controls, risk management and good corporate governance. The responsibility of reducing fraud lies with internal audits. This responsibility is performed by testing the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control system as well as identifying risks. Management in any organization is thus primarily accountable for risk management, while internal auditors are responsible for assisting in the development of the risk management process. (Nawawi & Salin, 2018; Chowdhury & Shil, 2019; Thabit, 2019).

## 4. Research Methodology

A research methodology is a manner in which problems are systematically resolved. It is basically the science of studying how research is done scientifically. Furthermore, the research methodology indicates several steps assumed by a researcher in studying the research problem (Kothari, 2004). This study applied a quantitative approach and data was collected from the Gauteng Provincial Treasury with 28 responses as the study is still in progress. The outline of the research methodology is as follows:

### 4.1 Population and Sample

The sample size in this study was selected using stratified sampling. Shantikumar (2018) states that in stratified sampling, the population is first divided into subgroups (or strata) that all share a similar characteristic. It is used when we might reasonably expect the measurement of interest to vary between the different subgroups, and we want

to ensure representation from all the subgroups. The population includes internal auditors in the Gauteng Provincial Treasury. There are 114 internal auditors in employment at the Gauteng Provincial Treasury and the study targeted all of them for the role they play in Supply Chain Management (SCM). Preliminary results are based on 28 responses.

#### 4.2 Research Paradigm

According to Kaboub (2008:343), there are two major types of research paradigms, the positivist and the non-positivist. Kaboub (2008:343) further states that within the positivist paradigm, real events can be observed and explained logically through analysis. Furthermore, Alessandrini (2012) explains that the positivist favours quantitative data, while the non-positivist favours qualitative data. This study focuses on the positivist paradigm. The reason for using this paradigm is that real events with regard to supply chain management will be observed and explained logically through analysis in a way in which internal audit can be used as a tool for fraud prevention within the supply chain.

#### 4.3 Data Collection

Data collection is a process of gathering information from all the relevant sources to find answers to the research problem, test the hypothesis and evaluate the outcomes. The questionnaire method has been widely acknowledged as a capable tool for evaluating the perceptions of respondents on a particular subject (Dudovskiy, 2018). The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions. This study collected data from a quantitative perspective where data was collected consistently from each participant identified in the study.

##### 4.3.1 The Validity and Reliability of the Data Collection Method

The validity and reliability of an instrument refer to consistency from one measurement to the next and validity to the accurate measurement of the concepts. An instrument is reliable if it supplies consistent results. There are different types of questionnaires and for the purposes of this study, a group-administered questionnaire will be used. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) emphasize that the group-administered questionnaire is one of the most effective instruments for data collection from a group of respondents who can naturally be brought together for the purpose.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis Technique

Data in this study was analysed by following a quantitative research method to quantify the cause and effects that presents the role of internal audit in fraud prevention within the supply chain management in the Gauteng Provincial Treasury. Data was analysed using the 2022 version of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Thus, the researcher analysed survey data based on the sound principle of research questions and interpret the data in line with the research approaches and design.

### 5. Results and Discussions

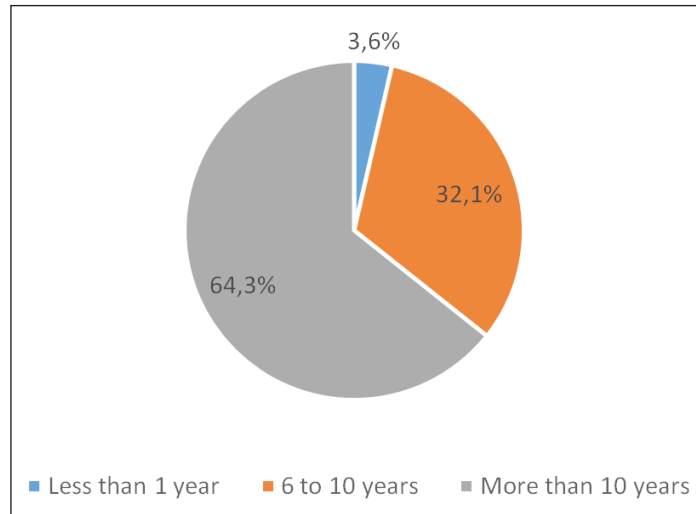
The main objective of this research is to analyse the effectiveness of internal audits in fraud prevention and detection in supply chain management. Data reported in this study are preliminary findings of the ongoing research. The findings are presented from the results of the research questions of the study as follows:

In Figure 1, it can be realised that the majority of the people who completed the questionnaire are more experienced in the internal audit field, with over 10 years of experience. This means that they have a better understanding of the role of internal audits and its effectiveness. Badara and Saidin (2013) in their study indicate that experience is a crucial aspect to consider because auditors' experience influences their professionalism, and this therefore has a critical impact on their efficiency and effectiveness. Further research indicated that when auditors have more experience, they are more knowledgeable about errors, and their knowledge is more accurate on errors. It also suggests that the knowledge advantage is a result of the ability to provide better explanations for audit findings (Gaballa & Ning, 2011). However, other researchers argue that although experience is a good predictor of knowledge, not all forms of knowledge are obtained equally by persons with a given amount of experience. Similarly not all people with the same experience in a particular field are likely to have the same problem-solving capabilities, but rather depend on tasks or activities. This is because different types of knowledge are obtained through different experiences and training (Lehmann & Norman, 2006).

In Figure 2, the main contributing factors to fraud risk in supply chain management as indicated in the

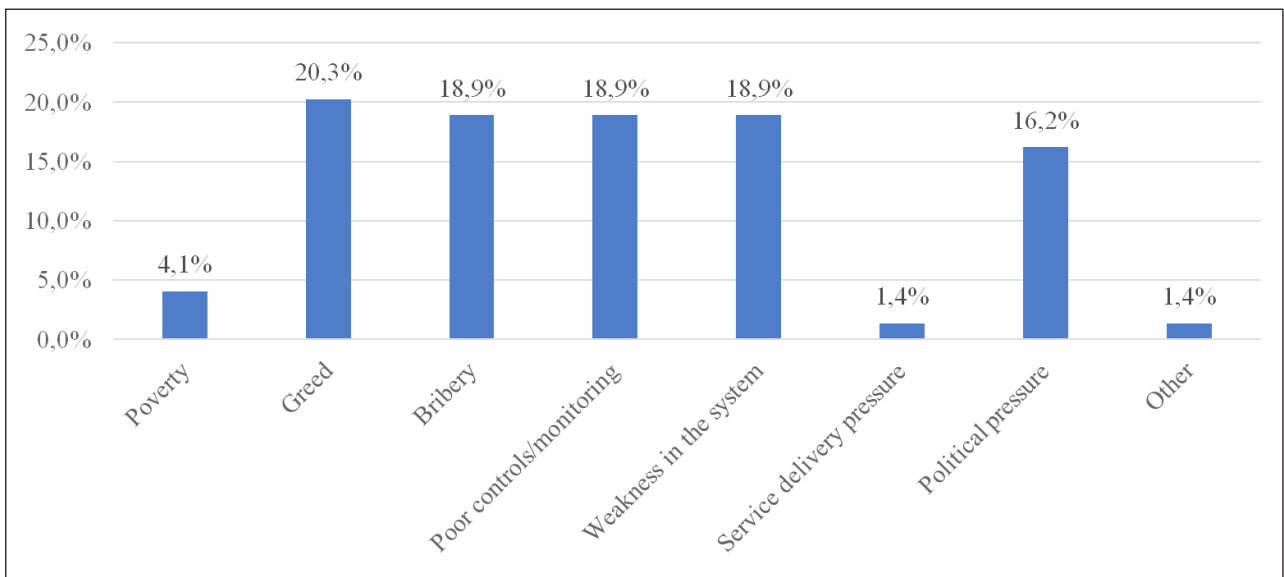


**Figure 1: Years of Experience in the Public Sector**



Source: Authors

**Figure 2: Factors Contributing to Fraud Risk in Supply Chain Management**

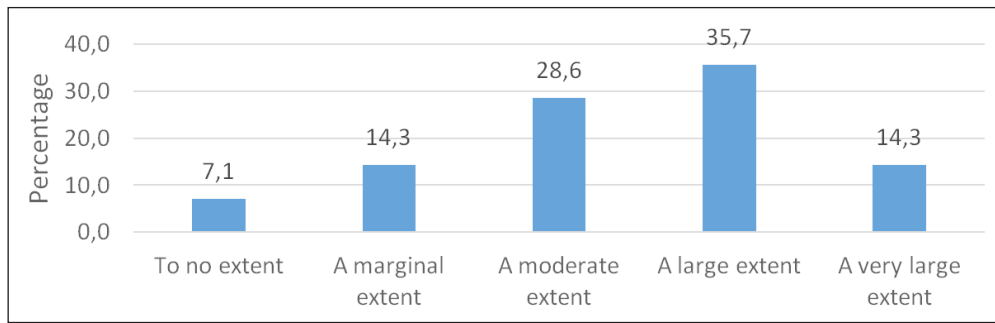


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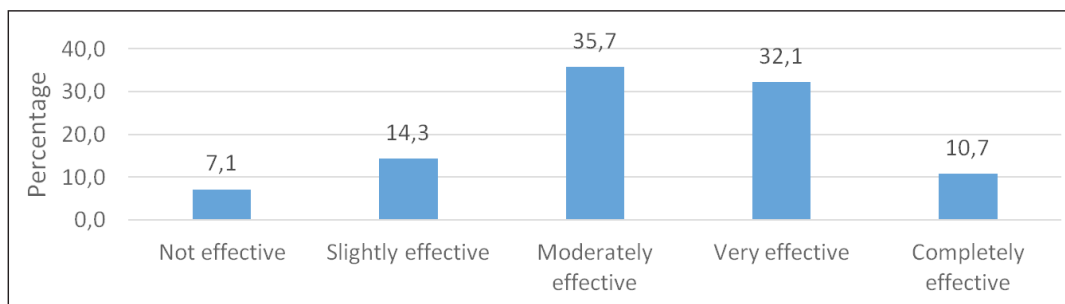
figure are as follows: Greed (20.3%), bribery (18.9%), poor controls/ monitoring (18.9%), weakness in the system (18.9%) these three are the highest contributors to fraud risk in the supply chain management. Bribery and greed are human conditions that may be pre-existent in human beings and could possibly be a result of poor controls/monitoring. This means that bribery and greed happen due to poor controls in place or monitoring thereof. Poor controls also lead to weaknesses in the system. Therefore, understanding the opportunity to commit fraud

enables auditors to identify which fraud schemes an individual can commit, how fraud risks occur when the controls do not function as expected by management. Pressure in this analysis is political and service delivery pressure and the opportunity to commit fraud thus refer to the weakness in the system where an individual has the power or ability to exploit and commit fraud (Varma & Khan, 2016).

Figure 3 and Figure 4 respond to the questions of, to what extent does the Internal Audit function have

**Figure 3: Capacity of Internal Audit to Identify Fraud in Supply Chain Management**

Source: Authors

**Figure 4: Effectiveness of Internal Audit in Identifying Fraud in Supply Chain Management**

Source: Authors

the capability to identify fraud in supply chain management; and is internal audit effective in identifying fraud in supply chain management? According to the analysis, the internal audit function has the capability to identify fraud in supply chain management to a large extent (35.7%). Furthermore, the study indicated that internal audit is moderately effective in identifying fraud in supply chain management (35.1%). This percentage is higher than the ineffectiveness thereof at (7.1%).

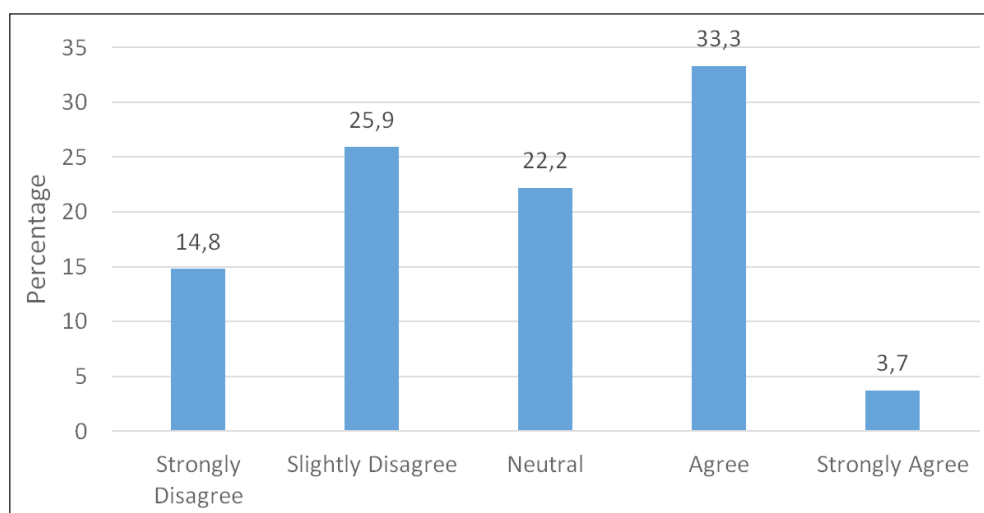
To ensure that the internal function is effective in this area, they need to obtain relevant knowledge in the fraud aspect, investigative techniques and relevant legal provisions. As stated above, there are various programs globally which provide training and certification to fraud detection specialists. If the responsibility of an internal audit is to detect fraud, it can carry out its activities by use of internal personnel, outsourcing or a combination (Mui, 2018; Haron & Khalid, 2018). The purpose of an internal audit is also to support management in the decision-making processes by providing information on the functioning of the areas under investigation (Burzyńska & Jabłońska, 2018).

In Figure 5, the study indicates that internal audit is effective in preventing fraud in supply chain management (33.3%). This percentage is higher than the ineffectiveness thereof at (14.8% strongly disagree). Handoyo and Bayunitri (2021) explain that fraud prevention eradicates opportunities to commit fraud by establishing and implementing fraud risk management, internal control and honest corporate governance. Improving the effectiveness of internal audit is also a way to minimize fraud in the organisation as internal audit helps the organisation to accomplish its goals by taking a systematic and disciplined approach to assess and improve risk management, control, and governance processes (Institute of Internal Auditing, 2012).

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study argued at the beginning of this article that it contributes to work in the field of financial management in the public sector environment. The findings that the study reveals have presented that the organisations should follow the prescribed framework that provides a uniform execution and practice of SCM in the local government and public

**Figure 5: Effectiveness of Internal Audit in Preventing Fraud in Supply Chain Management**



Source: Authors

sector environment in order to minimize the risks in the SCM. While this study does not offer a conclusive answer to the question of preventing fraud and corruption, it does provide best practices in organisations to establish uniform controls and procedures for ensuring compliance, reduction of errors and maintaining consistency in the application of regulations. The research raises important questions about whether internal audits alone can minimize fraud in organisations as well as whether the monitoring of supply chain management can yield an effective supply chain management process.

As a result of conducting this research, the study proposes that SCM practitioners should be consistent on regulatory issues; work consistently with internal audits to identify indicators of fraud as well as prevent fraud. The internal audit's role is not to investigate fraud, but to evaluate risks and provide reasonable assurance that the organisation has taken adequate measures with regard to internal controls and that risks are mitigated and reduced.

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# South Africa's Foreign Policy During COVID-19: Evaluating Prospects of Establishing the BRICS Vaccine Centre and Intra-BRICS Cooperation

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**Abstract:** The 13<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit held in 2021 affirmed the need for intra-BRICS cooperation to implement vaccine collaboration including the establishment of the BRICS Vaccine Centre, which was initially proposed by South Africa in 2018. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the need to re-assess South Africa's foreign policy objectives in BRICS in terms of vaccine diplomacy, and implementation of the BRICS vaccine centre to its benefit. The article determines whether South Africa effectively cast its foreign policy net during COVID-19 through the BRICSs alliance. This paper utilises one of South Africa's four levels of engagement through its 2012 BRICS strategy which is to strengthen intra-BRICS cooperation from a more organizational perspective. The methodology implemented examines whether South Africa can strategically leverage intra-BRICS vaccine cooperation through COVID-19 vaccine capacity and political collaboration. Given the divergent interests of the BRICS grouping, this paper argues that pragmatism may be the best foreign policy option in navigating options for implementing a BRICS Vaccine Centre, which can act as a lever to promote South Africa's interests.

**Keywords:** Vaccine, intra-BRICS, COVID-19, Foreign policy, Cooperation, Capacity

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## 1. Introduction

South Africa's foreign policy has long been influenced by the universal foreign policy principle and the strengthening of relations with all countries particularly in African countries and the Global South. According to the 2011 White Paper on South Africa's Foreign Relations, *Building a Better World: The Diplomacy of Ubuntu*, there are two key tenets that inform South Africa's international engagement which are Pan-Africanism and South-South solidarity. The second tenet is based on cooperation amongst countries in the Global South designed to promote a mutual position on political, economic, social and human rights issues (Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 2011). In 2010 South Africa joined Brazil, the Russian Federation, India and China to form an economic block termed BRICS. Joining BRICS aligned within South Africa's objectives of cooperation amongst countries aimed at addressing political and economic rights (Institute of Security Studies, 2017). The BRICS key major interest is premised on the international agenda that has been dominated by Western priorities and capacity for action on issues such as the role of the Bretton Woods institutions and the failure to reform the UN Security Council (Spence, 2016).

According to President Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa's membership in BRICS should be viewed in the context of "recasting" South Africa's international relations after decades of isolation during the apartheid era as a pariah state (Harvard International Review, 2019). Recasting the foreign policy net was framed by the late former President Nelson Mandela. Writing 2019 on the eve of South Africa's first democratic election, Mandela argued that, '*all nations will have boldly to recast their nets if they are to reap any benefit from international affairs in the post-Cold War era*' (Mandela, 1993) In essence, South Africa's foreign policy had to be far more strategic in its drive to foster closer engagement with emerging economic powerhouses such as Brazil and a strengthening of the soft relations that had been maintained with India and China (Partnered Content, 2021).

Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a need to re-examine the country's foreign policy objectives in BRICS. Despite BRICS pledges to enforce global governance and economic reforms, the lukewarm cooperation on COVID-19 vaccines manufacturing, distribution and access has led to South Africa and its peers missing an important political and economic opportunity to demonstrate their ability to mount a strong collective response to a far-reaching global crisis

(Mpongose, 2021). The 2021 BRICS summit, in an effort to demonstrate joint public interest, affirmed the need for intra-BRICS cooperation to promote vaccine development. This initiative began in 2018 when South Africa proposed the establishment of a joint BRICS vaccine research centre which became part of the BRICS' Johannesburg Declaration (South African Government Declaration, 2018). Given the state of health infrastructure and pharmaceutical manufacturing capabilities and development in South Africa and the continent, the establishment of this health institution will be of great significance and benefit to the African continent. However, unlike setting up a finance institution such as the New Development Bank, implementing a vaccine research centre is a complex task that requires significant and sustained funding, infrastructure such as manufacturing plants, cold rooms, and other resources such as uninterrupted power supply, Information Communication Technology (ICT), skilled resources, and political will. Implementation of the BRICS Vaccine Research Centre in South Africa begs the question as whether this is a practical proposal for the country's foreign policy interests given the current domestic climate of low economic growth. It is within this context that South Africa's adoption of the BRICS cooperation concept needs to be examined in the light of COVID-19 as it relates to the issues of capacity, economic relevance and political will.

Pertinent questions have to be asked about the extent to which BRICS can collaborate on a global vaccine or research centre to counteract viruses. This article examines whether the South African government's foreign policy can be strategically leveraged for intra-BRICS vaccine cooperation based on BRICS COVID-19 vaccine capacity and political collaboration. The paper is broken into five parts focusing on the introduction, background to South Africa's foreign Policy and BRICS, domestic realities of South Africa's vaccine capacity, BRICS capacity and collaboration during COVID-19, and whether South Africa strategically cast its net during COVID-19. The paper utilises one of South Africa's four levels of engagement through its 2012 BRICS strategy which is to strengthen intra-BRICS cooperation from a more organizational perspective (Harvard International Review 2019).

## 2. Background

South Africa's dynamics within BRICS are complex as the relationships are not necessarily complementary,

but continuously nuanced with different political objectives and interests. For example, South Africa does little trade with Russia, while all the other three BRICS members are all major trade competitors in South Africa and the continent (Johnson, 2015). In order to assess South African foreign policy interests in relations to COVID-19 dynamics over the past two years and the establishment of the BRICS Vaccination Centre it is important to unpack the significance of its foreign policy post 1994. The late President Nelson Mandela touted human rights as the core concern of international relations. From a South-South perspective, President Mbeki's government became actively involved in African development and India-Brazil-South Africa Alliance (IBSA) relations designed to increase cooperation and collectively pursue a new global order amongst them. China's position despite its recognition was relatively neglected by Pretoria (Alden & Wu, 2016) as Mbeki also distrusted China and viewed it as a potential New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) competitor on the continent.

Under President Jacob Zuma, IBSA became a thing of the past, and BRICS became the new kid on the block. A BRICS partnership was of political interest to President Zuma's foreign policy which preferred diplomatic engagement with the East as this suited the domestic agenda of shifting away from neo-liberal "White Monopoly Capital" linked to the West (Institute of Security Studies, 2017). Countries such as China not only offered economic options, but ideological ties and political contexts. Unlike idealistic Mbeki, Zuma who was a realist had limited interest in African politics or the G-8 (Spence, 2016). He instead focused on keeping his domestic interests of state capture in check, and leaned towards Russia and China.

Ramaphosa's foreign policy began with a focus on the establishment of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFTCA), which he viewed as a business platform for African countries to trade among themselves and reap the benefits of the tariff-free area. The AFTCA establishment was followed by his action oriented role as the AU President in 2020. In this role, he helped launch the Africa Medical Supplies Platform (AMSP) as a single online marketplace to enable the supply of COVID-19-related medical equipment in Africa (South African Government, 2020). However, President Ramaphosa the country's economic crisis have forced his government to ensure that domestic issues are inter-linked with foreign policy issues

where possible. This is demonstrated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic where international decisions were made to address domestic interests. In essence, one would argue that unlike Mbeki, Ramaphosa's foreign *policies* are designed with the aim of achieving complex domestic issues first, followed by a more balanced and realistic approach to international affairs (Strategic Comments, 2021).

### 3. South Africa's Vaccine Capacity Realities

South Africa's pharmaceutical sector is currently the largest drug market in Africa, with the fifth highest expenditure on pharmaceuticals per capita. The total market value in 2015 was estimated at R44.0bn with R34.2bn (86.7%) attributable to the private health-care market and R6.8bn (13.3%) to the public sector (Rayment, 2020). The country boasts the fifth-highest worldwide pharmaceutical expenditure per capita (Benavides & Riley, 2019). Moreover, in 2021, South Africa's Afrigen Biologics used the publicly available sequence of Moderna Inc's (MRNA.O) mRNA COVID-19 vaccine to make its own version of the shot, which is also the first mRNA vaccine designed, developed and produced at laboratory scale on the African continent (Benavides & Riley, 2019). Furthermore, in terms of government based manufacturing, South Africa does have world-class local vaccine-production facilities in the form of the Cape Town-based company, Biovac, which was created in 2003 in partnership with the private sector as a way to "establish local vaccine manufacturing capability" (Ndivhuwo, 2021).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed South Africa's limitations in pharmaceutical manufacturing. Biovac, along with other South African pharmaceutical companies, have not produced vaccine shots from scratch because they have not engaged in the production of active pharmaceutical ingredient (API), which is the raw material necessary to manufacture a vaccine or drug from scratch (Oxford Business Group, 2014). API ingredients are the active substances in any diagnostic test, treatment or vaccine that make it work. Consequently, South African producers import 95% of API's, including all of those used in the production of generic ART's, mainly supplied by India and China, as well as packaging materials and other inputs (Oxford Business Group, 2014). By 2015 pharmaceutical imports accounted for 85% of the country's total (two way) pharmaceutical trade, despite the depreciation of rand against global currencies.

To date, the gap between imports and exports of pharmaceutical products continues to grow and imports are growing at an even faster rate than exports. Needless to say, compared to China and India, South Africa, does little local manufacturing, and is currently mostly confined to assembling, and into some lower-end products. South Africa had to contract private companies like Johnson & Johnson, whose shots were produced locally by Aspen Pharmacare Holdings, and Pfizer (Bloomberg, 2021), demonstrating a need to either fast track Biovac's manufacturing capacity or push the establishment of the BRICS vaccine centre for domestic and regional objectives.

South Africa's domestic capacity to manufacture vaccines is also severely affected by lack of energy due to power outages dubbed "loadshedding" by its State Owned Electricity supplier, ESKOM. Lack of maintenance of existing power stations, failure to successfully introduce new infrastructure, poor management and allegations of corruption are some of the suggested reasons (Niselow, 2021). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, SA already had a strained healthcare system, largely owing to inefficient financial management, a disparity in the distribution of resources, a quadruple burden of disease (Pooja, 2015), and electricity shortages that crippled the health industry and the economy. What then do South Africa's infrastructural problems mean for the establishment of an institution such as a vaccine centre which is a very high tech industry? Notwithstanding the fact that fixing ESKOM has become a bureaucratic process that could linger even after completion of the BRICS vaccine centre if it was established in the near future.

From a domestic perspective, South Africa would probably benefit from the BRICS Vaccine cooperation which would probably increase the manufacturing of its own national institutions such as Biovac. To date, at a push, Biovac could manufacture 30-million doses of vaccines per year using multi-dose vials. But this number hinges on the type of technology used to produce some vaccines and the willingness of foreign manufacturers to do "technology transfer" as part of licensing their product for local production (Sulcas, 2021). For instance, in 2021, Biovac began implementing a process to manufacture Sanofi Pasteur's six-in-one jab, Hexaxim, with a plan to fill four million doses of Hexaxim by year end. However, this is tiny compared to the Serum Institute of India's huge capacity and to Aspen's reported capacity of

300 million vaccine doses a year (Dorfman & Kirsten, 2021). The bottom line is that unless South Africa's domestic infrastructure challenges are resolved, accomplishing the country's foreign policy objective of intra-BRICS cooperation thereby elevating South Africa's health and manufacturing status nationally and regionally through the BRICS vaccine centre will not succeed.

Lastly, South Africa's vaccine capacity has been heavily aligned with that of the West. In 2021, a Sisonke study was rolled out by the South African Medical Research Council, which demonstrated that Johnson and Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine was safe for use. According to the National Department of Health, South Africa has received a total of 60 606 060 COVID-19 vaccines – 39 272 220 Pfizer doses and 21 333 840 J&J doses, which is inclusive of Sisonke doses (Malan & Grant, 2022). The Pfizer doses include donations from the United States which total 7 443 540 (Malan *et al.*, 2022). Besides the vaccine doses, there is clear collaboration to implement the vaccine processes with the South African health department, in collaboration with the US government into health districts with the lowest vaccination rates, specifically in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, where immunisation rates in some areas are below 25% (Malan *et al.*). To date, there has been no vaccine collaboration roll-out with some of South Africa's BRICS partners such as China and India. This is despite South Africa's emphasis on South-South cooperation as a necessary process to entrench BRICS-intra cooperation. One could argue that the South African government was practising realism to protect the health of its people as there were valid scientific concerns related to the BRICS COVID-19 vaccines Sinopharm, and Sputnik V whose results of large-scale human trials, have recently been published and peer-reviewed in the prestigious Lancet medical journal showing an impressive 91.6 efficacy for the vaccine (Ullah & Chance, 2021). Moreover, it could also be argued that South Africa's vaccine diplomacy has been aligned with the US in particular for decades as evidenced with the HIV-AIDS testing, treatment and funding that have jointly taken place for years (Stevens, 2021). Due to more than 30 years of joint biomedical research, the US-South Africa long term health partnership made it possible to quickly implement COVID-19 vaccine trials (Ullah *at al.*, 2021). Where then will the BRICS Vaccine Centre fit into South Africa's pharmaceutical plans when this type of vaccine agenda is dominated by the US? It is not clear how South Africa

would navigate this balance between the West, East, and South, and it may actually be more practical to collaborate with the US instead on this endeavour.

#### 4. BRICS Capacity and Political Collaboration with South Africa During COVID-19

South Africa is not the only BRICS country grappling with vaccine production at a national and global scale. Furthermore, while all BRICS countries are currently engaged in vaccine development, this is not uniform across the countries. Russia was the first country to register a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine named Sputnik V for use before any other nation. However, Russia was unable to engage in mass scale production for a while due to its lack of pharmaceutical infrastructure (Ullah *et al.*). Even where pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity exists, rapid production of COVID-19 vaccines at sufficient scale also depends on extensive transfer of technology which Russia did not have at a large scale and ended up relying on China to assist at some stage. Brazil also leaned on China by partnering with China's Sinovac Biotech Ltd. to produce the CoronaVac shot, labelled the ButanVac (Pinto, 2021). India on the other hand, has been in a better position as a leading exporter of generic drugs across the world depends on China for more than two-thirds of its bulk drug needs (Pinto, 2021). Like South Africa, it is now preparing to produce its own mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccine which would be a scientific breakthrough (Quiroz-Gutierrez, 2021).

China is the main exception amongst the BRICS countries as the world's largest supplier of APIs also known as bulk drugs (Kurian & Kapur, 2020). The other BRICS members depend on China to engage in pharmaceutical production which emphasizes the need for China's leadership in this vaccine centre establishment. Given its global manufacturing status, it is *sine qua non* that the centre will not become effective without China's capacity and support. This section examines the BRICS capacity and politics of vaccine production in relation to South Africa's national interests. Brazil is not discussed as there was zero collaboration between the two countries on this matter.

##### 4.1 South Africa – Russia

*South Africa's ties to Russia* stretch back to the 1960s when the former Soviet Union gave support to



anti-apartheid freedom fighters. However, despite their strong ties, on October 2021, South Africa's Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) rejected Russia's Gamaleya Centre manufactured COVID-19 vaccine, citing some safety concerns (Redaction African News, 2021). South African officials pointed to two failed research studies testing an HIV vaccine also using Adenovirus Type 5, which found men who were vaccinated had a higher risk of being infected with HIV. The regulators said they had asked the Russian makers of Sputnik V to provide data proving the vaccine's safety in a country with high rates of HIV but that "the applicant was not able to adequately address (their) request" (Redaction Africa News, 2021).

Russia on the other hand, due to the global backlash regarding its invasion of Ukraine, recently reminded South Africa of its support for the fight against apartheid, including financial and military training to the African National Congress (ANC) and its armed wing, *uMkhonto we Sizwe*. The Russian foreign ministry in South Africa also added how it was also the first to come to the aid of the South African people at a time when the West on the other hand had implemented travel bans against the country due to its discovery of the Omicron variant. Russia's recent reminder for its COVID-19 support to South Africa is interesting, as it raises the politics of diplomatic payback. Needless to say, President Ramaphosa's BRICS collaborative research call was his first on December 10, 2021, was more in reaction to the international flight bans as he felt betrayed by his perceived Western partners, that he even declined to attend US President Joe Biden's virtual Summit for Democracy in December 2021 (Fabricus, 2021).

President Ramaphosa's request for the BRICS countries to conduct joint research in December 2021 also revealed South Africa's foreign policy position on the BRICS Vaccine Centre as the South African Minister of International Relations, Dr Naledi Pandor stated on December 14, 2021, that the cooperation was growing amongst the BRICS countries as they had invited their BRICS scientists to collaborate on research, share data and information on COVID-19 with a focus on Omicron. The Minister also added that "*South Africa is currently the host of the BRICS Vaccine Research Centre and the research on the Omicron variant will form part of the centre's initiatives*" (Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 2021). Interestingly, no explanations were given as to why Brazil, India and China did not

respond or provide any reasons for their scientists not participating in the intra-collaborative research on Omicron.

## 4.2 South Africa – India

Unlike China, Brazil, and Russia, the Indian and South African vaccine producers entered technology-centred agreements with their Western partners, but did not own any COVID-19 related patents. In an attempt to address this issue, even before concluding these agreements, the two countries' governments led a push at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in October 2020 to waive intellectual-property rights for COVID-19 technologies and vaccines (Mpungose, 2021). But the other BRICS foreign ministers did not collectively support this proposal until June 2021, eight months after it was first submitted. China and Russia had previously remained silent on the issue, while Brazil, as BRICS expert Karin Costa Vazquez notes, was the only member of the group openly to oppose this idea, in direct alignment with former US President Donald Trump. Brazil's position became more supportive only in early 2021, after US President Joe Biden's administration announced its support for the proposed IP waiver (Mpungose, 2021). Brazil's support of the US over its BRICS partners begs the question as to the relevance of the alliance given its objectives to promote global governance reforms of institutions such as the WTO which are Global North dominated.

In 2021, President Ramaphosa constantly reiterated his call for the WTO to finalise deliberations on the waiver on COVID-19 vaccines and treatments so that developing economies would be able to access and manufacture their own vaccines (Business Tech, 2021). From a foreign policy perspective while the BRICS alliance only began supporting South Africa and India on the proposed IP waivers much later in the game, this process demonstrated a push towards South Africa's political objectives of pharmaceutical production from a domestic and regional angle.

Along with the cooperation for IP waivers, South Africa and India cooperated on a business arrangement for COVID-19 vaccines that demonstrated a lack of intra-BRICS organisational cooperation. South Africa ordered at least 1.5 million shots of the vaccine from the Serum Institute of India (SII) which had emerged as a key vaccine supplier. During

the delivery of the vaccines, the South African Parliament's Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation, through its Chair, Ms Tandi Mahambehlala, extended *"gratitude to the government of India, as a true friend in need and a trusted partner in the BRICS for prioritising South Africa to receive its first batch of the vaccine to fight the pandemic"* (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2021). This was despite the fact red flags were raised prior to the delivery regarding the sale price. South Africa bought doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine at a price \$5.25 of (€4.32) while according to a Belgian Minister, European Union members paid \$2.16 (€1.78) for the doses (Sullivan, 2021). In other words, South Africa's AstraZeneca's costs were 2.5 times higher each than most European countries as they were nearly two and a half times the amount paid by most European countries.

The high price costs between the two BRICS countries were followed by a disastrous arrival of a million doses as they came a month before their expiry date (Bhatia, 2021) which according to the South Africa's Health department, they were unaware, and only able to identify the expiry date of April upon arrival. The South African government engaged the Serum Institute of India to exchange of the expiring stock and failed to secure an agreement on resolving the matter. Somehow, it seemed that communication between the two BRICS countries even from a political level failed to address the impasse. South Africa also moved to suspend another 500 000 vaccinations from India following a small clinical trial showing that the shot offered minimal protection against mild to moderate illness from the 501Y.V2 coronavirus variant that was dominant in the country (Reuters, 2021).

This business cooperation debacle between the two BRICS countries was unfortunate, but also questions that assumption of good business practices expected to transpire between South-South countries versus the West which has been tagged as exploitative. BRICS is regarded a continuation of the tradition the historic Bandung Conference to galvanise their economic and political collective muscle in the context of the Cold War and assert themselves in the international system (State of the Nation, 2018). South Africa's foreign policy failed to make headway in this debacle and was forced to cut its economic losses by selling the vaccines to the African Union. What is the likelihood of this saga replaying itself through the establishment of a BRICS Vaccine Center

which requires participation from manufacturing institutions such as the Serum Institute?

### 4.3 South Africa – China

South Africa's engagement with BRICS is dominated by its trade relations with China. However, the China-South Africa case is very interesting as it demonstrates how South Africa was not easily swayed into using China's vaccines which were finally approved for roll out at the tail end of the Omicron virus crisis on February 2022 (Maromo, 2022). South Africa's decision not to roll out China's vaccine in South Africa is significant as it is the main country with the capacity to implement the BRICS Vaccine Centre in South Africa. Furthermore, that China's contribution is premised on its vaccine diplomacy. Vaccine diplomacy is the use of vaccines to increase a country's diplomatic relationship and political influence of other countries (Allison, 2020). China has made no secret that vaccine distribution is wrapped up in its broader geopolitical ambitions. In fact, it has even explicitly included vaccine distribution in its broader Health Silk Road initiative, which aims to bolster China's international soft power (Gopaldos, 2021). However, despite diplomatic pressure from China, South Africa remained pragmatic by pursuing its own foreign policy interests which did not necessarily always align with China.

In 2020, the Chinese Embassy in South Africa through BRICS public health cooperation, stated that it would promote the development of the BRICS Vaccine R&D Centre, advance collective vaccine research and trials of BRICS countries, including China and South Africa, set up plants, authorise production and recognise each other's standards (Fabricus, 2020). During the November BRICS Summit in 2021, China's President Xi indicated that China had designated its own national centre, to support the development of the BRICS Vaccine R&D centre (Fabricus, 2020). He also confirmed that while Chinese companies were already working with their Russian and Brazilian partners on Phase 3 of clinical trials of vaccines, his government is prepared to have cooperation with South Africa and India as well (Fabricus, 2020). However, SAHPRA conditionally approved that the CoronaVac COVID-19 vaccine manufactured by Sinovac Life Sciences of China would be used in South Africa under specific conditions in 2021 (Maromo, 2020). The conditions were based on the safety, quality and efficacy data submitted by the vaccine manufacturer to SAHPRA between 22 March

2021 and 22 June 2021 (Maromo, 2020). As indicated earlier, to date, Sinopharm has not been rolled-out extensively for use in South Africa like Johnson and Johnson and Pfizer. More than likely, even the vaccine deal the AU brokered with Johnson & Johnson was probably influenced by South Africa's leadership when President Ramaphosa served as AU president in 2020 (Stronski, 2021).

China did not give up easily on promoting the use of its vaccine in South Africa, and tried another diplomatic tactic through its People's Liberation Army (PLA), which as part of its vaccine donations to militaries in 28 countries, offered 300,000 free doses of the CoronaVac jab manufactured by Sinovac to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) (Fabricus, 2021). According to Fabricus, the PLA's COVID-19 health outreach contributions to foreign militaries were to "promote and further deepen links between the PLA and recipient military elites in those countries" (Fabricus, 2021). However, it seems in South Africa this process backfired as the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) Director of Corporate Communication denied any plan to use Sinovac vaccine in order to complete the vaccination roll-out for the military community (Fabricus, 2021). Moreover, the Corporate Director added that since CoronaVac was never part of the national vaccine roll-out, they could not acknowledge the existence of an offer to donate the vaccine to the army (Fabricus, 2021), making China's vaccine diplomacy null and void.

Finally, the China vaccine case with South Africa is tricky as both countries are heavily pursuing the same continental market. In 2020, Chinese Ambassador Chen in South Africa indicated China would give full play to South Africa's important role as a bridge for BRICS cooperation with Africa (Fabricus, 2021). This statement was made despite the fact China has already infiltrated the continent through its own direct bridge of COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing which has been extended to African countries. For example, in 2021, China has signed a deal with Morocco to start using the established facilities of a Moroccan pharmaceutical firm to make 5 million doses a month of Sinopharm vaccines for continental and global production (Caiyu, 2021). This is China's second vaccine production line in Africa after one in Egypt which announced that it had produced the first 1 million doses of vaccines developed by China's Sinovac, using its local facilities, with the daily output reaching 300,000 doses. If

the supply of raw materials is sufficient, daily output is expected to double (Caiyu, 2021). China's pledge to work through South Africa, while pushing its own interests through setting up continental vaccine centres, demonstrates its drive to promote the health Silk Road and public good through its soft power tactics. Where then does the BRICS Vaccine Centre fit in China's vaccine diplomatic angle, and what does China's manufacturing capacity from a geopolitical perspective mean for the BRICS Vaccine Centre implementation in South Africa? Suffice to say, it is obvious that the centre will not become effective without China's capacity which may not positively impact South Africa's national interests.

## **5. Has South Africa Strategically Used its Foreign Policy to Promote Vaccines Cooperation Among BRICS Countries?**

South Africa's foreign policy of strengthening intra-BRICS cooperation from a more organizational perspective has been a dominant theme at BRICS summits over the years. BRICS has argued that what unites them is a common commitment to multilateralism and the principles of mutual respect, sovereign equality, inclusiveness, and strengthened collaboration (Department of International Relations and Cooperation, 2020). Currently, the most important aspect of BRICS' cohesion is its geopolitical outlook. BRICS has been pursuing an anti-hegemonic notion based on classic geopolitical power politics and relations underpinned by military strength, economic performance, diplomatic and political influence, and soft power.

This paper has demonstrated the challenges the South Africa faces with regards to casting its foreign policy net for intra-BRICS vaccine cooperation inclusive of the establishment of the BRICS Vaccine Research Centre. Russia and China, and at some point India tried to engage in spreading out their vaccine production market as far as possible, while South Africa and Brazil were focused on fast tracking their COVID-19 vaccine production entries in their regions. However, COVID-19 demonstrated a clash of interests that went against some of the BRICS objectives of intra collaboration, solidarity, and reform of global governance institutions. The BRICS countries were at first not only unanimous in their support of India and South Africa in their diplomatic quest for the patent waiver at the WTO, but their lack of collaboration spoke volumes. Particularly when China emphasized that its objectives are

to assist the continent through vaccines production, and yet would not endorse a measure that would have assisted Africa in that same process. The India-South Africa AstraZeneca case also demonstrated that BRICS solidarity is not always practical as the Indian government left the South Africans to fend out for themselves with the Serum Institute of India after forking out hefty sums of money for expiring vaccinations. Notwithstanding that China's promise to work with South Africa to implement vaccine manufacturing was questionable when it has already begun implementing vaccine pharmaceutical production on the continent. South Africa needs to question what does China's manufacturing capacity from a geopolitical perspective mean for the BRICS vaccine Centre particularly in relations to China's foreign policy interests of its Health Silk Road and "public good" concept. Especially when it is China that would be the main driver in terms of vaccine capacity? Moreover, given that all the BRICS countries have decided to start developing their own vaccines for redistribution on the continent, then which vaccine will be produced in this BRICS Vaccine Centre? Suffice to say, pharmaceutical manufacturing is about economics is a big business and South Africa needs to examine China's interests from that angle. There is also the matter of profits from the BRICS vaccine centre which will need to be divided up amongst the members once it is up and running. Unlike the New Development Bank, the pharmaceutical industrial complex is a billion dollar business linked to many other global players?

South Africa should also reconsider its branding as a gateway to the continent when in fact it is China which has become the economic link to Africa. China has even become a more accepted Brother or Sister by Pan-Africanists on the continent. There is absolutely no way that the BRICS vaccine Centre could benefit South Africa's domestic and global agenda given its limited influence compared to China. Perhaps South Africa should promote the BRICS Vaccine Centre as a tool of Pan-Africanism for the BRICS countries, which through China's manufacturing capacity could promote the continental pharmaceutical industry from a regional perspective thereby which would also strengthen South Africa's agency through a numbers approach.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite South Africa's strong trade relations with China, under Ramaphosa regime, it seems West

pharmaceutical industries under Biden have also made great inroads in South Africa, and started soft power tactics. The recent announcement that Johnson & Johnson has granted South African Pharmaceutical Company, Aspen, an intellectual property license to produce its vaccines under the new brand name, "Aspenovax" is an example of the soft power at play. Based on the BRICS interactions over the past two years, will South Africa therefore be better off casting its foreign policy net with its pharmaceutical partners in the West than the BRICS grouping? Unlike Zuma who adored the East, or Mbeki, who shunned China to a degree Ramaphosa needs to continue to play his realist balancing act between BRICS and the West to find solutions that address the country's domestic issues that would tie in with manufacturing global interests. In practice, considerations of financial, commercial, political and health interests overtake alliances if they are not able to deliver as was the India case. Realists consider the survival of the state as the most important thing which is what President Ramaphosa has also been grappling with. Finally South Africa to be successful at implementing its foreign policy measures such as establishing a BRICS Vaccine Centre, it needs to urgently address its social and economic problems. Until the government deals with the domestic issues that are affecting the country's foreign relations, such as its energy crisis, Pretoria will only have limited success in recasting its net and achieving its foreign policy objectives.

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# The Broken Relationship Between the Government Machinery and its People: A Reality or a Myth?

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to clarify the breakdown of relationship between government machinery and its people as far as service delivery is concern. Service delivery is a complex and difficult task in South Africa. When politicians during local and national elections engage in elections campaign, quite often the politicians are bombarded by service delivery demands from the citizens. In turn, the politicians make elections promises to satisfy the service delivery demand of the citizens should they be elected to office. After, the election season has, the politicians elected to office rarely interact with the citizens to deliver the election promises. This can be attributed to many factors, such as breakdown of relationship between government machinery and the citizens, lack of capacity by the government machinery to deliver services to citizens amid the growing population in South Africa, break of trust between government and its citizens, poor service delivery, corruption and maladministration. The paper is conceptual and descriptive in nature, which means document and review literature on government has been used to collect data. The paper argues that the relationship between government machinery and its people is broken. The empirical results indicate that the relationship between the government and its citizens has broken.

**Keywords:** Public administration, Government machinery, Service delivery protests, Public trust

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## 1. Introduction

The lack of public trust between government and its citizens is a thorny issue in South Africa and this has led to service delivery protests and violent protests. For example, when elections promises are made by politicians during elections campaign and after the politicians are elected in office, often the politicians do not fulfil the elections promises. As a result, the citizens take to the streets in an attempt to get the attention of the government. South Africa is burdened by 63,9 per cent of unemployment rate (Statistics South Africa, 2022), with over 55 per cent of the country's population living in poverty, as well as growing inequality (Statistics South Africa, 2017). As a result of the development challenges, the government machinery has experienced breakdown in relationship with the citizens and growing number of service delivery protests due to inadequate provision of basic services and failure to deal decisively with corruption and maladministration.

There is evidence that the breakdown of public trust between the government machinery has resulted in violent service delivery protests. For instances,

#feesMustfall at universities in across the country, Vuwani demarcation protests, the burning of buses and trains throughout the country and the #Seshego shutdown because of lack of constant supply of water. It needs to be stated that in order to resolve public trust in government machinery there should be a proper oversight and that corrupt officials in government institutions have to be brought to justice. This paper begins by providing conceptual analysis on the meaning of public trust and government machinery, followed by a theoretical perspective of public trust and government machinery. This is then followed by discussion of election promises, corruption and maladministration, service delivery challenges as enablers to broken trust between the government machinery and its citizens. Discussion of results and recommendations are provided in the last section of this paper.

## 2. Conceptual Analysis of Terms: Government Machinery and Public Trust

Citizens' trust in government is one of the elements of good governance. The word public trust is not

found in many literature, instead many authors use trust in government. The question remain is what is trust in government? Mansoor (2010) define trust in government as the confidence that citizens have in authorities to do the right things. The citizens (people) experts the government entities to be upright, provide them with justice, and safeguard their fundamental rights of food, health, shelter and safety. Therefore, trust in government refers to the public's expectations regarding their political leaders and government agency's performance regarding how they commit, behave, and fulfil their responsibility (Cheema, 2011). On the other side, OECD (2013) view trust in government as the confidence of citizens and business in the actions of government to do what is right and perceived as fair. It is one of the most important foundations upon which the legitimacy and sustainability of political systems are built. Hitlin and Shutava (2022) define trust in government as the public's perception of government based on expectations of how it should operate. In a nutshell trust in government is the same as public trust. It depends on the author's compatibility to use those terms.

The concept of the public trust relates back to the origins of democratic government and its seminal idea that within the public lies the true power and future of a society; therefore, whatever *trust* the public places in its officials must be respected. Public Trust is a term of art referring to any public property which belongs to the whole of the people. Initially it was used within the formation of the government to refer to politicians who achieve power by election (Hitlin & Shutava, 2022). Therefore it is a responsibility of politician to build trust to the public by coming back to the public after the election and provide feedback instead of appearing to the public during the election.

The machinery of government is a key tool to the elected politicians who want to exercise control, formulate and implement their preferred policy programmes. According to Heath (2020) the machinery of government means the interconnected structures and processes of government, such as the functions and accountability of departments in the executive branch of government. The term is used particular in the context of changes to established systems of public administration where different elements of machinery are created. The phrase "machinery of government" is thought to have originated with John Stuart Mill in considerations on Representative Government (1861). It was notably

used to a public audience by President Franklin D Roosevelt in a radio broadcast in 1934, commenting on the role of the National Recovery Administration (NRA) in delivering the New Deal. A number of national governments, including those of Australia, Canada, South Africa and the United Kingdom, have adopted the term in official usage.

The Office of the Premier (Limpopo) and cabinet (2019) define machinery of government as the allocation of functions and responsibilities between departments and ministers. These allocations reflect a government's strategy and priorities and changes may often be made following an election or to support new policy directions. The Public Service Commission (2016) state that the term "machinery of government" refers to: the allocation of functions to and between departments and other government agencies; the creation of a new departments or other government agency, and the amalgamation or abolition of existing departments and other government agencies; the co-ordination of the activities of departments and other government agencies.

It is the responsibility of State Service Commission to review the machinery of government across all areas of government according to Section 6(a) of State Sector Act 1988 which state that "Department dealing with policy issues that have potential implications for the machinery of government are required to consult SSC". Based on the abovementioned definition, machinery of government is just a structure and functions government in order to deliver service to the public. The government structure of South Africa consists of three spheres of government. The first is national government for the country as a whole. The second sphere consists of the nine provincial governments, each responsible for the delivery of certain services to their communities. The third sphere is local governments which are responsible for delivery services to their local communities (Du toit, Knipe, Van Niekerk, Van der Waldt & Dovle, 2002).

### 3. The Theoretical Framework Underpinning Public Trust

Trust in democratic institutions and its functions are usually explained from two different theoretical perspectives. On one hand, there are cultural theories arguing that trust in political institutions like government does not necessarily depend on the quality of the political affairs on the part of the government,



rather it depends on the deeply rooted norms and values that people attain as a member of the society and as a social being. Institutional theories, on the other hand, argue that political trust depends on the way citizens evaluate the performance of the democratic institutions. Both cultural and institutional theories have two streams: micro and macro. Macro theories in both types focus on the shared belief and understanding of the socio-political phenomena, whereas the micro theories emphasize on the individual experience and evaluation of the social norms, values, and institutions. Empirical research shows that trust or distrust in political institutions is determined by the political and economic performance of the regime rather than cultural context (Mishler & Rose, 2001, 2005).

Political trust has become a dominant approach that argues that political trust is determined by public assessments of government actions. According to the approach, whether or not a regime is supported by the greater populace depends on the outcomes of the government actions (de Blok *et al.*, 2022). Again, the evaluation can be based on both micro and macro performance of the government. The macro-performance theory argues that political trust and its variation across regions can be understood by the macro level indicators such as unemployment, inflation, economic growth, and government stability. Studies related to macro-performance theory are usually comparative. On the contrary, micro-performance theory states that underperforming government agencies will determine public trust in government institutions and vice versa (Van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003). The micro-performance theory further states that change in the trust in government depends on the changes in public perception of the quality of the public services rendered by the government (Yang & Holzer, 2006). The choice of citizen to act during a national crisis depends on how the leaders are dealing the crisis. Sztompka (1999) argued that citizen's perception follows rational-choice theory which can be defined as the "consistent evaluations of politics" by the citizens "given any level of political knowledge" (Elsas, 2015). Apart from the theoretical underpinnings, empirical evidence suggests that political trust is a rational phenomenon (Elsas, 2015). Individual choices are determined by an array of variables including their sociodemographic factors dictated by available information or person's knowledge on the crisis, and potential costs and benefits in determining preferences.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

In this paper qualitative research design is followed and it uses a naturalistic approach that seeks understanding phenomenon in context-specific setting (Golafshani, 2003:600). According to Hancock (2002:1), qualitative research attempts to increase the understanding of the author regarding why things are the way they are in our social world and why people act the way they do. According to Business Dictionary (2013:1), research methodology refers to the process which can be used to collect information and data for the purposes of making decision. Muaz Jalil (2013:6) asserts that research methodology refers to the mode of data collection, this include whether qualitative or quantitative data required, or a mix of the two. The paper uses secondary research (also called desk research) and it consists of research about what has already been written or found at the library, that is information found in books, databases and journals (Driscoll, 2011:153).

#### **5. The Role Election Campaigns Promises in Creating a Hype of Expectations for Services**

Naurin (2011) defines "election promise as a promise or guarantee made to the public by a candidate or political party that is trying to win an election". In other word election promises is about political manifesto (election campaign) of a political party. "Elections are at the core of democratic politics. At least in principle if not always in fact, they provide citizens with a chance to express their policy views and priorities, to participate directly in the political process, and to hold elected leaders accountable for their actions" (Craig, Martinez, Gainous & Kane, 2006:579). As mentioned earlier in the abstract that: "when politicians during local and national elections engage in elections campaign, quite often the politicians are bombarded by service delivery demands from the citizens. In turn, the politicians make elections promises in an effort to satisfy the service delivery demand of the citizens should they be elected to office. After, the election season has ended, usually the politicians once elected to office rarely interact with the citizens to deliver the elections promises."

Naurin and Markwat (2019:2210) stated that election pledges hold a prominent place in classic accounts of representative democracy – accounts in which political parties make clear pledges before election, voters use these pledges to make decision at the ballot box,

and voters then either reward government for living up to their commitments, or "vote the rascals out" if pledges are broken. Mellon and Feldman (2021:1) argue that "parties make hundreds of campaign promises but not all are seen by voters as central to a party's offering. Studies of government promises fulfilment accept that not all promises equivalent but in practice treat all promises equally because they lack an appropriate means of measuring promise centrally". Palfrey and Postlewaite (2007) stated that the difficulty with the argument that campaign statements are a mere act of promising or pledging, to carry out a particular policy is that they are cheap talk. The challenge with political parties is that they are concerned with the implementation of their policy rather than service delivery. Their relationship with the voter is based on election only, especially during the election campaign. Therefore, this breaks the trust between the government and its people.

## **6. The Broken Public Trust as a Result of Poor Service Delivery**

A wide range of literature (Twala, 2014) on broken public trust because of poor service delivery, such as Allan and Heese (2011) and Hough (2008) has examined the reasons behind lack of public trust in government machinery and service delivery related protests in South Africa; citing issues such as lack of services, housing, jobs, water, and sanitation, as well as political problems linked to ward councillors (South African Local Government Association, 2015).

When the ruling African National Congress (ANC) grabbed power in 1994 after the collapse of the apartheid regime, it undertook to provide wide range of basic services such as free housing, free water and sanitation, jobs, and most importantly, free education. By implications the ANC's goal of improving the majority of lives of the citizens of South Africa was unattainable in just 28 years in government. The slow pace of delivery of such services and failures in governance processes has diminished the public trust that the citizens have on the ability of the government machinery to turn the tide on service delivery. Consequently, such failures have led to raising anger from those citizens who remain trapped in abject poverty, unemployment and landlessness, as evident by the sporadic ongoing service delivery protests across the country.

The Presidency (2015) found that the key reason for the dwindling level of public trust in government

machinery is as a result that approximately 80 percent of municipalities in the country had failed to perform their mandatory duties, with more than 50 percent of municipalities having failed to perform half of their duties. As such, it is unsurprisingly, that the root cause of lack of public trust in government machinery in South Africa is associated with the inability of the government to deliver services to the citizens. This inability is compounded in part by a shortage of competent staff at the higher echelons of local government. Sikhakhane and Reddy (2011) identified the lack of public accountability as another reason for the lack of public trust in government machinery. This is so particularly in municipalities, with growing unhappiness among citizens. This lack of accountability is also evident at national level, where there has been widespread looting of public funds of state-owned enterprises such as Eskom, Transnet, Denel, South African Airways and Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa. As a result, only 33 percent of the population had trust in local government. While most of the literature (Presidency, 2015; Sikhakhane & Reddy, 2011) cite different views on the leading views on the decline of public trust and protests. However, the municipalities have their own perceptions.

## **7. The Complexity of Challenges Associated with Service Delivery**

Service delivery is a complex and difficult task in South Africa as mentioned previously in the abstract. According to DBSA (2022) "service delivery in South Africa remains a big challenge for municipalities. By lacking in infrastructure, resource and maintenance, they are unable to provide communities with quality service delivery in fast turnaround time. In the end, the lack of municipal infrastructure halts progress in other areas".

IDASA (2010) stated the major concern of service delivery challenges known as: the degree of corruption, institutional capacity constraints relating to appropriate skills and staff, lack transparency, dysfunctional of ward committees, lack of accountability by councillors and municipal officials, lack of public participation in issue of governance, failure to comply with municipal legislation and other by-laws, failure to prioritize community needs and IDP and budgeting process not aligned, tension between the political and administrative section of the municipalities and weak financial viability tremendously.

As a result this has led to the breakdown of relationship between government machinery and its people. This breakdown of relationship government machinery and its people is manifested by recent service delivery protests. The protesters explain that they took to the streets in order to get government to listen to them.

## **8. Corruption and Maladministration**

Corruption and maladministration are amongst the major challenges that confront South Africa. This assertion is supported by the evidence cited in Corruption Watch 2016 Annual Report which revealed that for the past five years, most of the prevalent types of corruption reported in 2016 were one way or another centered around the abuse of power (Corruption Watch, 2016). The breakdown of relationship government machinery and its people could be because of abuse of power by the government officials who engage in corrupt activities and maladministration.

Another type of corruption which was identified in the Corruption Watch 2016 report was bribery and procurement corruption. In an article penned by Safara and Odeku (2021), the revelation is that a tension exists between corruption and the rule of law in South Africa (SA). Further to that, Safara and Odeku's (2021) study revealed that corruption and maladministration were found to be inconsistent with the rule of law. The findings of Safara and Odeku's (2021) study re-emphasizes the argument of this paper that there is breakdown of relationship between government machinery and the people because evidently corruption and maladministration diminish the trust in the rule of law.

The catastrophic nature and the dent which corruption and maladministration has done to the functioning of the government machinery is evident. This proposition is confirmed by Maropo (2018) who undoubtedly asserts that corruption and maladministration distort government priorities and weaken the local government machinery. Corruption and maladministration weaken the ability of the state to provide services such as adequate housing to the poor, indigents, and vulnerable communities. This proposition is supported by the study conducted by Mashiane and Odeku (2021) which re-affirm the argument that corruption and maladministration contributes to the breakdown of relationship between government machinery and

its people for instance. On the other hand, Igwe, Egbo and Nwakpu (2021) argue that corruption lays a foundation for the violation of citizens' rights and underdevelopment. Furthermore, Igwe, Egbo and Nwakpu (2021) posit that there is a strong correlation between corruption, the absence of ethics of governance and maladministration. Lekubu and Sibanda (2021) argue that the reason why there is a lack of trust between the government and its citizens could be attributed to low levels of ethics and morality in public service in South Africa (SA). For instance, the Zondo Commission on State Capture reports, Advocate Terry Motau report on VBS. These corruption events of the past have demonstrated how machinery of government has broken down.

## **9. Results and Discussion**

Service delivery protest, riots and looting was a sign of broken relationship between government machinery and its people. The issue of trust has declined in the level of trust in government. According to the results of the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Edelman Trust Barometer, which surveyed more than 31 000 respondents in 26 country around the world, 16 of the countries surveyed in 2013 have trust score lower than 50 percent in government compared to only 9 of the countries surveyed that have trust scores below 50 percent in business. Afro barometer (2021) previous surveys were conducted in South Africa in 2000, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2015, and 2018. The findings were as follow: Trust in nearly all institutions is low – and declining. Only media broadcasters, both independent (63%) and government (61%), and the Department of Health (56%) enjoy the trust of a majority of citizens. Only a minority of South Africans say they trust the president (38%) and Parliament (27%) "somewhat" or "a lot." For the first time in Afro barometer surveys, only a minority (43%) express trust in courts of law. Only about one in three citizens (36%) trust the Electoral Commission of South Africa, with trust levels particularly low among younger respondents. Slightly more (42%) trust the Public Protector. Trust in both the ruling African National Congress (ANC) (27%) and opposition parties (24%) continues to decline. Trust in the ANC is especially low among younger and more educated respondents. Two-thirds (67%) of South Africans would be willing to give up elections if a non-elected government could provide security, housing, and jobs. Nearly half (46%) say they would be "very willing" to do so, with higher levels of support among younger and more educated respondents.

## 10. Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings from the most recent Afro barometer survey show a worsening deficit of public trust in South Africa's key democratic institutions. Low levels of trust in elected representatives point to a democratic malaise matched by decreasing voter turnout at elections and decreasing trust in the Electoral Commission. President Cyril Ramaphosa aimed to bring back trust in government when he replaces former president Jacob Zuma but riots in July may have been a warning. What the government need to do, is to improve its service delivery by providing social protection and demonstrate a determination to punish corruption to have any chance of rebuilding trust between citizens and their state. The ongoing inadequate service delivery, corruption, and political challenges, amongst others, have led to the rapid emergence of violent and destructive protests in South Africa, which are quickly becoming a concern for the government and many citizens. The predicament that remains is whether getting the attention of local authorities improves the quality of service, as evident in the shortage of railway services that leads to delays. These delays are frequently met with the torching of trains, thereby worsening the backlog in railway services. This only undermines the already weakened capacity of railway services creating a vicious cycle of service delivery protests.

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# Barriers to Parents Supporting Children's Learning in Volksrust Circuit, Gert Sibande District in Mpumalanga Province

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**Abstract:** The study's goal was to discover what impediments inhibit parents from supporting their children's academic growth. The objectives for this study were to identify barriers parents face when trying to assist in children's schooling devise solutions to overcome them. The research also evaluated the procedures in three categories of schools, namely township, rural and suburban schools. The study was guided by Lafaele and Hornby's the explanatory model. The study employed a qualitative research approach within an interpretivist paradigm. A phenomenology study design was employed. Three secondary schools (suburban, township and rural) in the Volksrust Circuit were used for the research study. Six parents from each school who were members of the governing body (five from the suburban school), a principal and a Departmental Head (DH) made up the sample of participants. Semi-structured interviews and a review of the parental involvement policies' policy documents were used to gather data. They were analysed using thematic analysis. According to the study, parental involvement in children's learning is inhibited by impediments related to the school, such as reasons and methods of communication, policies on parental involvement, and instructional jargon. Parent and family-based barriers such as job dynamics, subject matter expertise, educational attainments, cultural norms and transferred responsibilities were also highlighted as barriers to parental involvement. Moreover, the research discovered that notwithstanding the willingness of parents to help their children's education, parental support in children's education is constrained by learners' age. The study concludes that parental involvement is a changing phenomenon and so schools should base their judgements on data rather than generalizations. This study suggests using digital as well as other forms of connection, changing school systems, building capacity and developing "Action Teams" so as to foster parental involvement in children's education.

**Keywords:** Parental involvement, School-based barriers, Parent, Family-based barriers

## 1. Introduction

Any community's development is dependent on the education of its children. Children are dependent on their parents as their primary teachers for information, expertise and advice. Involvement of parents in the children's schooling is viewed beneficial in their children's conduct and social adjustment (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014) and also bears a beneficial impact on their success at school (Al Sumaiti, 2012). South Africa continues to have minimal parental involvement in their children's schooling, despite the findings of various studies. To address this concern, the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2016) developed a handbook that clarifies the role of a parent and gives a directive on how parents can be involved in the children's schooling in school and at home.

Hornby and Blackwell (2018) argue that a ton of information is available on what parents can do to better

their children's education, but there exists a vast disconnect in what is stated in publications and what is really taking place in schools. Poor parents' involvement in their children's education is a problem that exists everywhere. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act in the United States of America has elevated the involvement of parents in the children's learning to a national precedence (Baker & Soden, 1998). This suggests that in the United States of America, parental support is still a problem (USA). In their study conducted in the USA, Soutullo, Smith-Bonahue, Sanders-Smith, and Navia (2016) highlighted language and cultural barriers, family wealth, and families' unlawful status as impediments to building family school interactions with immigrant families.

The problem is the degree of parental involvement in the children's schooling. Educators complain that parents give little interest in the children's schooling, that they barely acknowledge progress reports, and that they are unaware of the grade their child

is in or whether they repeat a grade (Naicker, 2013). Due to their carelessness and ignorance, parents are unaware of the greater impact that their non-attendance at meetings, their children's behavioural issues, tardiness, absences, lack of discipline, poor hygiene, and unfinished homework have on the teaching and learning process and the academic achievement of the children in schools. A provision from the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, afforded parents an opportunity to have control and influence over the children's education. Even while parents are legally allowed to have a say in their children's schooling, research shows that only a small minority of parents really exercise this right (Naicker, 2013).

The DBE acknowledges that, notwithstanding its efforts to provide parents with instructions on how to successfully support the children's schooling, there is minimal parents' participation. High school learners are found to be the most vulnerable of this negligence and ignorance of their parents. This is because certain parents consider that high school children can handle schoolwork on their own (Naicker, 2013).

## 2. Role of Theory in the Study

The study used Hornby and Lafaele's (2011) explanatory model. They constructed the model through modifying Epstein's (2001) theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which prioritises the categories of family, school, and community to classify different barriers. This model adapts these spheres into becoming larger societal variables that affect how schools and family's function, parent-teacher relationship, individual parent and family factors and a particular emphasis on child aspects. This model was designed to clarify and elaborate on the obstacles that are present within each of these four classifications. Individual parent and family factors focus on parents' beliefs about parental involvement, expectations of parental involvement invite, current life experiences of parents, class, ethnicity, and gender. Child factors are discussed focusing on age, learning disabilities and difficulties, behavioural problems and gifts and talents. Factors of parent teachers focus on different behaviours, goals and interests and the language used. Lastly, societal factors cover problems of culture and geography, political issues and economic issues. The objectives for this study were to identify barriers parents face when trying to assist in children's schooling and

come up with solutions to overcome them. The research also evaluated the procedures in three categories of schools, namely township, rural and suburban schools. The researcher was thus guided by this model to classify the components that were found to be hindering and to recommend customised mitigation measures.

## 3. Literature Review

Parental involvement is an important variable that has been determined to have a beneficial impact on children's education. There is no agreed-upon description about what parents' involvement entails (Dor, 2012). This study complied with Epstein's definition of parental involvement. According to Epstein (2007), there are three interconnected spheres of influence that have an impact on how children grow and learn: family, school, and community. Considering this, Epstein *et al.* (1997) created a model that contained six essential elements of parents' involvement. These six elements are communication, parenting, learning at home, volunteering, collaborating with the community and decision-making (Finkbiner, 2014).

### 3.1 Parents' Involvement Internationally

Parents' involvement is recognised as a crucial component of children's education on a global scale. This recognition is not without challenges. In the United Kingdom, schools are the hindrances to parental involvement. Schools do not attempt to educate minority parents about the operations and the culture of the school (Crozier & Davies, 2007, as cited in Manilal, 2014). The findings of this research further demonstrate that these parents seldom tried to contact the school; instead, they awaited the school to get in touch with them, which always transpired whenever their children displayed problematic behaviours (Crozier & Davies, 2007, as cited in Manilal, 2014). Parents who tried to get in touch with the school were confronted by unfriendly educators who offered them virtually no time.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act in the United States has prioritised parental involvement in the children's schooling as a critical element (Baker & Soden, 1998). Various groups of individuals in America participate to varied degrees (Anderson & Minke, 2007, as cited in Manilal, 2014). Certain parents are considerably concerned with the children's home education than other parents are, while some parents are

extremely engaged with the children's school education. Chinese parents, for instance are considerably concerned about education at home, they view a child's accomplishments as an expression of his/her family. European parents, regardless of their financial standing invest more time with their children telling stories, playing games, and reading (Graves & Wright, 2011). On the contrary, the African American parents' involvement is more school based. Studies have shown that parents' involvement among rich American parents is higher as compared to those who are less affluent (Park, Byun & Kim, 2011; Cooper, Crosnoe, Suuizzo & Pituch, 2010). Some studies have determined that although parents' involvement has improved in the United States of America, certain obstacles remain (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Epstein, 2018). In several elite schools, parents are heavily involved, which causes a conflict due to divergent views between the parents and the school (Lareau & Muoz, 2012). Lack of schooling, difficulties with the language, and unfamiliarity with American classroom customs may discourage immigrant parents from participating (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009, as cited in Makamani, 2019). The purpose of the research was to examine parental involvement in communities with various backgrounds.

### 3.2 Parental Involvement in Africa

Involvement of the parents seems to be rising in some African nations while falling dramatically in others. Overall, it is discovered that Ghana has a very low participation rate (Chowa, Ansong & Osei-Akoto, 2012). According to research conducted in Ghana's Ashanti area, parents seem indifferent about the schooling of their children (Mantey, 2020). Another study revealed that mothers are largely responsible for their children's schooling (Nyarko, 2011). This study also alluded that these mothers make financial sacrifices to ensure their children's educational achievement. Parental involvement in Ghana remains low.

Parents in Nigeria, according to Msila (2012), are far more interested in enhancing their own lifestyles. They assume that teachers are better equipped to run the schools without their assistance. This study also found that the neglect of their responsibilities is so much that they are not bothered whether their children are late, absent or have completed their homework. However, another study found that certain parents do get involved, some do not (Olatoye & Agbatogun, 2009, as cited in Manilal, 2014). They

contend that parents of children in private schools seem to be more dedicated to the children's schooling when compared to those of children who go to public schools. These parents are found to get their motivation to participate because of their educational levels, economic status, and the fact that they pay school fees. Contrarily, Erlendsdottir's (2010) investigation of a Namibian school which accepted pupils of various socioeconomic classes discovered that affluent and impoverished parents engage fully in children's schooling in school and at home. They foresee that their children will finish high school and pursue higher education (Erlendsdottir, 2010). This reveals that some parents have positive ambitions and aspirations for their children, irrespective of their socioeconomic position.

### 3.3 Parents' Involvement in South Africa

There is plethora of research outlining various actions parents may undertake to enhance their children's academic performance, but there exists a great disconnect among what is published in publications and that what is taking place in classrooms (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Okeke (2014) asserts that involvement of parents continues to be problem in South Africa. Poverty and unemployment are identified as the attributing factors to parental non-involvement (Munje & Mncube, 2018; Mavungu, 2013; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011). The study area is impoverished, has a high level of unemployment and some parents commute to nearby for employment, The study area is underdeveloped and has a high unemployment rate. Additionally, some parents commute to nearby cities for work, which leaves their children with grandparents or, in certain circumstances, on their own. In South Africa, illiteracy and low educational attainment have been cited as contributory factors to non-participation. In Limpopo and Mpumalanga, a study found that parents are not constantly engaged due to their being unskilled, and incapable of supporting the children's academics (Bush, Jourbert, Kiggundu & van Rooyen, 2010). Other parents cite a shortage of time as the reason they are not present. Some of them return home fatigued, others are extremely late, while some just do so on weekends due to having to locate jobs outside the jurisdiction of their homes (Makgoba & Mokhele, 2013). In South African multi-cultural schools, multiplicity in languages and culture encourages parental non-involvement (Michael *et al.*, 2012). These schools might just supply details in English (Lemmer & Van Wyk, 2004).



The scholar was able to observe this circumstance first hand. One of the schools in this study only uses English and Afrikaans languages to communicate with parents. According to the examined literature, there exists a dearth in parents' involvement in school and at home in South Africa. In conclusion, literature reviewed revealed that some of these countries have passed legislations, some issued directives to ensure parental involvement. All these efforts are proven to not be without challenges.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

A qualitative approach was employed in the study. Using the method, the scholar was able to discover more from parents, educators and principals about the impediments that prohibits parents from becoming active in the children's teaching and learning. Phenomenology study design was employed in this study. With the use of this approach, the scholar was better able to discern why parents do not really support the children's schooling from the participants' first-hand perspectives. In the Gert Sibande District's Volksrust Circuit, the researcher selected three high schools to provide a representative sample. One township school, one school from a rural community and one former model C school, referenced as schools A, B and C respectively to maintain confidentiality. As a result, the scholar could compare viewpoints of the subjects from these three various environments and guarantee that all types of schools in the Circuit were represented. Three secondary schools within Volksrust Circuit of Mpumalanga's Gert Sibande District were chosen as the sample population for the participants. The parent SGB members of each school as well as three principals, Department heads (that attend parents whenever they visit the grades' educators on different purposes) were selected. It thus indicates a representative sample of twenty-three subjects.

To gather data, a triangulation of partially structured interview as well as analysis of documents was used to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the results. To discover barriers which prevent parents in assisting the children's schooling, the researcher examined the schools' parents' conferences' invitation methods, attendees' records of those conferences, as well as schools' regulations on parents' involvement. The findings from this paper were examined using thematic analysis. The researcher adhered to the six-step thematic analysis techniques given by Clarke and Braun (2013).

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee was contacted first to obtain the ethical approval. The Circuit office, the participating schools, as well as the governing bodies of the institutions (SGBs) were all informed first before research was started. Consent papers were presented to every participant. They were told of the aims of the research including the right to revoke their consent at whichever stage. The participants' confidentiality rights were honoured, their identities were protected. For the schools and participants, pseudonyms were used in place of real names. To ensure credibility and confirmability of this paper triangulation was used to obtain the most important information. To assure transferability and to help the reader comprehend the context in which the behaviour happens, the researcher utilized thick descriptions (Ponterotto, 2006).

#### **5. Results and Discussion**

The study's findings are presented and analysed with a focus on its goals: to determine the impediments of parents' involvement in the schooling of children at the level of secondary education and to examine mitigation measures that the schools might use to achieve the best possible parents' involvement in schooling. Emerging themes from the interviews and the document analysis are discussed by incorporating literature where possible. Themes are categorised and discussed as follows: parent-family barriers, school-based barriers, and child factors. Lastly, the suggested strategies to improve parental involvement are discussed.

##### **5.1 Parent and Family-Based Barriers**

###### **5.1.1 Work Dynamics**

Most of the participants cited work obligations as one of the attributing factors of the absence of parents' involvement. It is confirmed by research that revealed that several parents are prevented from attending school functions because of work commitments (Michael, Wolhuter & van Wyk, 2012; Mbokodi & Singh, 2011). Suburban schools require parents to have some sort of income as parents are expected to buy school necessities, such as uniform, school fees, boarding fees, sports equipment, and attire etc. Low-paying jobs make it difficult for parents to acquire the essential school supplies for their children (Anderson & Minke, 2007, as cited in Munje & Mncube, 2018). As opposed to that, this study found that unemployment and poverty has the same detrimental effect to parental involvement

as employment. Parents who are unemployed are dependent on the social grants which hardly meet the basic demands of the household. This then compel parents to prioritise the household necessities and disregard their children's educational requirements.

Time was also mentioned as a barrier to parental involvement. Participants remarked that meetings typically coincide with working time. Meetings in school A for instance, are conducted during the day which is a disadvantage to someone who has a day job. In schools B and C, they are conducted after school hours, which also is a disadvantage to parents whose children use scholar or private transport to school. This is consistent with Naicker's (2013) findings that parents that commute using public transportation are not able to honour school meetings that are conducted after school hours and or evenings.

### **5.1.2 Lack of Expertise in Subject Content**

The curriculum for Basic Education in South Africa has undergone changes over time. It has turned out to be challenging for parents given that they are unable to aid their children with their learning. The study also discovered that it is literally impossible for parents to be knowledgeable of all their children's subjects (especially high school subjects). According to a 2011 survey by Hornby and Lafaele, homework and subject content get more complex as the children age.

### **5.1.3 Level of Education and Culture**

The research revealed that the majority of learners reside with parents and grandparents who are either illiterate or have poor levels of education. However, this study found that in school A uneducated parents are mostly involved as they do not want their children to be like them. This is consistent with the findings by Chowa, Ansong and Osei-Akoto (2012b), which found that parents with less schooling showed greater interest for the children's schooling. The study also found that in as much as educated parents understand their role in the education of their children, they are usually absent due to work. It was also determined that cultural differences have a damaging effect to parental involvement. The study found that Black parents in school C, do not understand "volunteering", as they expect to be paid after they have "worked" during fundraising events at school. Mbokodi (2008) agrees that parents do not donate anything to school, either cash or time

unless they are rewarded for their efforts. The study also found that language used by schools and teachers has resulted to parents avoiding meetings and talking to teachers because it is not the parents' first language.

### **5.1.4 Delegating Parental Duties**

The research discovered that parents transfer the responsibilities to friends or older relatives, even going to the point of asking to be represented at parent-teacher talk sessions. Every one of the participants acknowledged that an excessive number of pupils live with grandparents or other relatives, wherein the research revealed to have a negative impact on learners' behaviour, performance, and discipline. Mtshali (2015) found that grandparents seemed incapable or hesitant to aid learners with schoolwork, notably with homework.

## **5.2 School-Based Barriers**

### **5.2.1 Lack of Communication**

Methods of communication were found to be one of the factors that obscured parental involvement. School A and B use solely letters for communication which pupils then forward to the parents. The research revealed that at most, parents never receive these letters. If the letter is inviting the parent because of learner's bad behaviour or underperformance, that letter will never reach the intended destination. According to Epstein (1995), once learners decline carrying out the role as an intermediary between the school and parents, they pose an obstacle to collaboration between the school and parents. On the contrary, school C is using all relevant social media platforms, however, they are not without challenges. Whenever they invited parents to school, the ones they really require seeing never come. In all the three schools' parents are mostly invited when their children misbehave or are underperforming. This is consistent with a study by Baker, Wise, Kelley and Skiba (2016) which revealed that teachers approached parents quite often if the pupil exhibited inappropriate behaviour rather than offering positive information.

### **5.2.2 Parental Involvement Policy**

The research discovered that none of the schools have a separate parental involvement (PI) policy. Moreover, the schools' code of conduct, sports and academic policies express how the schools engage or seek to engage parents. Parents with expertise in sports are welcomed to volunteer their services

at the school. Makamani (2019) agrees that hiring knowledgeable coaches prompted parents' decisions in sending the children for sports matches. Each school has Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign structures, school C has parent teacher association (PTA) structure which promote the involvement of parents. All schools have learner code of conduct which provides for the assistance of parents in learner discipline, uniform, and other matters. Incorporating PI policy to other policies has limited its details, the focus is on the details of the actual policy.

### 5.3 Age of Learners

The study found that learners at this stage make it difficult for parents to be engaged in their education and their lives in general. This agrees with Hornby and Lafaele (2011), that pupils at such stage of development were not inclined in desiring the active participation of parents in their schooling. Children of this stage prefer support and advice of their peers to that of their parents. As drugs have infested our communities, the study found that some of these children are lured to drug use by their friends and end up doing crime and have inappropriate conduct. As a result, their parents avoid getting involved in schools in any way.

### 5.4 Strategies of Improving Parental Involvement

#### 5.4.1 Improved Communication

Lau (2013) argues that if communication from school to home is not as frequent and relevant, as well as when there is no possibility for meaningful participation in school programs, parents get quite unsatisfied. The participants from school A and B suggested the use of diaries to communicate with parents about homework and other important information that needed parents' attention. They suggested that it should be compulsory for a parent to read from it on daily basis and append their signature. To improve communication, school A and B suggested the use of social media platforms. School C, on the other hand is already using these platforms. They noted that most of these methods impose data challenges and the fact that not all parents are inclined in technology. This means that while using various media platforms for communication, it would not completely solve the problems that schools A and B are having. Frequent parents, one-on-one and grade meetings were suggested

to promote parental involvement. Most parent-participants suggested inviting parents for academic and non-academic awards in schools which is in line with Baker *et al.* (2016) findings, that parents prefer being informed of a pupil's triumphs instead of just their shortcomings.

#### 5.4.2 Transformation in the School Structures

Participants from school C who were parents advised that meetings be conducted in the language that most of the parents speak. This supports the claim made by Larios and Zetlin (2011), that if institutions can deliver information in the language that the parents prefer, there would be less resistance and hesitation on the part of the parents to attend meetings. They suggested transformation in school governing body (SGB) compositions, school management teams (SMT) and the parent-teacher association (PTA). All members in these structures are white South Africans with only two black South Africans in the SGB.

#### 5.4.3 Building Relationships

The relationship between parents and educators is crucial in fostering the partnership that is effective to support the education of the learners. The participants suggested a "braai day" to foster the teacher-parent relationships. These results are consistent with those reported by Kabir and Akter (2014), which participants recommended a yearly event for parents as well as social activities in promoting a home-like environment in schools and offer them chances to become better acquainted.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

South African law mandates parents' assistance in the children's schooling (SASA, 84 of 1996). This study's findings indicated that parents experience obstacles that keep them from fulfilling their responsibilities. The study concludes that the shortcomings in establishing and subsequently addressing the impediments to parental involvement have affected children's learning in schools. The study recommends the following:

- Exploit technological methods of communication such as SMS, WhatsApp, school communicator etc. Adoption and proper usage of diaries to generate a contact between home and school. The knowledge and understanding of the community dynamics will assist in making informed decisions. Flexibility in meeting times.

- Encourage and invite parents from all backgrounds to serve in school structures. Language of the majority be used in meetings.
- Development of stand-alone parental involvement policies with clear roles for home and school. School year programme and the expectations thereof be communicated to parents at the beginning of the year and in time. Capacity workshop for serving educators and those in training be organised and executed.
- Establishing 'Action Teams' to manage, coordinate and evaluate all parent-related activities.

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# A Critical Review of Literature on the Importance of Workforce Diversity in Universities in Relation to Organizational Goals

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**Abstract:** Universities are under pressure for a proper professional approach to managing workforce diversity as governments call to address lack of representation in the workplace guided by annual targets. However, there is little or poor progress in the critical area of employment equity to its strategic goals and objectives. This has been exacerbated by the inability of the Universities to apply diversity management practice consistently. The purpose of this study is to critically review the literature on the importance of workforce diversity in enhancing organizational goals. This literature review article further sought to ascertain the bottlenecks in the diversity management application practice to the academic staff members in Universities. Workforce diversity practice as a research subject has received little attention and its importance cannot be ignored. There is a need for a paradigm shift how workforce diversity is applied in Universities and tasked with an importance of job knowledge creation and advancement of research as well as community engagement. This is qualitative literature review study where the grounded theory as a qualitative analytical approach will be followed where themes and trends will emerge from the published journal articles. The paper addresses how to dissect the challenges of workforce diversity, effect of workforce diversity and the management of the workforce. From the thematic analysis university leaders will be able to select the most management best practices for managing diversity that could impact University goals. Further this will bring diversity management practice that enhances the importance of workforce diversity and will implement sound turnaround strategies that affirm diversity.

**Keywords:** Workforce diversity, Grounded theory, Diversity management practices, Universities

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## 1. Introduction

South African employers are facing one of the biggest challenges in the workplace especially in Universities today as to leveraging and managing workforce diversity. According to Meyer (2019), without a monitoring tool, the management of workforce diversity in this case, institutions face challenges of racism cases throughout the years. Researchers have reported that there is a racial tension and incidents at some Universities across the world. Carrell, Elbert, Hatfield and Warnich (2022:96) asserted that there is a challenge of race relations that adversely affected negatively in the workplace and this requires business leaders and HR managers to take a lead to be bold in their organizations to harness inclusive workplace. It is argued that organizations that embrace workforce diversity have better competitive advantage in innovation and productivity that create world-class culture. These need a proper professional approach to managing diversity and inclusion. As the pace of globalization gathers momentum workforce diversity is still a challenge.

Employing a diversified workforce is necessary for every organization however managing such a diversified workforce is also a big challenge for management. Diversity is the composition of different elements and qualities that differentiate people within communities or groups based on their gender, age, language, culture, race or religion (Sealome & Chipunza, 2020). According to Carel *et al.* (2022:91), the broader definition of diversity may include age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, lifestyles, beliefs, physical appearance and economic status. Diversity requires a type of culture in which each employee can pursue their career aspirations without being inhibited by gender race, nationality religion or other factors that are irrelevant to performance (Mazibuko & Govendor, 2017).

Organizations must embrace diversity as it is the essence for every organization. It has been observed that organizations that employ a quality and competitive workforce regardless of their diversity profile in terms age, attitude, language, gender and religion

can benefit from a more integrated approach to diversity management (Meyer, 2016). Given Carrim and Moolman (2020), and Dreyer, Viviers and Mans-Kemp (2021), managing diversity can present a strong business that gives organizations a sustainable competitive advantage and improves their performance needed to manage diversity. It is differences in culture that creates differences. Flexible Institutions are looking for employees who are unique or different because a diverse workforce may bring diverse talent, which may assist the organisation in being more efficient and effective.

In the case of South Africa, the institutions of Higher Education are engaged in a transformation process in which recognizing diversity has become a legal imperative (Sealome & Chipunza, 2020). To redress the challenge of representation in the workforce, the South African government created a solid foundation of "workforce diversity initiatives". These initiatives include policies and legislation, namely the Labour Relations Act No. 75 of 1997, Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998, and Affirmative Action measures. Organizations that resist change in terms of embracing diversity effectively and do not adopt a transformative approach in terms of eliminating discrimination and injustice will adversely affect employees and customers (SABPP, 2019). Managers' continuous excuses that they can't find the right talent from the 56 million people can be challenging (Meyer, 2019). Lack of diversity management might lead to organizational ineffectiveness. To manage effectively, rather HR leaders at Higher Education Institutions ensure that awareness levels around diversity issues are high and real that real conversations take place about problems and solutions. Institutions of Higher Learning should rethink and redefine mission strategies, management practices, and cultures to meet the needs of increasingly diverse workforce (Barker & Kelan, 2020).

A study on the importance of workforce diversity in Universities in relation to organizational goals is lacking. Research has observed rapid growth in research with an emphasis on diversity. However, research on the importance of diversity and the managing systems at higher education Institutions has not been conducted. Even though higher education institutions measurement is based on excellence in scholarly teaching, scholarly research, scholarly community engagement and academic citizenship, the present study also identified gaps by focusing on the talent diversity and inclusion.

Therefore, based on the scenario above, this study's main purpose was to review the literature on the importance of workforce diversity in Universities to organizational goals.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The paper reviews the transformation process of institutions of Higher Education by creating diversity inclusion practices. SABPP developed an HR Diversity Standard that HR leaders should apply in the workplace as to promote diversity (Meyer, 2019). According to Meyer (2019), the SABPP standard on employment equity and diversity management is defined as the systematic application of HR Management processes towards attaining and retaining a state of employment equity whilst developing a competent workforce to achieve social justice and organizational objectives. This means that in an organization where diverse employees are highly engaged they feel valued, respected, supported and treated as insiders within the organization. The standard assert that a state of employment equity will only be reached when all previously disadvantaged groups are equitably represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace sustainably overtime. In addition to the definition outlined above the standard specifies fundamental requirements for good employment equity and diversity inclusion practices. According to Meyer (2016), these requirements are as follows:

- Top management should lead, direct, visibly support and role model the policies, practices and behavior's required to achieve employment equity and inclusion.
- Employment equity progress often entails making difficult choices which should be clearly defined and analysed and conscious decisions made and these decisions should then be clearly communicated to everyone in the organization.
- Responsibility for employment equity should be shared between line management and HR.
- Employment equity is a key organisational strategy and should therefore be appropriately catered for in performance management and remuneration practices.
- Achievement of employment equity, particularly at the skilled, professional and management

levels, requires careful analysis and planning and the adoption of a long-term planning and implementation approach which builds appropriate pipelines.

- Internal barriers to employment equity progress often include diversity/inclusion practices that are insincere or inadequate. The Code of Good Practice requirements to conduct analyses of barriers and enablers should be implemented appropriately to the organization.
- HR leaders in the organization should ensure that awareness levels around diversity/inclusion issues are high that real conversations about problems and solutions occur.
- Sustainable employment equity will not be achieved without positive perceptions of inclusion amongst all employee groupings.
- Practices such as inflation of job titles to reach employment equity in higher levels, fronting to acquire BEE tenders, approaching of employment equity talent to the exclusion of investment into development for internal candidates, inflation of remuneration packages for employment equity recruits. This in turn creates internal inequalities and unbalanced use of golden handcuffs are unethical and create unfairness and inequities within the organization.

According to Meyer (2016), the HR standard on employment equity and diversity management has a three phase strategy for implementation which are the following:

- A commitment to social justice, equity and inclusion: Management commits to social justice, equity and inclusion by admitting that inequality is wrong and can only be with decisive strategy and action.
- Organizational productivity and effectiveness plan. While social justice commitment is key, employment equity and diversity are imperative for business results.
- Diverse, inclusive and engaged workforce: If the first two phases are implemented successfully, the third phase will achieve and maintain a diverse, inclusive and engaged workforce. During this phase, the institution focuses on

building and celebrating diversity and ensuring that all employees are actively engaged and retained. They ensure an inclusive and empowering work environment is result from effective employment equity and diversity management implementation.

Therefore, the theory applied to can contribute to higher education institutions and create a workforce diversity that will develop environment inclusive of all diverse groups. This diversity will create inclusive workplaces and employment practices that bring an inclusive culture that achieves the organisational goals.

### 3. Methodology

The study is based on a qualitative literature review of 28 peer-reviewed journals from major data bases. The literature shows many views about work force diversity (Mazibuko & Govendor, 2017). As a result, the search for relevant themes across various articles was used relevant for the study. Thematic analysis is based on identifying and analysing critical patterns in data that are of interest to a study (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Themes are patterns that give a better way of understanding a study. They are important aspects and coding them. In giving general data patterns that can offer to mean to the required concepts related to the study. Thematic analysis was necessary for this study as it gives essential information for providing means. Such information can also be significant as they were drawn from various literature review sources. According to Fereday and Mur-Cochrane (2006), thematic analysis is a process of pattern that seeks to capture key trends in data to address a certain phenomenon. It is a process of recognizing some important data and coding the aspects. As such it encompasses a data reduction process in a manner that effectively captures what is essential for a study.

A literature review was relevant for this study as it allows for summarizing a mature field of study such as workforce diversity. According to Brown and Clarke (2006), there are two types of themes: Inductive and deductive. These themes are based on how they originated. Inductive themes emerge from the collected data while deductive themes are rooted in the literature and they are applied to aid data interpretation. Data analysis of this study was based on applying inductive themes to the reviewed articles and established how the themes



are reflected in the articles. Thematic analysis for this was important to provide the aim of the study. The purposive sampling technique was appropriate given that inductive themes were used and, articles that contained elements of the inductive themes were chosen for further analysis. The analysis noted how the themes were explained and how they were linked. Purposive sampling tends to be an important technique in thematic analysis as it allows a study to focus on the relevant items linked to the study.

#### **4. Workforce Diversity Defined**

Researchers have defined workforce diversity from a narrow perspective (Ehimare & Ogaga-Oghene, 2011; Lee & Gilbert, 2014; Veldman, 2013), while some did so from a broader perspective (Barak, 2017; Daya, 2014; Carim & Molman, 2020). Given this, advocates of a narrow definition (Snell & Morris, 2019; Dreyer, Viviers & Mans-Kemp, 2021) defined workforce diversity as the degree of heterogeneity among employees that is precisely limited to specific cultural attributes such as age, gender, and ethnicity. Selvarajah, Meyer & Dorasamy (2014) further explained that workforce diversity based on age and gender and ethnicity could not be viewed similarly to workforce diversity based on organizational roles and individual aptitudes. In addition, Baker and Kelan (2020) contented that because cultural workforce diversity attributes interact with other attributes of diversity, a narrow definition would be lacking as it will fail to identify those interactions.

Contrary to the above, advocates a broader definition (Jouany & Martic, 2021; Barak, 2017; Snell & Morris, 2019) defined workforce diversity as acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing and celebrating differences among people for the whole continuum of differences including age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race economic status, sexual orientation, spiritual practices and public assistance status. This definition implies that when people come to work in the workplace they bring all the differences. However, managers and leaders must play a crucial role and should not be ignorant of their employees if they want to be in charge of managing and encouraging diversity (Ukpere 2017). This is a challenge in the management of all employees. When organisations employ human resources of different ages, gender, perception, attitude, caste and religion, it will be very difficult for the management and employees to manage and adjust to that environment. According

to Werner *et al.* (2021), managing a diversified workforce is the biggest challenge of human resource management departments and it can affect organizations functioning in the following four ways:

- Diversity can have affective consequences, like lower organizational commitment or lower satisfaction because people prefer interactions with similar people.
- Cognitive outcomes refer to an increase in creativity and innovation because through diversity people get an opportunity to interact with various people.
- A diverse organizational workforce is a symbol of equality.
- Diversity also has clear implications on the communication processes within a group or organization.
- When different types of people in terms of thinking, perception and generation come together to work at the same place, a situation may definitely arise where all these different types of people may not agree at some point (Abbot & Meyer, 2016). Such a situation could affect the interpersonal relationships among people (Werner *et al.*, 2021).

On the other hand an organization's competitiveness depends upon its ability to embrace diversity and realize its benefits. Conclusively this study addresses the reasons for Workforce diversity in Higher Education Institutions.

#### **5. Benefits of Workforce Diversity in a University Setting**

"Without managing diversity, the institution will not know where it is heading" (Meyer, 2019). Saxena (2014) identified the following as the most important benefits of a diverse workforce in the workplace:

- Managing diversity can stimulate innovation and productivity and increase world-class culture that can outperform the competition.
- A multicultural organization is better suited to serve diverse external clientele in an increasingly global market. Such organizations better understand foreign nation's legal, political, social, economic and cultural environments.

- In research-oriented and hi-tech industries the broad base of talents generated by a gender- and ethnic-diverse organization becomes a priceless advantage, creativity thrives on diversity.
- Multicultural organizations are found to be better at problem solving, possess better ability to extract expanded meanings and are more likely to display multiple perspectives and interpretations in dealing with complex issues.
- Organizations employing a diverse workforce can supply a greater variety of solutions to problems in service, sourcing and allocation of resources.
- Employees from diverse backgrounds bring individual talents and experiences in suggesting ideas that are flexible in adapting to fluctuating markets and customer demands.
- A diverse collection of skills and experience allows institutions to provide a service to customers globally.
- A diverse workforce comfortable with communicating varying viewpoints provides a larger pool of ideas and experience.
- The requirements of the relevant Codes of Good Practice in employment equity should be used as guidelines and should be applied in line with organizations requirements.
- Employment equity is shared responsibility between the line management and HR. The former is accountable to stakeholders for employment equity progress, while the latter is required to support line management with relevant policies and practices.

To ensure HR delivers the best practices on diversity and inclusion, some of key strategies of Bersin by Deloitte's diversity and inclusion framework as identified by Kozan (2019) include the following:

- Creating a focus and strategy at the CEO/COO/CHRD.
- Assigning a top executive, the responsibility for leading and sponsoring a diversity and inclusion programme (Not necessarily CHRD).
- Creating behavioral standards and holding leaders accountable for results.
- Training people at all levels on topics like unconscious bias (something often not acknowledge).
- Integrating diversity and inclusion strategies in recruitment, performance management, leadership assessment, and training.
- Creating employees networks (e.g. employee resource groups community outreach groups).
- Creating an extremely visible scorecard to measure progress, including metrics for recruiting, promoting rates, compensation levels, turnover, participation in ERGs, and supplier diversity.

According to the SABPP (2016) the fundamental requirements for good employment equity and diversity practices include the following:

- Executive HR should lead from the front and ensure that organizational awareness of employment equity and diversity is facilitated and conversations take place about related problems and solutions occur.
- Top management that should lead by clearly supporting and role modelling policies and behaviors' necessary to achieve employment equity and diversity.
- Employment equity decisions and choices should be communicated to everyone in the organization, no matter how difficult they may go.
- Given that employment equity is critical for organizational strategy, it should be therefore in performance management and remuneration practices.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Workforce diversity in universities has been a complex topic, however, relatively little research has been conducted. Because of its importance, no University in the world will sustain in the world. No organization in this world of globalization would survive without workforce diversity. Academics have responsibility of critically evaluating the extent of workforce diversity. On the other hand, the management must stand firm in ensuring workforce

diversity. Not implementing the guidelines, as stated by the SABPP, diversity and employment equity standard posits a dynamic approach to people management, which is proactive and inclusively for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Building diverse talent pools will not only create a representative university, but also enlarge talent pools for future development, talent optimization and succession plan.

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# Human Resource Management Practices Amid COVID-19 Crisis: A Case of Botswana Public Service

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**Abstract:** This paper seeks to study the challenges of public sector human resource management during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resultant opportunities as well as the implications these have on the directions of the organisations post pandemic. A desk top research was used, and data collection was carried out in different sources exploring the impact of the COVID-19 on human resource management. Organizations had to adapt very fast to disruptions caused by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in both the internal and external environment of organisations. That resulted in uncertainties amongst the workforce and posed immediate threats to organizations' performances and productivity while at the same time disrupting strategies, employee relations, staffing occupational health, training and career development, compensation management. However, organizations had to navigate through the unprecedented times and thereby find new solutions to challenges across the stated areas of the operations. This paper will unravel how most of the solutions became trends of the COVID-19 era for and glimpse how these HR trends will continue to drive transformation and which new trends are emerging to shape the future of work.

**Keywords:** Human Resource management practices, Pandemic, Public Service, COVID-19

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## 1. Introduction

The global impact of COVID-19 pandemic cannot be overstated, it has severely affected economies, societies, employees, and organizations. At the height of the COVID-19 surge the government of Botswana just like most governments globally imposed some measures to try employed lockdown measures to try to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the population: travel restrictions, curfews and lockdowns were imposed; people were quarantined; schools, universities, nonessential businesses, government departments and non-governmental organisations were closed; there were restrictions in public gatherings and social events. With the measures deployed to mitigate against the effects of the pandemic becoming the new normal, the perceptions of how work is performed in the public service begun to change. The public sector began employing unconventional tactics like working from home and exploring technology to execute its mandates. Murphy, Markey, O' Donnell, Moloney and Doody (2021) postulate that some of the measures had serious consequences on the mental health of individuals, as a result there had been a movement towards incorporating physical, mental, and social health of the employee in the organisational culture.

The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled government to tackle multitudes of issues, like safeguarding public health and safety and easing adverse economic effects, as a result the public sector must steer through disruptions in established norms to do so (Sowa, 2020, as cited in Kim, Yang & Cho, 2021). Government employees generally are being asked to work in new ways and new contexts (OECD, 2021). The government's COVID-19 responses rely heavily on the competence and efforts of the public sector. As a result, astute human resource management (HRM) is indispensable for public servants to sustain the heightened work demands (Christensen & Laegreid, 2020, as cited in Kim, Yang & Cho, 2021). Kim, Yang & Cho (2021) further highlight that government Ministries and Departments have been hard-pressed to learn how to use new technology and tools on the job, often alongside old procedures and processes in other words public sector has become an accidental agile organization, with novel procedures and rules regulating working from home, fast-tracked hiring processes, and human resource management programs developed as need arises. The core of this paper will thus explore literature on implications, challenges, opportunities brought about by the advent of COVID-19 as well as draw future directions with regard to human

resource management in the public service in Botswana.

## 2. Background

Botswana is a Southern African country positioned between South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, well known for its tourism and natural beauty with a population of just over 2.3 million people (Bordering Africa's epicenter, 2021). Prior to the current COVID-19 the country was on its knees fighting another pandemic, the BBC reports that the country once had the world's highest rate of HIV-Aids infection. UN figures for 2004 suggest that for adults aged 15 to 49 the prevalence rate was 37.5% (Botswana country profile, 2021). Botswana devotes around BWP4660 per capita on health which allows universal access to health services devoid of substantial financial adversities bulk of the population. This has contributed to the country's reaction towards the COVID-19 pandemic, notwithstanding several challenges that persist (Bordering Africa's epicenter, 2021).

Botswana's response to COVID-19 is driven by the Public Health Act together with the Emergency Powers Act 2020. The Emergency Powers Act 2020 was decreed specifically to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, through establishment of the essential emergency legal framework for an extensive response (Bordering Africa's epicenter, 2021). In Botswana just like in other countries public servants have undertaken huge responsibilities in the response to the pandemic. Healthcare workers keep medical systems operational and families out of harm's way. Civil Servants are finding novel ways to design and channel unprecedented economic stimulus spending and manage human resources during these trying times (OECD, 2021).

The public sector plans, design and oversees the country's national development, in Botswana it is made up of the local authorities (councils), parastatal organizations and all ministries and independent departments of the central government ("Public-Sector HR: Resources & Learning", 2021). Public Sector management encompasses features of management such as productivity management, human resources management (HRM), and management of financial resources and other resources (NDP9, 2021). The Directorate of Public Service Management is mandated to formulate, guide, monitor and evaluate implementation of

human resource policies (Directorate of Public Service Management, 2021).

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Human Resource Management in the Public Sector: The COVID-19 Implications and Challenges

Human resources management (HRM) aids organizations in attainment of competitive advantage by eliciting the most value out employee performance and productivity (Rakowska, 2014, as cited in Kumar & Kapoor, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the human resource management function of the public sector immensely by creating considerable challenges for human resource management practitioners as well as public sector management. In this chapter these challenges will be spelled out and investigated, with regards to strategic human resource management, working conditions, as well as the following human resource management functions:

- Staffing.
- Performance management.
- Training and development.
- Compensation management.
- Safety and health management.
- Employees' relations.

#### 3.1.1 Strategic Human Resource Management During COVID-19

Strategic human resource management is an extensive organization of management activities and tasks linked to the development and sustenance of a competent workforce (Fottler, Hernandez & Joiner, 1994). According to Gifford (2021), it focuses on long term capacitating issues within the context of application of human resource to fulfil the strategic requirements of the organization.

About COVID-19, Liu *et al.* (2020, as cited in Hamouche, 2021) state that an organization need to attain strategic agility for it to guarantee accomplishment of organizational goals during periods of crisis. Hamouche (2021) further postulate that since it is imperative for organizations to attain capacity in organizing and apportioning resources with a view of coordinating the required system as well as being prudent with available resources and knowledge, the uniqueness and intricacies of COVID-19 present challenges that are likely to impede attainment of organizational goals.

Harney and Collings, as cited in Collings, McMackin, Nyberg & Wright (2021) highlight that strategic HRM research has been disparaged for its lack of capacity and failure to embrace novel and modern-day human resource issues. As a result, it is extremely difficult to make forecasts related to organizational undertakings during times of uncertainties (Hamouche, 2021). In fact, the pandemic has occasioned a host of contradictory priorities for organizational leaders with unparalleled intensities of uncertainty and conflict (Collings, Nyberg, Wright & McMackin, 2021). At the present moment, nobody can tell when the virus will end, and or whether effects on work arrangements will be short-term or long-term (Hamouche, 2021). Therefore, Elsafty & Ragheb (2020) add that this uncertainty increases employee stress and reduce motivation especially when workers can't get any information about the organization's management plan or their proposed responses with regards to the pandemic. However, Wong *et al.* (2020), as cited in Hamouche (2021), affirm that a strong communication strategy during the pandemic will put employees at ease and build strong relationships between employees and management towards the benefit of the organization. In a nutshell the response of the human resource management function towards the crisis and its part in planning the route of dealing with the crisis will bring about a more balanced, sustainable outcome for organization.

### 3.1.2 Working Conditions

According to Ali, Ali & Adan (2013), as cited in Ajala & Adediran (2021), the business dictionary defines working conditions as the work atmosphere and any other setting that has an influence in the workplace that is, hours' work, physical aspects, legal right and obligation, organizational culture amount of work and training. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered what must be the greatest disruptions in the workplace in decades, imposing unprecedented uncertainty in governments, societies, organizations, and workers. Totah (2021) accentuates that there has been a move away from the customary work model towards a more agile and employee centric, highlighted by approval of teleworking/remote working. While traditionally workers had to seek authorization to work from home, these days the default position is that all workers who can work from home ought to work from home (OECD, 2021). For example, a 2020 survey by the Korea Institute of Public Administration, shows that a large portion of civil servants were engaged in remote-working

(59.9%), video-conferencing (46.7%), and mobile VPN sign-off systems (8.9%) (Kim *et al.*, 2021). Where workers cannot work remotely some they are often required to observe physical distancing measures that interfere with social interactions and set fixed outlines and distance that influence employee behaviours within the organization, unfortunately this can have dire impact on employee mental health (Hamouche, 2021).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) warns that working from home can result in long working hours, as studies have shown that most teleworkers report longer working hours than office-based workers (International Labour Organization, 2021). Furthermore, according to Hamouche (2021) human resource practitioners have to contend with a challenge as a result of remote like ascertaining that is effective communication, supervision, support and performance management as well as ensuring that employees have tools that will enable them to remotely perform their job. Furthermore, Collings *et al.* (2021) specify that HR practitioners have to deal with fractures between employee groups who can work from home alongside those who have work in the office.

## 4. Staffing

Staffing refers to the process of locating, screening, and selection, hiring and retaining manpower within an organization, other roles which may fall under staffing are orientation, training, retention, and termination (Mighty Recruiter, 2021). The results of COVID-19 on staffing vary by industries and from organization to the other. According to Hamouche (2021) a lot of people have lost their jobs or remained unemployed as organizations faced with financial problems because of the pandemic opted for letting go of workers, down skilled by requiring less work experience and education and or cutting back all their recruitment. Staffing issues have deepened at the height of the pandemic due to government mandated restrictions (Chandler Macleod Group, 2021). The Sunday Reporter (2020) states that at the height of the pandemic, the government of Botswana, through a Cabinet directive, froze all new employment inside the public service.

Employee retention is another issue that can be a hot bed for HRM practitioners. There is evidence to suggest that due to fractures between employees and employers during the pandemic related lockdowns

and movement restrictions employees are looking to search for new employers as that phase passes and the economy is opened (Hamouche, 2021). According to Pimentel (2021) since some employers showed acute mistrust towards some employees' capacity to work without constant supervision, some employees are opting to job hunt over going back to where he has been mistrusted. In addition to that others were content working remotely as they were able to successfully pursue side businesses and they want to lose that opportunity by going back to the office. Mayer & Bravery (2021) advise employers to retain and attract top talent by being progressive and pursuing employee development as well as provide appropriate incentive systems in order to attain competitive advantage they have. Drawing from Przytuła (2020), Hamouche (2021) underscores the significance of heightening employee engagement and cultivate a sense of psychological ownership amongst the workforce during this period and beyond, to guarantee organizational success, and avert incurring recruitment costs.

## 5. Performance Management

Performance management is the continuous performance improvement process by which individual and team goals are aligned to the organization's strategic goals (Armstrong, 2009). Performance management take centre stage in organization and employee relationships because it's the basis of organizational survival because it is founded on organizational goals (Sembiring *et al.*, 2020). As stated, before one of the most significant changes that the impact of COVID-19 has had is remote working, unfortunately since organizations especially the public service uses systems and metrics that may be unsuitable for performance management as far as full-time teleworking is concerned (How COVID-19 Has Changed Performance Management, 2021). Wigert & Barrett (2021) postulate that traditional performance metrics may be misrepresentative and or even impracticable in a period where employees had to contend with numerous trials inside and outside of the workplace. Employees had to up-skill in virtual communications, novel work procedures and engagement channels 'on-the-go', as well as at finding the right balance for home and work life instantaneously which might also impinge on efficiency (How COVID-19 Has Changed Performance Management, 2021). The new standards of performance may need to be more collaborative, adaptive, and tailored according to circumstances on the ground (Wigert & Barrett, 2021).

## 6. Training and Career Development

Career development is a continuous process of skills development, defining new goals and job transitions (Medicine Hat College, 2021). During this pandemic, it is apparent that a lot of employers have ignored career development (Nagem, 2021). Falcone (2021) asserts that though to an extent it might be understandable that training and career development may have been sacrificed over emergency challenges at the height of the pandemic however, since there is no end in sight about the COVID-19 crisis, restocking career and professional development is critical. Training and career development is especially essential than ever before during the pandemic (Nagem, 2021). Organizations have to re-skill and up-skill their employees so as they are competent to deal to the current transformative employment alterations across the globe (Przytuła *et al.*, 2020, as cited in Hamouche, 2021).

## 7. Compensation Management

Compensation management is associated with the preparation and application of strategies and programs geared towards consistent fair and equitable compensation of employees (Armstrong & Brown, 1998). Scroggins, Thomas & Morris (2009) assert that strategic compensation infers support to business strategy and sensitivity to predictable environmental demands. Unfortunately, the unpredictability of the COVID-19 environment has upended compensation management much like other traditional HR structures (Starner, 2020). According to Hamouche (2021) after imposed travel restrictions and lockdowns some countries provided financial relief to support workers and organizations. The government of Botswana established the COVID-19 relief fund, which had provision for the wage subsidy for use by the private sector (Selatlhwa, 2020). The public sector was spared problems associated with compensation for the best part, and according to International Labour Organization (2021) the public sector employment has been a safe place during COVID-19 jobs crisis.

## 8. Safety and Health Management

Hamouche (2021) affirms that employee wellbeing in the workplace is the responsibility of the employer, since employers are duty bound to guarantee that the place of work doesn't pose a health hazard, either mentally or physically. Hecker (2020)

underscores that the COVID-19 pandemic has proved to be a workplace crisis. Human resource management (HRM) is thus principally placed to deal with the effect COVID-19 has on the workforce as well as to guarantee and prioritize their health and safety (Sulaiman, Ahmed & Shabbir, 2020). The World Health Organization has distributed guidelines for employee health and safety during the pandemic (WHO, 2020, as cited in Hamouche, 2021). HRM practitioners can leverage on these guidelines to maintain employee safety and health.

The alterations in social and working settings *viz* teleworking static physical distancing, and dynamic physical distancing (Hamouche, 2021) consequent to the pandemic do not only affect physical health but mental health as well (Giorgi *et al.*, 2020). Hamouche (2021) asserts that even employees who do not work remotely might develop mental issues because of the general fear of contracting the virus at work and spreading to family members. Giorgi *et al.* (2020) advise employers to be proactive and monitor mental health symptoms at an early stage and try to cater for diverse needs of different groups of workers.

## 9. Employment Relationship

Employee relations' (ER) explains the connections between organization and its workers by highlighting individual and collective relationships in the workplace with much prominence placed on the relationship between managers and their team members (Verlinden, n.d.). The pandemic has had a profound impact on the traditional relationship between the employee and employer in fact lockdowns and restrictions placed on trading affected the execution of contractual obligations by either party (Hamouche, 2021). According to Staniec (2021), during the advent of pandemic, organizations were in either of the two positions:

- The employer and employees had previous experience of teleworking and as a result the employer had the tools and administrative systems in place for remote working.
- The employer and employees were novices in remote working as a result the employer had to place an unparalleled amount of faith in staff and appreciate that this adjustment had to be tolerated and competently managed. Both sides had to adapt to the new conditions,

and clearly define the parameters of remote work and methods of reporting and monitoring 'on-the-go'.

Hamouche (2021) stresses that countries had to amend laws promptly in order to deal with the COVID-19 disruption period. For instance, in Botswana the Emergency Powers Act 2020 was used to prohibit organizations from initiating a collective layoff procedure during the state of public emergency (SOPE) (Bordering Africa's epicenter, 2021). Not knowing when the pandemic will end made it difficult for deciding on definitive period for protection of employees, which complicated the relationship between employer and worker (Biasi, 2020). The development of COVID-19 vaccines also presented another burning regarding employee relations governments making COVID-19 shots mandatory for some workers in the public sector especially health workers (Mahlaka, 2021). This however provokes issues concerning the legality of the employer to enforce the COVID-19 jab on their employees (Rothstein, Parmet & Reiss, 2021). According to Rothstein *et al.* (2021), the implementation of severe and strong-armed tactics could achieve negative results as individuals could rebel against such measures (Osborne, 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO) also warned against imposition of Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination specifying that it should be thought of as a last resort and when all practicable routes to advance vaccination acceptance have failed. The (WHO) further highlighted that usefulness of directives are very context-specific and as a result public confidence and faith in authorities have to be taken into consideration.

### 9.1 Opportunities, Future Organizational Directions, and Insights into HRM Interventions

Dayal, Thakur & Asamoah-Appiah (2021) assert that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a host of complications globally, and the field of HRM was not spared the misery either, however, Dayal *et al.* (2021) highlight that where is problem there is an opportunity masquerading as a solution. This section seeks to illuminate these opportunities and their connections to the prospective future trends in HRM. Human resources management practitioners had to contend with unprecedentedly challenges since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic than at any other point in the past *viz* global health crisis, downsizings, psychological wellness crises, societal discontent and an economic downturn are just a



few of the key issues keeping HR professionals up at night (Friedman, 2021). According to Hamouche (2021), the pandemic has forced organizations to reconsider their HRM strategies and to go outside the realms of classic human resources management models, by fast-tracking the adoption of disruptive technologies as a means of survival and guarantying organizational efficiency. Using digital technology and virtual work meant organizations gradually relied more on tools to measure personnel involved, efficient and effectiveness (Dayal *et al.*, 2021), and in so doing had to turn to data discernments for direction, and this underscores the importance Data holds in the future of HR (Totah, 2021). The use of information technology-based systems such as applicant tracking software as well as cloud-computing underpin the importance of data in assisting HR practitioners in recruitment and workflow streamlining (Amery, 2021).

Hamouche (2021) highlights that albeit at a lesser intensity than at the height of the pandemic, teleworking and virtual meetings are here to stay. Furthermore, Amery (2021) advances that HR professionals must be conscious of the fact that the upcoming workforce favour a work-life balance with flexible schedules and teleworking. Despite its challenges, telecommuting gives workers flexibility in work hours and provokes a feeling of job control (Hamouche, 2021). Amery (2021) further posits that workers opt out of the traditional work schedule in favour jobs that allows them to pursue their side hustles. As a result, HR practitioners and managers must consider innovative ways to be efficient and agile as per the current trends. As organizations scrambled to react to a crisis that was beyond their control, it should come as no surprise telecommuting, physical distancing and other measures adopted might have contributed to employees' mental health problems (Amery, 2021). Dayal *et al.* (2021) highlight that it is imperative that employers put in place appropriate organizational actions to support employees, to ease their acclimatization to workplace disruptions and to safeguard their mental health.

## 10. Results and Discussion

The main problem the study has unearthed is that most of the literature on the research problem is based on the private sector. Furthermore, where there is some literature relating to the public sector human resource it is remotely connected to the

research question. However, since to a larger extent there is a common goal of public and private-sector HR management, the research study has found that during the pandemic remote working and the use of technology was a necessity as physical distancing protocols were unavoidable. However, in some cases it gave rise to mental health issue, because of the absence of societal connections or work vs family time clashes resultant from working from home. Furthermore COVID-19 protocols highlighted the importance of occupational health and safety in the workplace.

Because of the limited research specifically directed towards human resource management COVID-19 implications, challenges, opportunities, and future organizational directions in the public sector, the findings are based to a greater extent on data about the private sector human resource management. Despite the common goals of public sector and private sector human resource management, it has been evident that some of the experiences during this pandemic were not the same. For instance, where the private sector laid-off employees or couldn't pay salaries because of lack of economic activity over extended periods, public sector organizations did not experience any of that because they are tax funded. Besides this, the other measures like telecommuting and physical distancing were common in the two sectors. However, where there is likelihood that the private sector will continue working like that the bureaucratic nature doesn't give confidence that the public servants will continue with remote working when unless there is another disaster.

## 11. Conclusion and Recommendations

During the height of COVID-19 the public sector in Botswana explored the same avenues as the private sector to deal with the challenges. Working from home and the use of technology protected workers from the risk of infection, while they keep on working for the organization. However, that gave rise to mental health problems as individuals adjusted to spending extended periods of time at home while lacking societal connections. On a positive note, this challenge brought mental health and the attention it deserves. Since there is no end in sight of COVID-19 virus there must be further investment in areas of virtual work, and mental health, literature prove that skills in remote working attained by employees and organizations during the pandemic will be used in the future. However, because the study is based

on exploring available literature, and since there is shortage of literature on the specific topic a resolute inference regarding public sector human resource cannot be made with confidence. The study therefore recommends the following:

- The public sector must do more to assimilate employee health to work designs rather than trying to address health with occasionally wellness program (that includes physical, mental, financial, and social health).
- The increasing prominence in the use of technology to hold meetings means that virtual work is here to stay, as a result the public service must invest more on technology.
- The public sector must leverage on the prominence of usage of technology to do online training and career development
- There must be more exploratory research regarding the public sector.

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# Strategies for Managing a Virtual Workforce

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**Abstract:** In today's fast-paced, ever-changing organizational environment, there is a heightened need for versatility and productivity in every situation. With the advance in technology and changing customer needs, an organization can find itself left behind the competition if it does not work smarter and faster than others in the marketplace. To keep up with these demands, many organizations have had to do away with the concept of traditional, on-site, office environments for those of virtual configuration, especially now during this COVID-19 pandemic as this allows companies to operate with lower overhead costs, capitalize on geographically dispersed talent and provide flexibility in the services they offer. This has since been a challenge to managers as they cannot have face-to-face interactions and have had to come up with new management styles to make sure the virtual workforce is performing and producing as per organisational standards.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Managing, Strategies, Virtual workforce

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## 1. Introduction

According to Skyrme (2000) a virtual organisation is one "where the physical office is replaced by office services". Keeling (2000), on the other hand, says: "A new form of organisation is evolving that uses information technologies to collapse time and space." They also mention that 'virtual workers are people that work at home or away from the workplace and have their own computers and data communication devices". A virtual organisation is therefore a place where people work by using computer networks to work cooperatively and share knowledge quickly and easily regardless of time, distance and organisational boundaries.

In a traditional office, managers need to administer and coordinate efforts to achieve the goals of the organisation (Keeling, 2000). If managers want to attain the organisational objectives, they need to combine human resources, material resources and financial resources into a productive system (Keeling, 2000). However, the manager of the virtual workforce needs to "find new ways of working with people at arm's length" (Brevis & Vrba, 2013). New organisational structures need to be implemented and managers need to learn more about the virtual workforce. With technology such as e-mail, e-commerce, Internet, cell phones, etc. the time is finally right for virtual offices to take shape. Computer networks make it possible for a person to work outside the confined walls of the

traditional office. They will be working from a virtual office – a portable office that allows people to be functional and effective wherever they are, be it in the car, at home, in a hotel lobby or at a client's office. It is therefore important for companies to start spending money on computer networks and other technologies rather than on buildings (Brevis & Vrba, 2013). A virtual workforce constitutes employees that operate remotely from each other and from managers. Therefore, managing this emerging workforce successfully depends largely on effective communication between managers and the employees that constitute the virtual workforce (Ejiwale, 2008). The purpose of this paper is to identify and evaluate a variety of leadership skills and techniques related to managing in a virtual workforce to assist managers improve the effectiveness of their virtual workforce to increase performance, and ultimately, positively impact business results. Traditional jobs have been office-based, with close supervision. In the virtual office managers are challenged with managing the workforce because they do not know how to manage virtual workers off-site, workers that they cannot see. The challenge is to establish methods for effectively managing the performance of virtual team members to ensure they are held accountable for their actions despite the absence of an on-site manager or supervisor. They feel that managing virtual workers off-site places a huge burden on them. The biggest difference is the shift in management style from direct control to management of results. The biggest challenge for

most organisations in managing the virtual workforce is determining how managers can manage the virtual workforce, how managers can improve communication with the virtual workforce and how managers can control the virtual workforce.

## 2. Background

During the last decades all administrative activities were centred in the traditional office where the administration function was performed. Employees worked at their own physical workplace with furniture and equipment provided by their employer. They had to do filing, receive visitors, take telephone calls, type documents, make photocopies, etc. The list is endless. The virtual organisation emerged from the rapid developments in information technology (Suazo, 2006). This is also supported by Hoffman (1999), who says "A new administrative scenario – the virtual office emerged in enterprises due to the influence of technological development, which drastically changed the traditional office scenario". The meaning of the word "office" as we understand it today will have a completely different meaning in the future. Organisations will have to adapt to their new environment where Information Technology will play a major role in communication within the organisation.

According to Brevis and Vrba (2003), "modern managers need to appreciate and understand the power of technology and must be able to use it to the best interest of the organisations they work for, pp 50". Virtual teams allow companies to operate with lower overhead costs, capitalise on geographically dispersed talent and provide flexibility in the services they offer. One source estimates that 20 percent of the world's workforce will be working virtually by 2005 (Burtha, 2004) and The Gartner Group had estimated that by 2008, 41 million employees will be working virtually at least one day per week, and nearly 100 million will do so at least one day per month (Consultants, 2005). In the coming decades, most people will be working in virtual teams for at least some part of their jobs (Suazo, 2006). Human beings have always functioned in face-to-face group settings. While the use of teams is on the rise, the face-to-face aspect of normal working relationships is changing dramatically. Electronic communication and digital technologies give people a historically unprecedented ability to work together at a distance, resulting in a powerful trend to team across organizational boundaries (Lipnack, 1997).

## 3. Literature Review

The virtual workforce does the same job in nearly the same way, and working full-time or part-time from any place, be it at home, in a car, in a hotel lobby, etc. The virtual workforce is not one that be confined to the walls of a traditional office. The virtual force will remain as employees and will have all the same terms of employment as the traditional worker. Virtual workers do not fit in with traditional organisational paradigms. Virtual workers are usually self-initiated and self-directed and although they cannot always be controlled, they need to be supported from the top (Van Der Merwe, 2007).

Technology brought positive changes to organisations but also changed the position of the manager. Traditionally the worksite was located close to a source of skilled labour and employees were near their direct heads. Managers could observe the work being done by employees and could easily communicate with employees face-to-face. With the emergence of the new organisation virtual office employees do not work in the confined space of the office but at a remote site by using a computer linked to the central office (Robbins, 2001). The traditional face-to-face management in the virtual has been removed and therefore the need for managers to "control" the work of employees needs to be changed. Managers and executives usually fear that they will not know if the virtual workers are working if they cannot watch over them while they are at work. The simple rule is that remote management is not much different from managing people on-site (Montero, 2004). It involves basic management skills that include setting goals, assessing progress, giving regular feedback, and managing by results.

One cannot be sure that employees are really working every minute you see them in the office either. Managers can easily confuse activities with accomplishments (Montero, 2004). Managers can feel that those who worked reduced hours, even if they worked efficiently, would not be promoted because they were not sufficiently committed. The long hour's culture in many organisations makes full-time work difficult to define. Virtual workers cannot be measured on the hours worked but should be measured on results and the attainment of established goals, because those are the only issues which can be objectively measured in any event (Van Der Merwe, 2007). The ultimate responsibility of managers is to attain the goals of the organisation by

reaching the highest possible output with the lowest possible input of resources. Due to the lack of physical presence during telework, more indirect and delegated management will be adequate for virtual workers (Kondrat *et al.*, 2003).

Management by objectives (MBO) is used as a planning technique and is based on the belief that the joint participation of workers and managers in translating broad organisational goals into more specific individual goals has a positive impact on employee motivation (Smit *et al.*, 2003). "The importance of objectives or goals in management can best be seen by showing how MBO works in practice" (Smit *et al.*, 2003). The process of MBO can only be successful if it starts at the top of the organisation and has the support of top management. Management and employees should be educated about MBO and its role in it. Everyone must know that they have accepted it and should therefore be committed to it (Smit *et al.*, 2003). The system of MBO can be applied to virtual workers. Instead of the virtual workers being told exactly how to do their work they are given tasks or projects that must be completed and specific results that need to be achieved. The objectives and goals are not imposed by the manager, but they are set and agreed to by managers and virtual workers. Virtual workers are free to work at their own pace and have freedom of action. They must decide on the best way to achieve their goals and objectives. The manager will measure their performance according to the accomplishment of the goals and objectives and not how employees follow the instructions of the manager to complete a task.

Workers need to set targets for their own objectives, commit themselves to attain these targets and evaluate themselves on how they have met these objectives (Keeling, 2000). The supervisor needs to give feedback to the employees as to how they have reached their goals. Employees need to discuss the problems they have experienced. New goals need to be set if deviations occurred. Managers need to do a regular evaluation of performance, goals, and expectations in order to detect problems or weaknesses early (Van Der Merwe, 2007). Another essential aspect of virtual teams is their ability to make use of the features of an electronic environment. Burtha (2004) reference several methods of communication for use in virtual teams including, but not limited to: websites where team leaders and members can post lessons learned, internal

electronic Bulletin boards to be used as a medium for asking and answering questions as well as receiving suggestions from each other, and conference calls, e-mail, and video conferencing tools to deliver both written and verbal communication which helps to satisfy the specific communication needs of each individual on the team.

In a conventional, co-located team environment, supervising and monitoring performance is often accomplished by walking around and personally checking on the Activities of each team member. As Platt (2001) indicated, however, for Managers of virtual teams – management by walking around involves travelling to different buildings, cities, states, or perhaps even different countries to accomplish the same task.

Bellingham (2001) suggests that clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of everyone enables a team to know exactly what each member is expected to do to achieve their goals and objectives. By delineating roles, team members are also better equipped to provide appropriate levels of support to one another throughout the course of a project or task. Additionally, by sharing information and negotiating expectations, conflict can be reduced, or more easily resolved when differences in perception occur, making the performance management process more accurate and fairer. To be successful in virtual groups, therefore, people must have much more independence and decision-making capability than people typically do in bureaucracies (Suazo, 2006). People who form teams that cross boundaries need to know more, decide more, and do more. This is made possible by clear purpose and personal commitments together with open, accessible, comprehensive information environments. A virtual leader, therefore, should focus on balancing and sharing the control within their team because too little or too much control can lead to the same outcome, low satisfaction. Exerting too much control can be construed as over-managing, not caring what team members think, and not valuing the ideas of others (LaFasto, 2001). All tasks must be assigned and subsequently effectively managed in the context of any team. In a virtual team, however, the following unique challenges presented by Bellingham (2001) may be associated with this responsibility:

- Evaluation is difficult because day-to-day performance is not observed.

- The person who leads the team may not be the boss.
- A person's role in a cross-functional team may not be the same as their job description.
- One person may be on five different teams at the same time.
- When a person has multiple bosses, all bosses tend to assume they have the person 100 percent.

Nonetheless, leaders must find strategies to manage performance accurately, fairly, equitably and consistently. Furthermore, team members must be held accountable for the tasks they have been assigned. Dziak (2001) recommends the following tips creating an effective virtual work environment:

- Establish the ground rules.
- Be prepared to enforce the policy.
- Practice effective meeting management.
- Provide effective support.
- Manage all direct reports by results.

He goes on to suggest that managers break employee work into objectives, projects, tasks, and action items. Assigning, tracking, evaluating, and rewarding work outputs using these specifics dramatically improve a manager's knowledge of work activities, consistency in establishing expectations, and ability to objectively determine whether those expectations are being met. Leading a geographically dispersed workforce from an e-leadership perspective may pose several unique challenges if the virtual workforce has no trust in e-leadership (Avolio *et al.*, 2000). Trust is defined by Avolio *et al.* (2000), quoting Mayer *et al.* (1995) as "the willingness of a team member to be vulnerable to the actions of another team member(s) based on the expectation that the other(s) will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control another team member(s)." Trust is critical in virtual work since direct supervision, similarity in backgrounds, and experience and a common form of social control in traditional workforce are not feasible (Ejiwale, 2008). Hence, leadership in the virtual workforce should

facilitate the formation of trust-building in a virtual workforce context. As a result, the effects of leadership on trust should not be underestimated. Since this approach is transformational, such leadership should instil confidence among virtual workforce team members about the ability of individuals in their team through: (a) individualized consideration, whereby the leader considers and encourages consideration of input provided by every member of the team and; (b) inspirational motivation, whereby the leader expresses confidence in team members' collective ability to accomplish a task all members identify with (Avolio *et al.*, 2000).

Other challenges to consider as more organizations implement a virtual and remote workforce model, is the need to address unforeseen modifications in structure, procedures, technology, management, and other operational aspects increases. With off-site staff, leaders will need to explicitly communicate the values and culture of the organization to ensure understanding and acceptance (Ware, 2010). Despite the challenges associated with remote work environments, increasingly, staff has come to expect to work off-site not as a privilege or perk but as a normal part of their job (Advantage, 2014). When organizations migrate to a remote work environment, a number of factors must be considered. Such factors include recruiting, pay structure, performance measurement, how bonds and connections between workers will be developed to form a team, operational protocols, and training. Moreover, organizational culture and the recognition and understanding of cultural diversity are key areas of focus. Transitioning from a command orientation and bureaucratic hierarchical culture requires not only training but commitment (Flood, 2018). Successful remote workers will be self-directed, motivated, resourceful, and able to identify their own career paths. Unlike employees who relied on management's detailed direction, leaders will need to recognize and cultivate talent that can solve problems, network with their peers, and direct their own projects (Hickman, 2018). An essential role of leadership will be to build personal relationships as this may be the only connection workers have with the organization and how they form their impression of it.

Though some managers may assume that remote and on-site employees can be managed the same way, there is a great difference between the two. Without physical proximity to fellow workers and the commensurate social element associated with



an on-site workplace, the remote employee may feel isolated. Without visual cues, body language, and face-to-face communications developed with day-to-day contact, there are less team cohesion, trust, camaraderie, and satisfaction with the team (Floody, 2019). Without a sense of belonging, it is difficult for remote workers to understand the role they play and build a shared sense of purpose.

A micromanagement style will no longer work for a remote workforce that thrives on autonomy. Without seeing individuals face-to-face, new communication etiquette must be developed. Unlike situations where a manager can pop into an office in physical proximity to clarify, correct, or update objectives, remote employees require better upfront communication and regular updates. Learning how to build trust throughout the organization will become an essential part of organizational culture (Ware, 2010).

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

Research has proved that the paradigm shifts in the corporate world of work – anytime, anywhere, in real space or in cyberspace is here to stay. Virtual workers and managers working away from the office is now a reality and will become more common in the future. Companies who wait for the future to allow the virtual office to effectively take shape may find themselves at a competitive disadvantage. Now is the time for companies to create the conditions for the virtual office to emerge. Given the benefits of connectivity and effective information sharing among stakeholders, many industries have continued to seek its application and implementation. Therefore, the success of coordinating work among a virtual workforce depends on "effective indirect communication" between the leadership and the virtual workforce (Ejiwale, 2008).

Adopting a remote workforce model has eased hiring for many organizations and increased access to talent (Floody, 2019). It has been predicted that those who refuse to adopt this new model risk losing their current employees as well as potentially overlooking future talent. Multiple, converging factors are influencing the shift in workplace staffing and leadership roles. Major advances in technology, a shortage of talent, and new generational expectations are at the forefront. In many cases, companies offer employees a remote work environment out of necessity. Global companies in the technology and other sectors employ highly skilled employees

regardless of their geographic residence (Advantage, 2014). Though most organizations are using a remote workforce and have technological systems in place to support them, many do not have policies in place for off-site workers. Organizations that have implemented policies believe they have become more lenient and inclusive (Floody, 2019). Still, for those who grew up in a traditional management style, it may be difficult to alter long-held beliefs. The era of managing while walking around and using visual cue to check on employee well-being is changing.

While outcomes and performance are key metrics to determine the effectiveness of staff, another essential characteristic to successful remote management is mutual trust between staff and leadership (Younger, 2017). Relationships at the office are born from comradery, collaboration, and personal interaction. From these, trust develops creating a sense of cohesion and confidence in each other. Lacking physical interaction, management must develop a trust that virtual teams can effectively communicate, self-manage their time, possess motivation, and have resourcefulness to deliver results (Advantage, 2014). Technology can be used to see faces, hear voices, build teams, brainstorm, and share socially. Team events, whether in person or virtual, need to occur to provide a sense of belonging. Such events offer remote and on-site staff an opportunity to experience a different side of their teammates through body language, sense of humour, and personal stories. Moreover, such events provide an opportunity to recognize remote staff in front of their peers for job performance (Floody, 2019).

A report by the Gartner Group states that as of 2008, 41 million corporate employees globally telecommute at least 1 day a week, a figure that jumps to 100 million for telecommuting at least 1 day a month. Most of these are U.S. employees, as U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that as many as 15 percent of employed people now telecommute one or more times per week. From the employee perspective, telecommuting is associated with higher job satisfaction and has been widely advocated as a solution to the challenges individuals face in reconciling their personal and work lives. Telecommuting can allow individuals to have greater control over work-family boundaries and to schedule work at times of peak efficiency or around family needs (Lautsch, 2011). The reduction in commute times that results from telecommuting also frees temporal resources that can be devoted to family or job

needs, as employees often substitute commuting time for additional work time. Successful global virtual teams thrive in organizations that foster vibrant communication, interaction, trust, clarity of task and team goals, and the development of a global team-based body of knowledge (Govindarajan, 2001).

Within the next decade, companies anticipate that more than one third of their full-time, permanent workforce will work remotely (Floody, 2019). Complimenting on-site staff with remote expertise can provide huge benefits to companies including cost savings, speed, and flexibility (Younger, 2017). Leading a distributed workforce requires resources, formal policies, and new ideas to create teams who will be relied on to achieve goals and objectives. Performance management, training, communication, and relationship building take on a different level of complexity when employees are not on-site and dispersed across multiple time zones and varied cultures (Hickman, 2018), all of which challenge the ability of managers to adequately motivate, coach, and develop employees within a virtual environment. This increasing trend will require new leadership skills in an era where staff no longer work in the office next door.

Emerging leaders who will manage the remote workforce of today and into the future will be markedly different from the leadership of the twentieth century (Hickman, 2018). A new workforce with flexible work hours that cater to their lifestyle and wide geographic mobility will demand it. The top-down decision model will give way to autonomous and agile workers capable of self-management and motivation as well as resourcefulness (Flood, 2018). Managing staff from a distance is vastly different than managing face-to-face. Beyond technical and business skills, leadership must acquire specialized aptitudes for coaching, adaptability, career guidance, communicating, interpersonal relationships, and developing cultural sensitivity (Advantage, 2014).

Implementing a remote workforce will require an overhaul of formal training programs for all levels of the organization from top leadership to down. There will be a need to raise awareness of the new work environment and its implications (Ware, 2010). Protocols and measurement matrices will be required to measure performance, thus requiring closer collaboration between human resources, procurement, legal, and information (Dessain, 2014). Expectations which are specific, measurable,

action-oriented, realistic, and time-bound must be communicated. Human resources must now embrace a new paradigm of a virtual workforce that is hyper connected through technology (Kennelly, 2015). While a remote workforce will present its challenges, it also presents an opportunity for employee loyalty and retention. Instead of losing a valued employee when personal circumstances create a need for relocation, remote work helps retain these valued employees plus their institutional knowledge. The costly expenses to recruit, hire, and train a replacement are reduced or eliminated (Ware, 2010). Learning to work on a global virtual team, across spatial, cultural, and linguistic barriers involves adaptation to new knowledge, practices, and attitudes (Neeley, 2017). Adaptation, however, can be a significant ask of people who have important technical responsibilities in the company.

Ricard (1993) suggests the following formula for balancing the cross-cultural communication process: attitudes help us decide to do something; having knowledge helps us know what to do; and having skills helps us do whatever we decide to do. Therefore, in a virtual team, members must be able to recognize their attitudes about the differences of his or her teammates, know, from the other person's cultural perspective what needs to be done about the difference, and then be equipped with the appropriate skills to effectively handle the situation. In other words, the key to achieving high performance in diverse teams is to move beyond a tolerance for differences and discover value in diversity (Soles, 2005).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Virtual managing has become increasingly prominent in recent years and is emerging as one of the most common trends of today's corporate culture, organisations may find themselves falling behind the industry standards if they do not invest the time and effort to enhance the effectiveness of their virtual leaders. A virtual leader's inability to establish trust among their team members, communicate effectively and manage team members' performance and accountability will result in their teams operating at standards of performance that are well below those of the teams headed by leaders who are effective in managing these organizational dynamics.

Each generation of leadership will need to embrace the new paradigm of doing business. It is a new

workforce and new workplace. Remote working is expected to increase substantially with the generational shift of the workforce, continued technological advancements, and expanded globalization. Preparing for and addressing these challenges enables the organization to inculcate an inclusive remote workforce culture. The right leadership will build trust with constant contact, encourage open dialogue, and cultivate collaboration (Kennelly, 2015). As organizations move toward a remote workforce, the more virtual they become, the more essential the leadership skills. The increased efficiency of virtual workers does not only result in enhanced productivity, but the added flexibility of virtual work. However, if this workforce is not well managed, its implementation may constitute waste rather than fulfilling its anticipated outcome of increasing productivity (Ejiwale, 2008). For Managers to effectively manage a virtual workforce, the author recommends the following:

- **Prioritise Communication**

Communication is key as it helps to enable both employees and managers to share ideas for the greater good of the organisations. Platforms such as the use of email can be utilised and well as schedules video calls and phones calls lest employees have to drop everything to go online for a meeting that was not scheduled.

- **Encourage Employees to Set Boundaries**

The virtual office can be a challenge especially where one is working from home and children do not fully comprehend that the parents are working even though they are home. It is therefore important for employees to set boundaries such that when they are working they are not disturbed and that they can be accessed by family members via phone calls or during their lunch break.

- **Promote Transparency**

Transparency is very important in any organisation. The virtual organisation is no different and therefore every decision, or planning should be shared with employees despite being in different places. Consultations should be done just as in a traditional office where employees can be easily convened for a meeting. This allows employees to have a say in the mechanics of their organisation. This also averts conflicts as everything will be public knowledge.

- **Check-in on Employees Regularly**

Checking on employees regularly is very important as the manager cannot move around offices to check on the employees. Phone calls, video calls, emailing are ways in which managers can engage with employees.

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# Occurrence of Religiosity in the Malawi Public Sector: An Analysis of Perceptions of Key Stakeholders

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**Abstract:** This study analyses the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the occurrence of religiosity in the public sector in Malawi. It comes on the backdrop of mounting interest in workplace religiosity and spirituality globally, which is attributable to such touted benefits as improved employee performance. However, the study and practice of religiosity, a concept which in this study subsumes the concept of spirituality, has been limited to private organizations due to the western ideals of church-state separation. Within Malawi though, which in this matter is a microcosm of the African context, such principles are not entertained. This offers an opportunity to explore and leverage religion's purported potential, to address performance deficiencies and other challenges in this region's government sector. As such, the perception of key stakeholders regarding the occurrence of religiosity in the public workplace may be of critical importance as it may influence the acceptance, retention, and even exploitation of the concept to the benefit of the sector. However, there appear to be no such studies to determine how the existence of religion therein is regarded by relevant key stakeholders. Mixed methods have, therefore, been applied to collect and analyze data from stakeholders at multiple levels within the religious and public sectors, and from other pertinent bodies. The study finds that sentiments regarding the occurrence of religiosity in the public sector workplace have been categorized thus: those that are positive and accommodative, those that are neutral, and the utterly negative. The majority perceived workplace religion positively, albeit advocating caution due to religion's propensity for disruption in the workplace. Those that were utterly unaccommodating were so very few, and so insignificant. This study, therefore, concludes that unlike in other cultural contexts, religiosity is welcome in the African public sector. These findings essentially denote that the management of the public sector need not be uniform globally, but rather contingent on cultural contexts, among other factors. This paper, therefore, recommends that Malawi and countries in similar cultural settings should deliberately integrate religiosity into general public sector administration and particularly, for performance.

**Keywords:** Religiosity, Public sector workplace, Religious sector, Perception

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, interest in workplace religiosity and spirituality has increased (Karakas, 2010; Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014; Sheikhy, Gheisari & Farokhian, 2015; Ranani, 2017; Farmer, Allen, Duncan & Alagaraja, 2019) particularly in the United States of America (Karakas, 2010; Farmer *et al.*, 2019) and generally across the world (Karakas, 2010), among both scholars and corporate managers (Karakas, 2010; Pradhan, Pradhan & Jena, 2016). The growing fascination with these constructs, which in this study are covered under the term religiosity, has manifested in the increased number of studies around the phenomena (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014; Houghton, Neck & Krishnakumar, 2016; Fox, Camron, Webster & Casper, 2018; Farmer *et al.*, 2019), the related publications flooding the literary market (Karakas, 2010; Pradhan, Pradhan & Jena, 2016), adoption of apparent religion-based business strategies

by corporations such as Boeing, Coca-Cola, Intel, Sears (Karakas, 2010), Ford Motor Company, the World Bank, Apple, and Hewlett-Packard (Mathew, Prashar, Ramanathan, Pandey & Parsad, 2020), Google, and Maruti Suzuki (Devendhiran & Wesley, 2017) and its exploration by influential contemporary management authors such as John Maxwell or Stephen Covey (King, 2007).

The rationale for the attraction is the subject of contention (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014). Some scholars have attributed it to a paradigm shift in management, resulting in businesses' change of focus to people, planet, and profits (Pradhan, Pradhan & Jena, 2016; Farmer *et al.*, 2019). Other intellectuals have ascribed it to modern enlightened leadership theories (Roof, 2015) and the growing urge to tap into the potential of eastern philosophies (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014). Alternative perspectives have highlighted employees' demands; the quest for

meaning and purpose in the workplace, and the desire to bring whole selves to work as opposed to parking the religious part of their life at home (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014; Saseendran, 2014). More pragmatic views have focused on its touted benefits to organisations (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014), which include performance enhancement (King, 2007; Osman-Gani, Hashim & Ismail, 2013; Fox, Camron, Webester & Casper, 2018; Prashar, Ramanathan & Mathew, 2018).

The integration of religion into the workplace has been limited to private organizations due to the western ideal of church-state separation. The implication is that religiosity has been studied or practised relatively easier in the private sector than in government departments and agencies (King, 2007; Farmer *et al.*, 2019). The downside is that outcomes of such studies, conducted in the private sector, may not be generalised to the public sector. Although some scholars such as Farmer *et al.* (2019), King (2007), and Shah, Larbi & Batley (2007) point out that the boundary between the public and private sector is diminishing, there remain fundamental differences between the two sectors (De Bruijn, 2007), that may justify a separate study. As such, stakeholders of the public sector and religiosity forfeit the benefit of knowledge regarding the propensity of religiosity to influence that sector. Hence calls have arisen for further research of religiosity in the public sector (Farmer *et al.*, 2019).

Fortunately, within Malawi, which in this regard is microcosmic of the African contextual setup, principles of church-state separation are not entertained. This offers an opportunity to explore and leverage religion's influence, and hence its purported potential, to address performance deficiencies and other challenges in this region's government sector. As such the perception of key stakeholders regarding the occurrence of religiosity in the public workplace may be of critical importance as it may influence the acceptance, retention and even exploitation of the concept to the benefit of the sector. However, there appears to be a dearth of studies to determine how the existence of religion therein is regarded by relevant key stakeholders. This study addresses itself to that gap.

## 2. Methodology

Although it is a mixed study, the qualitative approach has been prioritised and emphasized whereby focus

groups and in-depth interviews have been utilised to get data from stakeholders at various levels in the public and religious sectors, respectively. These have been complemented by data extracted from a survey that was derived from a study on the relationship between religiosity and public sector employee performance. Within the public sector, data was collected from the Ministry Education due to its strategic position in the development of Malawi, its monopoly of the national budget, its covering the largest proportion of employees in the Malawi public sector, and the accessibility of its members for data collection sessions. In addition, through snowballing, one representative was identified from a government-independent education-oriented body. From the religious sector, data was collected from the two religions of Christianity and Islam, as the two religions with the highest membership in Malawi; as well as a representative from the group of atheists to provide a counter perspective due to its anti-religion stance. From Christianity, it was from the Roman Catholic, CCAP, and Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) as the biggest overall church, the biggest protestant church, and a unique protestant church, respectively. In addition, two influential leaders of Pentecostal churches were identified through snowballing and interviewed.

Data was collected across the levels in each of the religious and public sectors, to get a holistic comprehension of the relationship between the highlighted variables, and for triangulation purposes. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data is optimal as the qualitative strand takes into account stakeholders' deep-rooted views on the matter since it allows them expression that is not constrained by pre-existing theories or explanations. On the other hand, the quantitative approach would serve validation purposes. Such an approach allows for leveraging the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods and limiting their weaknesses (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014). Thematic analysis and descriptive analysis were used for the qualitative and quantitative data, respectively.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Main themes arising from the qualitative data have been categorized into: (i) positive and accommodative position; (ii) neutral, non-committal or balanced position and; (iii) negative and disapproving position. However, respondents had reckoned that the

influence of religion in the workplace is the same regardless of whether it is a public or private sector context. As such, their responses were not exclusively with regard to the public sector, as highlighted by one of them:

*"(Differentiating) is very difficult because they are the same people that are working in government, that are working in the private sector" (National leader of Christian denomination 2).*

Although the lack of differentiation between the sectors is attributed to the employees, it may be due to the recently introduced New Public Management which, according to Tambulasi (2010) heavily borrows from the private sector. Hence, some have observed that the demarcation between the two sectors is increasingly becoming blurred (King, 2007; Shah *et al.*, 2007) and that, with regards to the occurrence of non-public sector constructs such as religiosity or spirituality, the effect in the two sectors may be the same (King, 2007; Farmer *et al.*, 2019); others such as De Bruijn (2007) have differed, highlighting key differences. Again, based on the findings of the study, there were fundamentally no differences in the perceptions of the respondents from the various sections such as the public versus religious sector, Christians versus Muslims, and among the various Christian denominations. This could be because all the participants were socialized within the same contextual environment that is infused with Abrahamic religiosity values. The exception was the respondent from atheism which is reflective of their irreligious stance.

### 3.1 Positive and Accommodative Sentiments Towards Workplace Religiosity

The majority of the responses reflected a positive view of religiosity in the workplace; whether that it is needed or that it should be tolerated. This may reflect Africa's cultural context, whence the employees emanate and where religion is prevalent and influential. The key themes arising from the data include: the role of religious teachings, the instrumentalist rationale, and mere benevolence to employees.

#### 3.1.1 The Role of Religious Teachings

By teaching about work, religions imply a positive view of religiosity in the workplace. Since such teachings can only be implemented in the workplace, giving and supporting them, reflects acceptance of

religious influence therein. In this regard, a senior leader of a Pentecostal Christian church confirmed and supported the existence of such:

*"... actually in our school of ministry we have a course called principles of work ... religiosity or spirituality should actually enhance work output tremendously" (Senior Pastor, PICC Church, Lilongwe).*

Hence, adherents of such religions have values, attitudes, and behaviours imbued in them through their respective affiliations which they attempt to implement at work either actively or unconsciously, implying acceptance of religious practices in the workplace. Considering that 97.9% of Malawians are religious, religiosity would be viewed positively in the majority of workplaces. Sentiments that such teachings are expected to be implemented in the workplace were echoed by other respondents:

*"... what our religion teaches us it's how we are supposed to live on a daily basis ... and (at) work, at home and everywhere we go ..." (Respondent number 5, BT Catholic Church FGD).*

*"... whenever a Muslim is at a workplace, he should do justice ... say nothing but the truth... and (be) hard-working too..." (Imam for a Lilongwe-based mosque).*

Although from a different denomination and religion, the responses reflect the expectation that religion should exist in the workplace and that it should be impactful. A respondent from the public sector also finds the influence of religion in the workplace palatable:

*"... The Bible says, when you work, work as if you are working for Jesus Christ... how did Jesus Christ work? He pleased the Father, and therefore, I should also please Him..." (Retired Principal Secretary, MoEST).*

The assimilation of biblical teachings such as this one from Colossians 3 verse 23 (*Holy Bible: New International Version*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, 2011) at the senior level of Principal Secretary may act as a signal to lower level employees to view religiosity positively in the public sector workplace. According to Ghazzawi, Smith & Cao (2016) and Farmer *et al.* (2019), leaders play a key role in ensuring a conducive environment for religiosity in the workplace. Hence religious practices are expected to thrive in such contexts.

Furthermore, that religiosity may enter the public workplace through teachings acquired by employees at their religions is supported by Shah *et al.* (2007) and King (2007) and confirmed by Lowery (2005) through an empirical study. Such imply default positivity towards the concept. Relatedly, theorists have argued that the purported exclusion of religiosity from public administration in the west is arrogant (Lynch, Omdal & Cruise, 1996).

### 3.1.2 The Instrumentalist Rationale

The fundamental premises of positivity towards workplace religiosity has been its potential benefit to organizations. Relatedly, the dominant themes from the data have related to religion's impact on behavior, and the benefits from divine intervention.

#### 3.1.2.1 The Impact of Religion on Behaviour

This theme captures respondents' positive sentiments towards workplace religiosity owing to its positive effect on behaviour. Godly fear has been credited for inducing behavioral transformation. Three participants from both the religions and the public sector substantiated that position:

*"...if you are a faithful Muslim, who really fears God, ... (he) sees ... wherever you are ... everything that you do, you may cheat that director ... but God will know that you are lying. ... on judgment day all of us will be asked on everything ... so you will be punished." (Respondent number 4, Lilongwe Islam, FGD).*

*"... because they will have the sense of the fear of God in them. That is when they say ... I cannot do such a thing because that will be committing wickedness against my God. So, that way your company resources will be protected but also ... see that sense of dedication to God will motivate people to work harder in their workplaces because their God already encouraged them ... encourages them to be hard workers." (Senior Pastor, Pentecostal Church, Lilongwe).*

*"...your beliefs will determine how you perform if you know that there is a power above you ... So, you fear because there is somebody who sees everything ... rather than the boss who is here today and then you hear that he has gone to the UK for two to three weeks, then you say ah let's relax but with God, he is everywhere and sees everything. So, when you have that in mind, your performance would be determined by that power..." (Retired Principal Secretary, MoEST).*

These responses share a particular characterisation of God which is attributable to the Abrahamic religions and aids behavioral change; he prescribes moral and behavioural standards to be met, is omnipresent and omniscient as to monitor peoples' behaviour violation and is omnipotent as to punish deviance. Such view of God produces fear and reverence in the adherents of Christianity and Islam which in turn, suffices to either induce certain acceptable behaviours or control divergent ones. Since the resultant behaviours are credited with positive workplace environment and results, religiosity is viewed positively. That the respondent from the public sector shares similar sentiments is indicative of religiosity's practicality and acceptance in the sector.

Literature on Abrahamic spirituality backs the existence of a God who combats evil, has provided written moral prescriptions in the form of bible and Koran and monitors humans to ensure compliance (Ghazzawi, Smith & Cao, 2016). As such adherents within those faiths behave so as to revere him (Mathew *et al.*, 2020) even in the workplace. Research also shows that over half of the people who regularly participate in religious sessions, believe that their work honours God (Neubert & Dougherty, 2015). However, other literature has emphasised a relationship with God (Brotheridge & Lee, no date; Bauer & Johnson, 2019), as opposed to fear as a motivation for behavioural change. Nevertheless, the resultant behavioral transformation, whether from fear or relationship, still shows religiosity in a positive light. Furthermore, another challenge with this basis for behavioral change with respect to religionists is the absence of a God figure in some religions (Nye, 2008; Van Niekerk, 2018). However, this is not applicable to the Abrahamic religions in question in this study. Additionally, a number of Christian scriptures exhort the fear of God, with one of them highlighting such reverence as the beginning of wisdom (*Holy Bible: New International Version*. 4<sup>th</sup> edn, 2011). In Islam Taqwa, the fear of God, is considered the essence of all the teachings of the prophet Muhammad and the only force that, not only teaches right and wrong but also, compels man from evil (Zubair, 2017). This compulsion from evil is premised on the already espoused character of God as an omniscient, as highlighted in Surah 49:13 (Saheeh International, 2012).

Prayer has also been credited with behavioural change by respondents. In this regard, respondents



from the religious and the public sector highlighted the role of prayer, as a deterrent of bad behavior:

*"...in the Quran, there is a teaching which says praying makes one to part with bad things..., meaning that if you have just prayed, ... you challenge yourself to say, I have just prayed so for me to steal here...things like those ... So, as long as you are doing the work you will be doing it faithfully." (Respondent number 1, Lilongwe Islam, FGD).*

*"... I have also seen it working where you start with prayers, close with prayers. ...there is a message that is sent in the organization that we are being led by a God fearing person and it does promote or influence some integrity elements in it..." (Respondent number 5, Lilongwe CCAP, FGD.)*

*"... I remember a situation whether one class was causing problems... we tried all sorts of measures but to no avail, until we said, let's seek the help of a pastor to talk to them but also pray for them..." (Headmistress, Lilongwe Primary School)*

The above responders expressed the belief that prayer, an aspect of religion, has the capacity to improve behavior. They have attributed behavioral to prayer without adequately articulating the purported cause-effect relationship. That notwithstanding, there seems to be firm belief that prayer can achieve such feat and on that premise, there is positive perception towards such aspect of religion. Literature does not seem to substantiate that prayer is deterrent for misbehavior. However, based on empirical data, prayer has been touted as tool for reducing the chance for erroneous decision making among workplace executives through refining their intuition (Schreurs, Van Emmerik, De Cuyper & Probst, 2014). This claim on prayer would still make it attractive, acceptable and positive in the workplace. The absence of literature on prayer as a tool for deterring bad behavior may be due to the actual absence of evidence to back that claim. Nevertheless, for purposes of this study it is adequate that they perceive prayer, an element of religiosity, positively.

### 3.1.2.2 Divine Intervention

Belief in divine intervention has been one of the bases for positive perception of workplace religiosity:

*"... it's a good thing according to Islam the workplace must ... accommodate its members to perform*

*their religious activities... to pray, then (by doing that) they are seeking the bounties of the blessings of God to be descended on their work places" (Imam Lilongwe, Mosque).*

*"... I feel that everyday God is doing something in my life; the work is going smooth because of God's intervention." (Primary Education Authority (PEA) 1, Lilongwe).*

Such conviction regarding divine intervention is ordinarily attributed to Christians of Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions. They believe that through prayer and supplication, whenever they are unable to remedy their situation, God intervenes in the framework of natural laws and a miracle ensues (Yong, 2008). Within Malawi though, Christian practices are so integrated that those that would ordinarily be attributed exclusively to one denomination is applicable to more others. In this regard empirical studies found that the concept of being Born Again, otherwise restricted to Pentecostalism, had permeated Malawian Catholicism (Manglos, 2010). Nevertheless, the critical question relating to our study is not the actuality of miracles, but rather whether participants believe they happen, and consequently how such belief compels them to view religiosity positively.

### 3.1.3 The Benevolence Rationale

This covers two themes that denote positive perception of the occurrence of religiosity in the workplace on humane as opposed to instrumentalist basis, namely: (i) religion and work being inseparable and; (ii) religion as part of the lives of employees. The essence of the argument is that religiosity should be allowed to benefit employees although it may not translate into meeting of organizational goals.

#### 3.1.3.1 Religion and Work are Inseparable

The argument is that if work and religion cannot be separated, people are likely to be accustomed to having religiosity in the workplace and to view it positively. In this regard, participants pursued the line of argument that work is a subset of religion. In relation to this, the respondents below have posited that work is actually an act of prayer or worship:

*"... Just to add, in Islam when we talk of worshipping God, whereby you could also be rewarded, working ... is also part of worshipping" (Respondent number 4, Lilongwe Islam, FDG).*

*"... and there is also a saying in Latin ... laborare est orare... to work is to pray ... we have a place ... while we are working ... it's part of prayer also if we are doing it well ..."* (National leader, Catholic Church).

*"... worship is about work. The worship is the work ..., wherever we are blessed to work, we should demonstrate that aspect that we are a worshipping community. That at the end of the day as a Christian, at the work place you assess yourself ... is God being worshipped ... in what I am doing?"* (National leader, CCAP Church).

The line of argument entails that religion will be found in the workplace by default, because it encompasses work. Hence, religiosity is accommodated, whether in the public or private sector, just as the work itself is acceptable. In Christian literature this view is based on a direct quote from the letter of Paul to the Colossians Chapter 3 verse 23 (*Holy Bible: New International Version*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, 2011). Christians have considered this scripture as applying directly at the workplace where working for any organization should be considered to be working for God. If all work is considered to be for pleasing God, then religion cannot be divorced from work and is likely to be accommodated in the workplace.

This view was also echoed in the public sector:

*"... it is important that in a workplace there must be an element of religion. That's my belief because for everything to work better that element of religion must be there, because it's not you but what is inside you that will force you to work better..."* (PEA 1, Lilongwe).

This assertion sounds less authoritative and more like an opinion. This could be so because she was not expressing it as government policy but rather, drawing from her religious background, thus backing the stance that religion may find itself in the workplace through the affiliation of employees who would view workplace religiosity positively as a result. The view that religion and work are inextricable is entrenched mostly in religious academia. Christian literature highlights that work existed at the very beginning with God himself carrying it out. Furthermore, it is claimed that God decided that man should work as part of his fellowship with him (Neubert & Dougherty, 2015). As such, work and religion cannot be separated; doing work would not only replicate what God does, but also would

be based on his example and prescription. Hence, work is godly business i.e. religion. In relation to the thinking that work and religion are inseparable, Max Weber argued that the Christian faith of protestant orientation influenced how its adherents worked. In his renowned book, 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', he posits that motivation of Protestants to work hard and support capitalism, was based on the teachings of Calvin, particularly his doctrine of asceticism and predestination. However, since this seminal work, other theorists have argued for Catholic work ethics, and Islamic work ethics (Ghazzawi, Smith & Cao, 2016).

Hence, based on Weber's claims it can be argued that the way Protestants work draws from their religious orientations. Likewise, it can be concluded with Catholics, and Muslims and their respective work ethics. Thus, the concepts of religion and work would be considered resolutely integrated. It is thus of little surprise that within the context of Malawi, where Christians in terms of Catholics and Protestants, plus Muslims constitute almost the whole category of the religious populace, respondents welcome religion in the workplace on account of it being inextricably linked to work.

### 3.1.3.2 Religion as Part of the Lives of Employees

The essence of this position is that people are receptive of religion in the workplace because it is part of employees' lives. The argument is that workers cannot leave a part of themselves at the gate and enter the workplace as secular beings. In this regard, some responded thus:

*"... as a Christian we know we always live because God lives, we always do whatever because God lives. So, the moment someone tells a Christian not to pray, that is a big blow."* (Pastor, SDA Church Lilongwe).

This is part of the classical explanation in literature of how religion finds itself in the workplace. Karakas (2010) theorizes that employees have wanted to be recognized for who they are, as whole individuals even in the workplace, leaving aside nothing of aspects of their personality including religion. Therefore, they have demanded to be allowed to bring their whole selves to work and not to be allowed to park any part of their person at the gate to the organization (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014; Saseendran, 2014). In return wherever employers have addressed this need to treat workers as full humans, embracing even their

religions it has positively affected their satisfaction (Ghazzawi, Smith & Cao, 2016).

### 3.2 Neutral, Non-Committal or Balanced

This section presents neutral themes, which include those that advocate tolerance of religion under particular conditions and those who consider religion to be neither helpful nor harmful.

#### 3.2.1 Religion Acceptable Under Particular Conditions

Under this theme some participants approved the occurrence of religiosity in the workplace subject to certain limitations, while others opined that religion could have been acceptable if it met certain conditions, implying that it cannot.

*"... (the practice of religiosity in the workplace) is good ... it's good as long as you respect the rights of the other persons ... preaching at the work place it's not a problem ... but you just have to be sensitive to the needs and beliefs of other people ..."* (Respondent number 6, BT Catholic Church, FGD).

The primary position for this participant is a positive view towards religiosity. However, he implies that the goodwill towards religiosity is not open ended and hints that his perception of religion could be negative, if otherwise. A similar theme is where only a particular type of religious practice is deemed acceptable in the workplace. Responses from the religious and public sectors contributed to this view as highlighted below:

*... everyone has individual needs that is what we Muslims believe in ... so, when we say let us pray as a group, you find that it is one person praying for all and all of them are responding, Amen! ... which means someone will be found to not have fulfilled his prayer. (Lilongwe, Islam FGD, respondent number 2).*

*"...you would just put up prayer rooms. Say yes if somebody wants to pray to their God there are prayer rooms on ground floor ... something like that so, somebody will be going to pray to Allah somebody will go to release their stress, you know. Come back and work better but not collectively let us pray." (Lilongwe, SDA, respondent number 5).*

The above views find the practice of religiosity in the workplace acceptable only if practiced at individual

level on account that collective religiosity would be oppressive and discriminatory towards minorities. That viewpoint may be inspired by actual experience since the respondents are members of a minority religion and a minority Christian denomination, respectively. The sentiments that religiosity without qualification has potential for dysfunctions in the workplace are supported in literature. With respect to discrimination, Benefiel, Fry and Geigle (2014) observe that litigation has been rife due to such in the modern workplace. Most theorists recommend individual religiosity, termed spirituality, at the expense of generic collective religion, not on the basis of religiosity's discriminatory tendencies alone but also general efficacy (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butter, Belavich, Hipp, Scott & Kadar, 1997). This view was supported by a senior position holder in the public sector:

*"... but if you are defining religiosity where spirituality is in there then the effect is different ... that religion on its own without spirituality, it would not affect quite much" (Director, MOEST).*

The primary position of this participant was that religiosity could have been acceptable if it was in the form of spirituality. However, he believes spirituality is unachievable in Malawi, hence religiosity should not be tolerated in the workplace.

#### 3.2.2 Religion Not Making a Difference

Another theme is of indifference towards workplace religiosity on the rationale that it has no effect whether good or bad as highlighted by a respondent from the public sector:

*"... It doesn't really manifest and it doesn't really have an impact in terms of activities of education because normally what we have is just a record of who belongs to which religion but it doesn't even have any impact anywhere" (PEA 2, Lilongwe).*

This theme appears to not have been supported by other responses from officers above below or even on equal ranking with the respondent. There is a possibility the response might have been given based on frustrations with the interview which he revealed later was inconvenient to him. Nevertheless, it reveals a neutral perception of workplace religiosity.

#### 3.2.3 Religiosity as Both Helpful and Harmful

Another neutral stance characterises religiosity as bearing potential to help as well as to harm such

that one's perception might be contingent on the nature of a particular religious practice as highlighted by this respondent:

*"... aa yes (the practice of religiosity in the workplace) has both (positive and negative) effects" (Member of Association of Secular Humanism (ASH)).*

Although such a response reflects a balanced position, the respondent ultimately was negative about the presence of religiosity in the workplace not only on the basis of its oppression of other beliefs but also on the argument that religiosity's beliefs which spur the good effects are based on fallacious premises hence untenable. Religiosity's tendency for both positive and negative effects is highlighted by authors (Karakas, 2010; Osman-Gani, Hashim & Ismail, 2013).

### 3.3 Negative and Disapproving Position

Other sentiments were disapproving of the occurrence of religiosity in the workplace. Typically, they observed that although religiosity has potential for positive impact in the workplace, ultimately it should not exist there. Such respondents included these two from the public sector and an education-oriented body, respectively:

*"... so it also becomes a problem. In fact, we would have loved if the school was devoid of such (religious) practices." (Director, MOEST).*

*"... why do you want to go to work? To do the work! (animated tone, almost getting angry about it) why do you want to pray there why you don't go somewhere where you are going to pray? ... these should be separated...you should not waste employer's time..." (Chairperson, Education oriented body)*

Both of them had highlighted that religiosity had positive effects in the public sector, however, ultimately their position was that it should not be allowed there. They both held senior positions within their workplaces. Hence, their view could be due to the exposure to western studies and experiences which oriented them to the church-state separation.

At epistemological level, the discourse on the pertinence of the occurrence of religion in the public sector may be, rooted in the science/facts versus values debate regarding public administration,

whose chief protagonists were at one point, the prominent scholars, Herbert Simon and Dwight Waldo (Harmon, 2013). The viewpoint of western thought on this matter is reflected in the principle of church-state separation; it is rebuked by some theorists (Lowery, 2005; King, 2007; Shah *et al.*, 2007) and rejected in the African cultural context (Manglos, 2011).

## 4. The Results of a Survey on the Perception of Religiosity in the Workplace

For purpose of validating the outcome of this study, data on survey questions relating to the perception on religiosity was extracted from two questionnaires, targeting the public and the religious sector, respectively and analyzed. This data was collected from lay members of religions and primary school teachers representing the religious sector and the public sector, respectively. For these questions, positive responses represent positive perception towards religiosity. In the public sector, therefore, the numbers of responses falling in each of the categories of the Likert scale were aggregated for each statement and a percentage calculated to determine whether the general perception towards religiosity is positive, neutral or negative. Table 1 and 2 on the next page present a summary of the findings.

The findings from both the religious sector and the public sector reveal that there is positive perception of the occurrence of religiosity in the public sector workplace. While the religious sector was asked about the perception of religiosity in any workplace, the public sector was asked about it in a public primary school which is in the public sector. The findings in both sectors reveal the positive perception that religiosity in the public sector has with the positive responses at 69% and 79% in the religious and public sector, respectively. This supports the findings of the qualitative approach which also reflects positivity. While the qualitative results suggest a variation in the themes regarding the perception of religiosity, the survey reveals that the majority are welcoming of religiosity in the public sector workplace. Furthermore, for each question, over 50% of the responses imply positive perception except for question no. 3 in the questionnaire for the religious sector with 49%. Even in that one, the positive perception is still in the majority; with the negative perception at 32% and 34% coming up as neutral.

**Table 1: Summary of the Perception of Lay Members of Christianity and Islam Towards Occurrence of Religiosity in the Public Sector Workplace**

No	Question	Positive Perception		Neutral	Negative Perception		Total
		S. Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	S. Disagree	
1	I expect my religion to positively affect the integrity of its members in the workplace	45	105	13	14	3	180
2	Religions/denominations should provide guidance to their members regarding work and life at the workplace	64	100	7	11	1	183
3	Religion helps its members to work hard at the workplace	36	80	31	32	3	182
4	Religiosity or being religious positively affects satisfaction with one's job	23	67	34	54	5	183
5	Religiosity or being religious positively affects an employee's commitment to work	17	90	30	42	4	183
6	Religiosity or being religious helps one to be a good leader at work	61	79	16	23	4	183
7	One's religiosity or religiousness can positively influence his/her performance at work	31	80	26	32	13	182
Total		277	601	157	208	33	1276
Percentage		22%	47%	12%	16%	3%	100%

Source: Author

**Table 2: Summary of the Perception of Government Primary Teachers Towards the Occurrence of Religiosity in the Public Sector Workplace**

No	Question	Positive Perception		Neutral	Negative Perception		Total
		S. Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	S. Disagree	
1	The practice of religious activities among primary school teachers is good	33	52	12	7	1	105
2	The practice of religious activities among primary school teachers is good for the individual teachers practicing them	23	52	14	13	3	105
3	The practice of religious activities among primary school teachers is good for other teachers	20	64	16	6	3	109
4	The practice of religion at school by primary school teacher is good for the pupils	21	65	8	5	5	104
5	Religiosity affects the attitude of teachers positively	17	49	19	14	5	104
6	Religiosity should be encouraged among primary school teachers	26	54	8	13	7	108
7	Religiosity positively affects the performance of public sector employees	17	44	27	15	4	107
Total		157	380	104	73	28	742
Percentage		21%	51%	14%	10%	4%	100%

Source: Author

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, qualitative data was supplemented by quantitative data to determine the perception towards religiosity in the workplace. The findings point to an ultimate position of positivity for both public and religious sectors. Although many respondents highlighted religiosity's potential for dysfunction, their primary position was of positivity while the negative aspects were highlighted in the temperament of a disclaimer. This has been validated by the survey results with the majority reflecting positivity in their responses. Although the survey was administered on the lower echelons of each sector, the results have validated the qualitative findings, which targeted highly ranked officials.

Furthermore, much as the study targeted perception in the public sector, for the qualitative strand, the participants from the religious sector responded about workplaces in general. This could be because most of the senior religious members have had no opportunity to experience the workplace and could not differentiate. Nevertheless, the fact that responses from the sectors were aligned may reflect uniformity of perception. These findings essentially denote that the management of the public sector need not be uniform globally, but rather contingent on cultural contexts, among other factors. This paper therefore, recommends that Malawi and countries in similar cultural settings should leverage this opportunity by deliberately integrating religiosity into general public sector administration and particularly, for performance improvement.

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# Political Killings in South Africa: A Political Conundrum?

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**Abstract:** Political killings are not a new phenomenon in South Africa. The killings of politicians date back to the apartheid era when the anti-apartheid activists were deliberately purged by the previous apartheid regime. Further, political killings escalated uncontrollably in the early 1990s when violent political confrontation between the African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) erupted, thus before the first democratic elections in 1994. The 1994 democratic elections were followed by a period of political calmness and peace. However, since 2011, local government elections, political violence and killings have been on the rise in South Africa. It appears that political solutions that have been identified to curtail political killings in South Africa have not been successful. Therefore, this paper questions whether political killings can be considered as a political conundrum worthy of political solutions only. To this end, the paper discusses various reasons for political killings and reflects on possible solutions. The paper is based on the review of scholarly and non-scholarly documents that are accessible to the public. This paper shows that the most common reasons for political killings are due to political intolerance, factionalism, competition for limited political positions and proliferation of illegal firearms. It is argued that although political solutions are crucial towards reducing political killings in South Africa, the justice cluster should be equally responsible for actively dealing with political killings. The paper concludes that special legislation and courts that deal with political killings should be established. At the same time, special investigative units that are well resourced need to be established on a permanent basis, to deal with political killings proactively.

**Keywords:** Factionalism, Political intolerance, Political killings, Politicians

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## 1. Introduction

Political killings reflect the extent of political violence in political contestation in South Africa (Bruce, 2013). In the past, violence in South Africa was driven by various factors such as political intolerance, tribal and ethnic differences. These factors played a key divisive role in the rivalry between the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Consequently, most people were killed in some parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng Province between the late 1980s and early 1990s, prior to the advent of democracy in South Africa (Mbhanye, 2022). This view is sustained by Phakathi (2019), who points out that violence in South Africa dates back from the apartheid government, which used violence against the black majority who sought political freedom and independence with a view to suppress their legitimate demands. Nevertheless, Mbhanye (2022) portrays a bleak state of political affairs in South Africa, revealing that political killings target both political leaders as well as some incumbents of administrative positions in government. In that regard, Mbhanye (2022) depicts the spread of

political assassinations in South Africa from the year 2000 until 2017 as follows. The Northern Cape had 1 murder case; Free State recorded only 5 murder cases; Limpopo had 7 murder cases; North-West had 15 cases; Mpumalanga recorded 22 murder cases; Western Cape had 22 cases; Eastern Cape recorded 23 murder cases; Gauteng recorded 39 murder cases and KwaZulu-Natal had 157 murder cases. This data shows that KwaZulu-Natal is more vulnerable to political assassinations followed by Gauteng Province. However, it must be noted that murder cases reported in KwaZulu-Natal surpass the combined number of cases reported in the other eight provinces in South Africa.

Bruce (2013) defines political killings as assassinations that can be linked to rivalry over political power. Furthermore, Bruce (2013) notes that political killings may also happen when supporters of rival political organisations attack one another for political reasons. For instance, clashes between supporters of different political parties may occur when they restrict campaigning in areas deemed their strongholds for support to their respective



parties. In the context of this paper, a political killing can be described as an assassination of a political activist, whether it is a leader or supporter of a political party, for reasons related to incumbency, political beliefs or conscientious objections.

There are instances when political leaders or supporters are killed and such incidents are subsequently reported as politically motivated deaths, but further investigations reveal that such occurrences were not political (Bruce, 2014). According to Phakathi (2019), some of the political killings could be fuelled by a struggle for survival, in which case individuals attempt to eliminate one another to avoid competition for available political positions, especially if such a position is remunerated. In line with this view, Bruce (2013:13) states that "for a killing to be 'political', it must be motivated by or connected to contestation or rivalry, either regarding access to political power, or conflict over the way in which the individual targeted (or a group aligned with that individual), is exercising his or her political power." Moreover, Bruce (2013) argues that political killings in South Africa are not considered as an excusable or justifiable form of resistance, but rather viewed as ordinary forms of murder that need to be handled by the criminal justice system.

De Haas (2020) notes that political killings continued to increase even beyond the apartheid dispensation, despite the availability of information concerning this challenge, while less progress has been made to arrest, prosecute and convict the perpetrators of these heinous crimes. Between 2010 and 2020, approximately 140 political assassinations occurred in the eThekweni Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal only. These killings increase exponentially towards the local and national government elections, as well as the elective conferences of the African National Congress (ANC) (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, 2020). This paper questions whether political killings can be considered as a political conundrum worthy of political solutions only. As a point of departure, the paper evokes the Theory of Self-Control to understand political killings in South Africa. Furthermore, the paper discusses various reasons for political killings and reflects on alternative solutions thereof. The paper is based on the review of scholarly and non-scholarly documents that focus on the issue of political killings, especially in South Africa. Specifically, this paper reflects on political killings that occurred in South Africa between the years 2000 and 2021.

## **2. Theoretical Framework on Political Killings**

The theoretical framework chosen for the purpose of deciphering political killings is the Self-Control Theory. This theory was developed by Michael Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi in a book entitled *A General Theory of Crime* in 1990 (Morley, 2018; Opp, 2020). The theory was predominantly used in the field of criminology to understand human inclination to commit crime or deviant behaviour. Self-Control Theory indicates that "crime and behaviour are due to the inability to deter gratification" (Morley, 2018:152-153). In other words, individuals may engage in deviant conduct because of failure to exercise self-restraint. According to Higgins (2007), self-control consists of six key elements, namely: impulsivity, self-centeredness, risk taking, pre-dilection for simple tasks, indifference to mental activity than physical activity and uncontrolled temper. Furthermore, people with low self-control have a tendency of ignoring the aftermaths of their own actions for themselves and other people (Higgins, 2007).

Gibson (2010) mentions that proclivity to pursue short-term and immediate gratification, despite the long-term negative consequences, is a clear manifestation of low self-control. This explains why an individual can hire a hitman to kill another person, because of an insatiable desire for immediate self-gratification that may flow from state resources in the form of tenders. Consistent with this view, Morley (2018) asserts that ill-discipline is a result of defective self-control, while low self-control leads to various forms of antisocial behaviour, such as violence and crime. Furthermore, low self-control indicates the extent to which individuals are susceptible to temptations at a single point in time (Morley, 2018). In Gibson's (2010) view, self-control reflects the ability to avoid short-term benefits that may result in enduring negative outcomes. In support of this view, Akers (1991:203) argues: "low self-control is the cause of the propensity to commit criminal behaviour. It is the cause of crime, because persons with low self-control seek immediate gratification and have less ability than those with high self-control to resist the temptations of the immediate rewards universally derivable from crime and to be affected by the longer-term costs of crime and benefits of conformity." Gibson (2010) agrees that individuals with high levels of self-control are less likely to pursue short-term gratification, even

in circumstances where there are no legal or social restraints. As a matter of fact, Gibson (2010:18) states: "those with low self-control have a tendency to be unkind and lack empathy, and therefore, are insensitive toward people on whom they directly or indirectly inflict pain or discomfort." Indeed, political killings reflect callousness and absence of kindness on the part of those who commit such heinous crimes, as well as those who initiate the killings.

### 3. Reasons for Political Killings in South Africa

Political violence in South Africa could be attributed to political intolerance, factionalism, competition for limited resources and proliferation of illegal arms in hotspot areas. Each reason indicated as a possible contributor to political killings in South Africa is discussed separately below.

#### 3.1 Political Intolerance

Gibson and Gouws (2002) state that political intolerance is one of the most vexing issues facing a democratic South Africa. Political intolerance can be defined as the reluctance to allow other people, notwithstanding their political perspectives, to contest for political power through peaceful and legal means. Prior to the 2021 local government elections, City Press (2021) reported three separate incidents that reflect the extent of political intolerance in South Africa. During the first incident, members of the governing party (ANC) attempted to block the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and supporters from entering a voter registration station in Pietermaritzburg. In the second incident, a member of ActionSA was reportedly threatened and divested of possessions by a member of the ANC in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. In the third incident, two members of the Democratic Alliance (DA) were kidnapped and assaulted while their car, branded in colours of the DA, was subsequently set alight. In response to political intolerance and manifestation of political violence, evidence suggests that the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) made efforts to call for calm in South Africa, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, to create an environment conducive for free and fair elections. For example, in 2009, the Independent Electoral Commission appealed to leaders of various political parties, civil society, party members and supporters to cooperate (Independent Electoral Commission, 2009). This was a necessary call by the IEC, in order to ensure that all

political parties would be able to participate without any impediments in public campaigns.

Bruce (2013) mentions that shortly after the launch of the National Freedom Party (NFP), which broke away from the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in 2011, 22 members of the NFP were killed between February 2011 and July 2012. Besides, De Haas (2016:49) reports that during the EFF's manifesto launch in Esikhawini (Richards Bay) prior to the 2016 local government elections, a confrontation between the ANC and EFF supporters was averted through police intervention. A study conducted by Gibson and Gouws (1998:18) found that individuals with "stronger identities will therefore be more likely to judge a variety of political movements negatively, perhaps to be threatened by them and unwilling to tolerate their political activities". This indicates that group identities of the various political parties in South Africa could have a major influence on political tolerance. In other social identities, such as political beliefs, it may result in some degree of political intolerance if an individual holds strongly onto such beliefs.

Gibson and Gouws (1998) assert that strong group identities do not contribute towards political tolerance and are opposed to the democratic theory. De Haas (2016) reports that between January and July 2016, three NFP supporters, three IFP supporters and fourteen (14) ANC supporters were murdered during separate incidents, which can be construed as being politically motivated deaths. Gibson and Gouws (2002) argue that the prevalence of political intolerance in South Africa is not unexpected, however, the absence of political tolerance may translate into majoritarian tyrannies. In other words, political intolerance could be harmful to a democratic principle, as it may create instability and absence of trust amongst key political formations. Due to the extent of political intolerance in South Africa, Gibson and Gouws (2000) suggest that there is a need for common understanding amongst political parties and their supporters that democratic theory requires tolerance and equal protection of the rights and perspectives of the opposition parties, irrespective of agreements or disagreements.

#### 3.2 Factionalism

On 1 March 2011, an ANC councilor in KwaZulu-Natal was killed while another murder incident took place on 9 September 2012, where a branch

secretary and chairperson of the ANC were killed. In both incidents, evidence presented in the court of law proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the killings were politically motivated, due to internal rivalry or factions within the ruling ANC (Bruce, 2013). According to Krelekrele (2018), political killings can be attributed to factionalism within the governing party, maladministration and corruption. Unfortunately, those who are in pursuit of dignity or integrity, thereby exposing incidents of corruption, are threatened and subsequently killed. In line with this view, Bruce (2014) indicates that some of the politicians are targets of assassinations immediately, when it becomes apparent that they intend to expose corruption that involves their fellow political comrades. For example, two members of the ANC in the Sisonke District Municipality were reportedly living in fear for their lives, after exposing corruption and financial malfeasance estimated at R400 million in irregular or councilors expenditure (De Haas, 2016). Furthermore, Krelekrele (2018:3) asserts that "competition for political power, and factionalism among members of the same political party, has led to those who want to cling to power, and those who desperately want to get their hands on it, to resort to hiring hitmen or assassins to eliminate their competition." In other words, factional battles for power within political parties create a situation where individuals resort to extreme measures of killing one another, to avoid tough competition towards their ascension to power.

Isike (2019) points out that corruption and factionalism are the two common factors that could lead to the demise of the ANC, especially if nothing is done to address these issues. This suggests that corruption and factionalism are endemic within the ruling party (the ANC). In this regard, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (2020) mentions that power struggles with the ANC have created fear and uncertainty among its followers, as well as members, because some of the community leaders are scared to accept nominations for leadership positions within the ANC. In fact, factionalism within the ANC gained traction in 2005, shortly after the removal of Jacob Zuma as Deputy President, due to corruption charges brought against him by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA). Nevertheless, it must be stated that due to the factional battles within the ANC, the Congress of the People (Cope) emerged in 2008 from the ANC (Sarakinsky & Fakir, 2015). Factionalism became apparent due to internal rivalry for the top position in the ANC in the

run-up to the Polokwane Conference in December 2008, where former President Jacob Zuma was elected as the leader of the ANC (Bruce, 2013). As a matter of fact, between 2015 and 2016, about 130 people, including some councilors, were murdered in different parts of KwaZulu-Natal because of intra-party conflict or factionalism (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, 2020). De Haas (2016) reveals that intra-party conflict also emerged within the ANC branches prior to the 2016 local government elections, concerning nomination processes and leadership positions. The arguments put forward above indicate that intra-party conflict, mistrust and betrayal contribute to the endless political conflicts, consummating in the deplorable deaths of some party members.

### **3.3 Competition for Limited Resources**

There is a blurred line of demarcation between killings that occur due to rivalry for positions and those that happen because of struggle over resources (Krelekrele, 2018). Be that as it may, De Haas (2020) argues that political killings could be linked to the struggle for limited scarce resources and positions. Furthermore, De Haas (2020) notes that there is an increased level of political killings towards elections, especially the local government elections, because individuals view councilor positions as a vehicle for lucrative wages and access to resources. In support of this view, Bruce (2013) postulates that a political office is seen as a source of great influence, which may enable a leader to use political influence to assist close relatives to secure employment and houses. At the same time, relationships of patronage are established through the use of political favours, which also guarantee political leaders of long-term relationships of obligation with their benefactors. Moreover, Krelekrele (2018) highlights that some witnesses that appeared before the Moerane Commission of Inquiry testified that political killings were fuelled by disputes over tenders. Fierce competition for tenders and other financial resources emerges in a political sphere because of "my turn to eat has come" syndrome.

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime (2020) points out that approximately 60 people were killed during the 2016 local government elections in KwaZulu-Natal only, reflecting a catastrophic state of political turbulence. Manipulation of leadership positions can create an unfavourable political atmosphere, where internal battles

for power may result in regrettable losses of life. In agreement with this assertion, Krelekrele (2018) argues: "When positions within the organisation are available through manipulation mostly based on factions, it becomes a factor of potential violence, which sometimes develops into full violence." This explains that a possible strong competitor in the political space, especially within political parties, can easily be killed to minimize or weaken the competing group. As an alternative to political murder, the issue of manipulation of votes or nominations for positions of leaderships also comes to the fore, as one of the tactics used within political parties by members who vie for positions.

### 3.4 Proliferation of Illegal Firearms

"Sixteen people are murdered with a gun every day in South Africa" (Gun-Free South Africa, 2016). Increased access to dangerous weapons, such as guns, contributes to high levels of political violence, in which case people are killed. Beri (2000) postulates that easy access to arms threatens the socio-political stability in South Africa. Unfortunately, the province of KwaZulu-Natal has, in the past, been used as a base for offloading dangerous weapons (Krelekrele, 2018). For example, the former police force commander, Colonel Eugene de Kock, used to supply deadly weapons, such as AK-47s, hand grenades, light machine guns, ammunitions, mines and RPG-7s to senior officials of the IFP (Krelekrele, 2018). According to Beri (2000), the reason for supplying the IFP with arms between 1990 and 1994 was primarily to destabilize the democratic processes and render the ANC weak.

Ineffective disarmament strategies after peace talks in most Southern African countries has led to proliferation and circulation of arms, which found their way into other countries, such as South Africa (Beri, 2000). Furthermore, Beri (2000) argues that when hidden arms caches are discovered and confiscated, there is poor control over such weapons. In other words, the control mechanisms are extremely poor as some of the weapons could be sold at low prices. Contrary to the view that most arms flow into South Africa from neighbouring countries, Gun-Free South Africa (2016) argues that evidence suggests that there are more guns in circulation in South Africa, such that some of them are smuggled out of South Africa to neighbouring countries. There are numerous factors that contribute towards an increased number on guns that are used illegally,

although they were purchased legally. Firstly, individuals who are not fit and proper to own a firearm are issued with permits and licences, which reflect a lack of effective enforcement of the Firearms Control Act, corruption and fraud. Secondly, theft and loss of firearms contribute to increased levels of illegal weapons in South Africa, because at least between 15 and 18 guns are lost daily. Nevertheless, Snodgrass (2019) acknowledges that there are numerous diverse sources of weapons, some of which are legal and illegal, but extremely difficult to monitor their circulation. Sadly enough, when there is poor enforcement of legislation governing firearms and no accountability for guns in possession of institutions as well as individuals, it will constantly be easier for assassins to commit murder, in which case politicians or supporters of political parties will be victims.

## 4. Possible Measures to Curtail Political Killings in South Africa

Due to the extent and incessant political killings in South Africa, it will be vital for the government to put strong measures in place to curtail killings and advance democracy in South Africa. Some of the measures that could be put in place are examined individually below.

### 4.1 Review Eligibility for Municipal Councilors

There are no specific minimum qualifications for one to become a councilor in South Africa. "Every citizen who is qualified to vote for a particular municipality may stand for elections in that municipality" (De Visser & Steytler, 2016:15). There are few exceptional circumstances that may prevent individuals from voting, which suggests that such individuals may not stand for elections. The following category of individuals may not stand for elections or exercise their rights to vote: persons who have been disqualified from the National Assembly; unreliable insolvents; persons declared of unsound mental state by a South African court; persons previously convicted and sentenced to more than 12 months in prison without the option of a fine (De Visser & Steytler, 2016). Clearly, conflict over leadership positions, such as councilor, could be attributed to simple eligibility criteria to stand for votes as a councilor candidate in a municipality. Professor Paulus Zulu, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, indicated that since individuals do not need any qualifications to stand as a councilor, this has created a

situation where people kill one another for coveted positions (Olifant, 2017). Perhaps as a measure to reduce conflicts and killings over positions, it would be necessary to review the eligibility criteria for a municipal councilor. Such a change should include a minimum post-matric educational qualification. Regarding education, Thebe (2017) indicates that education is critical for enhancing the intellectual capacity and growth of political leaders. Professor Paulus Zulu, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, told the Moerane Commission in 2017 that since anyone can stand for a position of councilor, it is the primary driver for political violence. He argued before the commission that setting an educational qualification as a requirement to be a councilor could reduce the number of political killings. Professor Zulu said before the commission that "there was more competition for positions of councilor than was the case in the national assembly or provincial legislature" (Olifant, 2017).

#### **4.2 Introduce Legislation and Special Courts for Political Offences**

Currently, South Africa does not have a specific legislation that clearly defines political crime and the elements thereof. Given the extent of political killings in South Africa, as explained above, it would perhaps be prudent to ensure that politically motivated murder is one of the crimes that ought to be classified as political crime and be prosecuted expeditiously through special courts. This is because political killings threaten democracy, safety, peace and security in South Africa. Notably, South Africa has several special courts that deal with matters relating to specific legal domains, for example, Electoral Court, Labour Courts, Land Claims Courts and Tax Courts (DSC Attorneys, 2020). Unfortunately, South Africa does not have any special court that deals with political crimes, in particular, political killings. Whilst murder is generally seen to be one of the serious crimes in South Africa, it is also evident that dealing with political killings is increasingly becoming an ongoing challenge in the country.

#### **4.3 Establish Special Investigative Units for Political Offences**

In 2018, President Cyril Ramaphosa initiated the formation of a national inter-ministerial investigative task team to deal with political killings in South Africa, with specific focus on KwaZulu-Natal as a hotspot

area. Unfortunately, the success of this investigative unit is not yet evident, because it has been faced with allegations of making selective arrests, making it weaker to address the scourge of political killings (De Haas, 2020). In Krelekrele's (2018) assessment of investigations into political killings, the manner in which the police handled some of the cases considered to be politically motivated suggests that investigations were ineffective. For instance, in 2019, the National Director of Public Prosecutions (NDPP), Shamila Batohi, expressed great concern over the manner in which the murder case of former ANC Youth League (ANCYL) secretary general and Unzimkhulu councillor, Sindiso Magaqa, was handled by the police investigators. The suspects were reportedly arrested, detained and charged without adequate evidence, but they were subsequently acquitted when charges against them were withdrawn in court (Harper, 2019).

Bruce (2013) expresses a great concern over investigations and convictions relating to political killings, because in cases where ordinary party members of political parties are killed, there seems to be less interest than killings where prominent political leaders are involved. Furthermore, Bruce (2013) believes that to deter incidents of political killings, high quality and independent police investigations would be required. Quality and independent investigations require policemen and women who are well-trained, competent, skilled, committed and have clean criminal records. Contrary to this view, the Minister of Police, Bheki Cele, reported that approximately 27 police officials in the Crime Intelligence had criminal records (Krelekrele, 2018). This suggests that investigations into various cases of political killings could be easily compromised when less credible police investigators are involved.

Although political killings predominantly occur in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, it is important to prevent such incidents from spreading to other provinces in the same scale in which they are happening within KwaZulu-Natal. Nevertheless, there is complete lack of proper coordination and coherence with regards to investigations among the key role players in the security cluster, especially the national intelligence and crime intelligence, reflecting great weaknesses in the criminal justice system (Phakathi, 2019). Furthermore, Phakathi (2019) postulates that crime intelligence has been unable to analyse, process and use collected evidence to avert or resolve political killings in South Africa. Be that as it may,

these issues raised above need to be addressed decisively, in order to ensure effective investigations into political killings and prevention thereof.

#### 4.4 Institute Political Education

Boaduo and Boaduo (2014) contend that political education has the potential of empowering and transforming individuals into social assets in their communities, while also introducing efficient and effective change in the society. During the 54<sup>th</sup> ANC National Conference, the leadership of the ANC, together with its members, resolved to establish the OR Tambo School of Leadership to advance political education, in which case members could be empowered to address multifarious challenges facing the ANC (Mabasa, 2018). However, the progress made in terms of promoting political education amongst the cadres of the ANC is not obvious. Similarly, in 2020, the EFF Student Command launched the Online Political School in an effort to disseminate political education that would focus on the following key issues, namely: ideological perspective; organisational understanding; gender, sexual orientation and the intersectionality of ideas; managing structures of a mass-based student movement and, towards free, quality, decolonised and well-resourced education (Samuels, 2020). It is not yet known whether the Online Political School has achieved its intended goals. In the absence of political education, people cannot comprehend, beyond their own self-interest, how society functions, because it is through political education that one can be able to fathom and interpret the present events as they unfold (Zulu, 2021).

Zulu (2021) suggests that political education is indispensable in understanding the socio-political and economic challenges confronting the citizenry. Mabasa (2018) mentions that political education will "promote good governance by producing ethical leadership that is not obsessed with crass-materialism but passionate in serving its people with dignity and patriotism." Clearly, without political education, it could be extremely difficult to achieve a situation where leaders can lead the society with great degrees of integrity and dignity. In addition to this view, Thebe (2017:126) accentuates that "political education should be deeply rooted in humanitarianism which means that it should be taught in a way that has value, based on professionalism and ethics laden." This suggests that through political education, political leaders and members within

the various structures of political organisations in South Africa should learn an appropriate ethics code. Ethics should not only be understood in the context of enhancing transparency, responsiveness, professionalism and accountability, but should be also apprehended in the context of respect of fellow human beings' rights to live, thereby refraining from connivance in political killings. According to Boaduo and Boaduo (2014), political education plays a vital role in shaping the behaviour of politicians, but it is equally important for conscientising ordinary citizens about their immediate conditions, so that they can hold political leaders accountable for their actions or inactions.

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has discussed the sad state of political killings in South Africa by applying the Theory of Self-Control to understand the phenomenon. The Theory of Self-Control vehemently argues that individuals with low levels of self-control are highly susceptible to performing deviant behaviour, since they easily develop a tendency to ignore negative consequences associated with egregious conduct. Interestingly, among the key reasons for political killings in South Africa, factionalism, competition for resources, political intolerance and proliferation of illegal arms were identified as main contributors to the killings. The South African government has not been able to decisively address issues that contribute to political killings in the country, despite the fact that these killings may eventually pose a major threat to democratic stability, safety and security. There is no doubt that a country ravaged by political killings could easily create great political uncertainty, which turn a country into a war zone. Nevertheless, South Africa needs to explore various avenues towards addressing the scourge of political killings. The South African government may need to revise the eligibility criteria for individuals to qualify as councillors in their respective wards or municipal jurisdictions, since this could contribute to the reduction of death rates among politicians towards the local government elections. At the same time, the country may need to introduce a special legislation and introduce some special courts to deal expeditiously with politically motivated killings. This should not be viewed as special treatment of political cases while other murder cases are not investigated and prosecuted, but should rather be seen as an effort towards stabilising the country's political circumstances and safeguarding democracy. Equally

important, independent special investigative units should be established to deal with political killings. These units should be free from any form of political interference, to function effectively and efficiently. Notably, political parties will need to take some initiatives and introduce political education among its members, to inculcate moral and ethical behaviour. Therefore, it is evident, indeed, that political killings in South Africa constitute a major political conundrum that requires not only political solutions, but also psychosocial and legal solutions.

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# Some Initial Thoughts on Assessing Monitoring and Evaluation of the Tshwane Metropolitan Public Transportation Intervention

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**Abstract:** Sprawled spatial patterns and fragmented infrastructure have contributed to the ineffective public transportation systems in South African cities, including Tshwane. As a response, the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) intervention is an integral component of the Public Transport strategy meant to address this challenge. Since the onset of its implementation in 2009, scholars and other interested parties have assessed the Public Transport strategy more broadly or its components or programmes. One of the components assessed is its effectiveness with regards to addressing public transportation challenges. Some of these assessments have reported positive changes in public transport operations. However, other scholars feel that public transport challenges are still evident. Therefore, the mixed messages could be the problematic monitoring and evaluation system of this intervention, either the lack or ineffective institutionalisation of the monitoring and evaluation arrangements or its alignment to the policy aim and objectives. For this reason, this research intends to assess the monitoring and evaluating arrangements for tracking and assessing the Tshwane metropolitan public transportation intervention. This paper, however, is restricted to conceptualise such a research. To do so, we undertake a thematic summative content analysis to interrogate literature on (i.) the research physical context or setting, (ii.) the research problem, and (iii.) the research knowledge gap. Further and exclusively to the research problem analysis, the paper applies the problem tree, the theory of constraint, and trend analysis to interrogating literature on ineffective public transportation systems. This interrogation provides for conceptualising an appropriate research problem statement as well as the accompanying research purpose statement and the research questions for such a research. We also propose the research strategy, design, procedure and methods as well as established frameworks that we can use to interpret the anticipated empirical results.

**Keywords:** Public transportation interventions, Bus Rapid Transit System, Research conceptualisation, Research physical context, Research problem analysis

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## 1. Introduction

As Tsotetsi and Mariette (2016) point out, South Africa has an overwhelming history of sprawled spatial settlement patterns since the 1960's during the apartheid era. These fragmented urban landscapes inhibit easy access to basic services and livelihood that are situated in the city centres. They have also contributed to ineffective intra-urban transportation in South Africa. The post-apartheid government has struggled to redress these disparities and ensure that the affected residents, mostly the Black South Africans, are drawn closer to city centres (Van Ryneveld, 2008; Thomas, 2016; Mthimkulu, 2017).

In 2007, the South African national Department of Transport released the Public Transport Strategy whose main aim was to improve transport infrastructure and transport operations. More specifically, this intervention provides for a wide public transport

network that is safe, efficient, and affordable (Jennings, 2015). By design, the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) intervention that hit the roads of South African urban cities in 2009 – implemented in 170 cities across the world (Von der Heyden *et al.*, 2015; Global BRT Data report, 2018) – is an integral component of the Public Transport Strategy. Rahim (2014) and Ugo (2014) who have assessed this intervention have shared its positive aspects such as quality, safety, and affordability.

Other authors however – such as Van Ryneveld (2008), Siyongwana and Binza (2012), Bickford (2013), Thomas (2016), Mthimkulu (2017), and Manuel and Behrens (2018) – have argued that the BRT has several challenges that renders it unsustainable such as limited capacity, poor planning, insufficient accessibility, operational glitches, and limited stakeholder engagement. Therefore, they argue, public transport transformation remains a distant dream in South Africa. Seftel and Peterson

(2014) have argued that the foregoing implies that policy-makers and transport planners are engrossed in developing and implementing an effective, relevant, sustainable, and efficient BRT system that can remedy public transport challenges. This entails providing adequate arrangements for tracking and assessing the performance of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) intervention (Van Ryneveld, 2008; Arropet, 2017; Mthimkulu, 2017). Therefore, the aim of this research is to consequently assess, empirically, the appropriateness of current monitoring and evaluation arrangements in municipalities meant to track and assess public transport interventions. Ultimately, the research will then propose appropriate monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Before then, this paper merely conceptualises what (and why) such a research should pursue. It employs Wotela's (2019) approach to research conceptualisation that summons summative thematic content analysis to interrogate literature on the (i.) physical context or setting of the research, (ii.) research problem, in this case absent or ineffective public transportation interventions, and (iii.) research knowledge gap. In addition to the summative thematic content analysis, Wotela (2019) suggests applying the problem tree and theory of constraint as well as trend analysis to logically demonstrate that a research worth pursuing does exist.

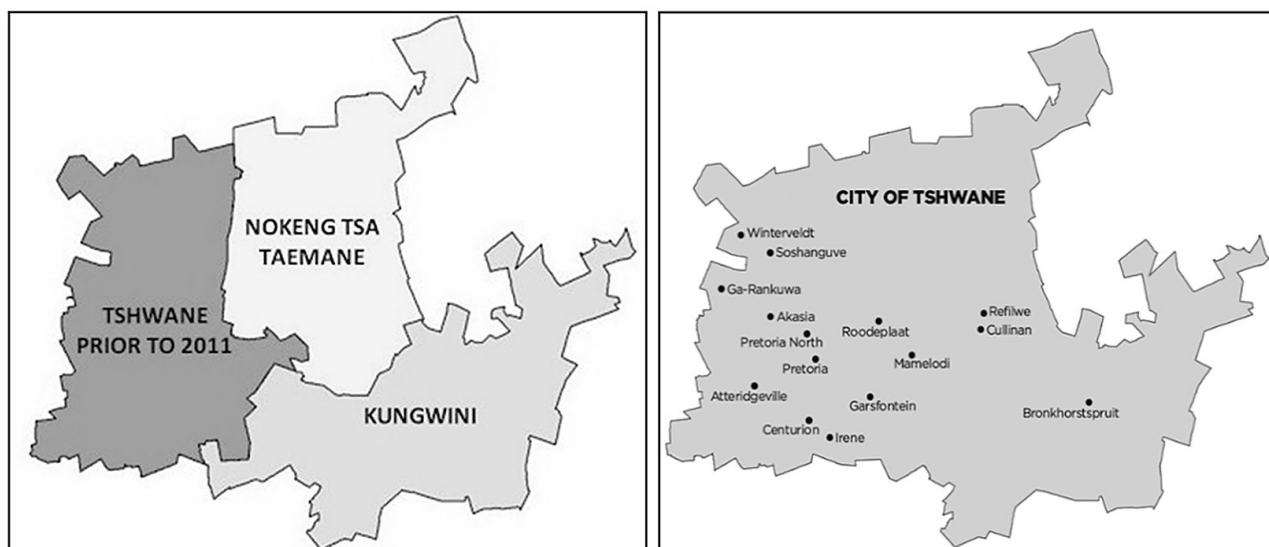
First, in Section 2, we describe the physical context or setting of the research, that is, the City of Tshwane

Municipality and its transport challenges. Second, in Section 3, we detail ineffective public transportation in urban cities and accompanying interventions. Third, in Section 4, we review past and current studies on developing and implementing interventions to address public transport challenges so that we identify the knowledge gap of such a research. Fourth, in Section 5, arising from the foregoing interrogation, we detail the research problem statement, purpose statement and research questions that such as research should pursue. Lastly, we propose the research strategy, design, procedure and methods as well as established frameworks appropriate for interpreting the anticipated empirical research results.

## 2. The City of Tshwane Municipality and its Public Transport Network

The City of Tshwane is situated in Gauteng, a north central province. In total, Gauteng Province has eleven municipalities of which three are metropolitans, that is, Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg, and Tshwane. Figure 1 shows the City of Tshwane before and after 2011. Historically, Tshwane formerly known as Pretoria – as Nunzhelele (2012) and the City of Tshwane (2016) point out – was until 1855 merely a farm called Elandspoort. In 2000, the amalgamation of various authorities that served the greater Pretoria and surrounding areas resulted in what we now call Tshwane. Further, in 2011, the City annexed Kungwini, Nokeng tsa Taemane, and Metsweding municipalities.

**Figure 1: Showing the City of Tshwane Prior (left) and Post (right) to the 2011 Re-Demarcations**



Source: City of Tshwane: Residents (2015) and Main, O. (Ed.) (2018)

In terms of span, Tshwane is the largest municipality in South Africa covering a total area of 6 368 km<sup>2</sup>. It is divided into seven regions, 105 wards, and is represented by 210 councillors (City of Tshwane, n.d.). According to Statistics South Africa (2011), Tshwane is home to 2,9 million people, predominantly (2,2 Million) Black South Africans. Further, the City boasts of a vibrant and diverse economy and contributes 26.8 per cent and 9.4 per cent to Gross Domestic Product of Gauteng Province and the country, respectively. Its main economic activities include government, finance, and manufacturing (Statistics South Africa, 2011). It is also a leader in the country's education, research, and technology sectors (Nenzhelele, 2012).

Diedericks and Joubert (2006), Hugo (2011), as well as Venter and Cross (2014) have argued that in 1961, Tshwane was the epicentre of apartheid dispensation that vigorously enforced the Group Areas Act to relocate and segregate its residents into racial zones. This necessitated the formation of dormitory settlements, mostly townships, located on the fringes of the urban centres. These peripheral settlements that have continued to grow entail a fragmented Tshwane with most of its residents located in its edges are excluded with limited access to the opportunities in and around city centres. Further, a fragmented City with perpetuated spatial exclusion is bound to have public transportation infrastructure challenges that, in turn, does not provide for convenient intra city movement. Majority of the residents endure a minimum of about 60 minutes to access to the city centre.

Despite having four (taxis, buses, private cars, and non-motorised transport) dominating modes of transport, its transportation system operates in silos and is uncoordinated (City of Tshwane, 2015; Department of Roads and Transport, 2015). This prompted Wood (2015) to call for an urgent need to integrate public transportation as a way of addressing the transportation challenges that cities are facing. According to Diedericks and Joubert (2006) as well as the City of Tshwane (2016), the thinking was that integrating public transportation systems would also redress the existing socio-economic disparities. In an attempt to do so, in November 2014 the City introduced the Bus Rapid Transit system, called "A Re Yeng", meant to integrate the dominate modes of transport and, therefore, improve mobility in the City. Levinson and colleagues (2002) as well as Tancott (2014) point out that the Tshwane

Bus Rapid Transit system was implemented after its equivalents in the Cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg.

### **3. Ineffective Public Transport Systems**

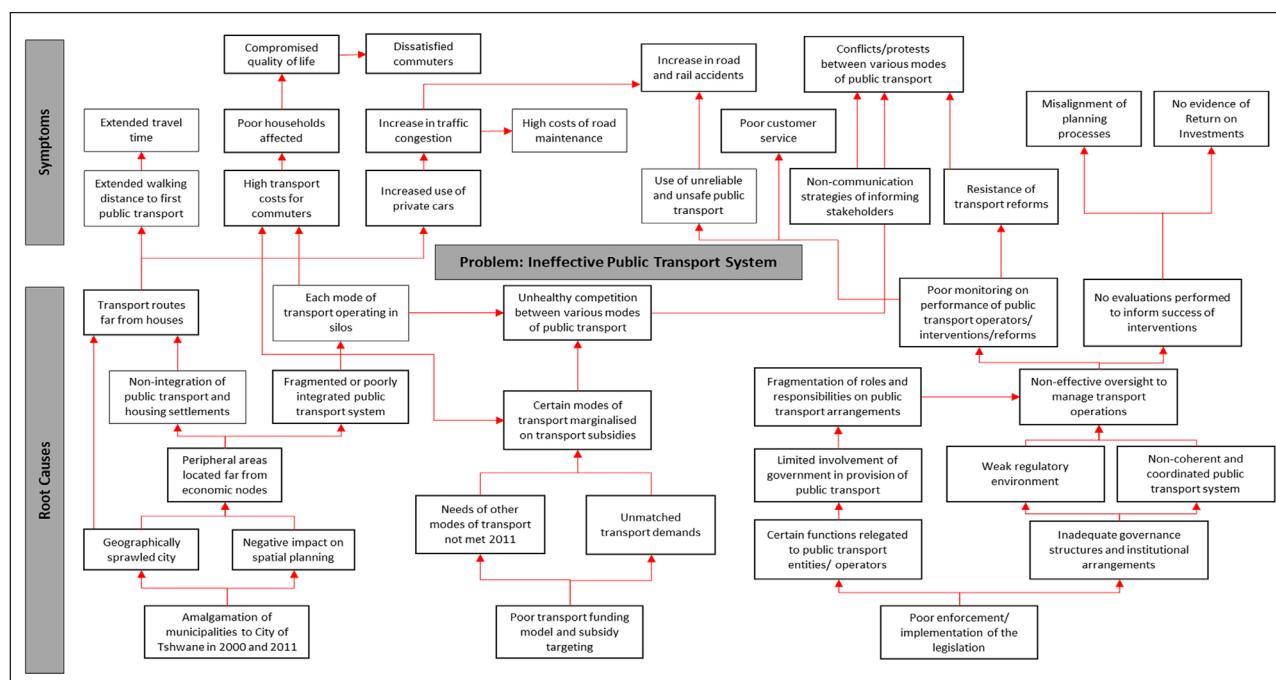
Thomas (2016) and Mthimkulu (2017) have argued that despite contemporary efforts and interventions, South Africa faces an immense backlog with regards to transforming its public transport system. We need to appreciate modern-day public policy so that we can, with authority, propose an affordable, reliable, and integrated public transport infrastructure for South Africa. However, such an appreciation requires that we interrogate the contextual and historical background to public transport systems in South Africa. Therefore, in this section, we interrogate the ineffective public transport systems problem. To be more structured, we use a problem tree to articulate the symptoms, the root causes, and consequences of the problem under study.

#### **3.1 Symptoms, Root Causes, and Consequences of Ineffective Public Transport System**

Figure 2 on the next page shows the literature supported problem tree depicting symptoms, root causes, and consequences of ineffective public transportation systems. Literature and supporting statistics demonstrate that South Africa, Tshwane included, have a public transportation problem through several symptoms. As Mthimkulu (2017) points out, ineffective public transport systems manifests as, amongst others, traffic congestion, extended travel time and costly commuter transportation. These parameters are even more amplified in Tshwane because it is geographically sprawled. According to Statistics South Africa cited in Arropet (2017), the average travel time in Gauteng increased from 32 minutes to 46 minutes between 2003 and 2013. Traffic congestion and deteriorating road infrastructure makes commuting on South African roads undesirable (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015; Suleman, Gaylard, Tshaka and Snyman, 2015; World Health Organisation, 2015).

A 2015 survey undertaken by the Department of Transport (2015) reveals that 70 percent of South Africans spend about 30 percent of their household income on transport. Further, none of the past and current transport interventions have lowered the cost to commuters especially low-income earners (Kruger & Luke, 2015; Thomas, 2016; Mthimkulu, 2017).

**Figure 2: Showing the Problem Tree Articulating Ineffective Public Transportation Systems**



Source: Authors

The list of root causes to the symptoms of ineffective public transportation that we point out in the preceding paragraph is inexhaustive. Therefore, our Figure is restricted to those that had literature support. These include the after effects of apartheid spatial planning, inadequate funding, and inadequate enforcement of legislation enforcement. As we have pointed earlier, spatially settlement patterns resulting from the apartheid governance hinder accessibility to central hubs that house major economic activities and social services (Van Ryneveld, 2008; Thomas, 2016; Mthimkulu, 2017). Further, Van Ryneveld (2008) and Bickford (2013) have argued that the transport funding model that government has been using is not aligned to the national objectives. It is obscure, uncoordinated, and does not match the transport demands. Mthimkulu (2017) cautions that government has triggered an unsafe and hazardous environment for commuters by leaving out the taxi industry in its distribution transport subsidies.

In addition to the list of root causes on the problem of ineffective public transportation, is an aspect that is critical for this research that is absent or ineffective institutional arrangements to regulate public transport systems in South Africa (Van Ryneveld,

2008). Various authors – such as Bickford (2013), Kruger and Luke (2015), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2015), and Arropet (2017) – have emphasised that the enforcement of public transportation legislation alongside the implementation of robust governance structures can assist the country to achieve its objectives. Unfortunately, as Van Ryneveld (2008) posits, South Africa has a weak regulatory environment attributable to struggling implementation, management, monitoring and performance measurement of interventions to yield the desired outcomes. Therefore, as Arropet (2017) and Mthimkulu (2017) have argued, the government should assess its current systems and its potential opportunities and then develop strategies that will provide for optimisation of the current infrastructure.

Other than the symptoms and root causes, we should also account for the consequences. Siyongwana and Binza (2012) as well as Thomas (2016) point out that the consequences of ineffective public transport systems and the accompanying ineffective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for transport interventions include an ineffective transport sector regulation, unreliable public transport services, and resistance to reform transport services. Historically,

government has restricted its direct involvement in the provision of public transportation. Instead, it has relegated this responsibility to various private operators. Unfortunately, this entails absent or ineffective regulation of the public transport system and, therefore, making it unsafe, unreliable, inaccessible, and characterised by poor customer service. This explains why people have resorted to private vehicles (Siyongwana & Binza, 2012; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015; Mthimkulu, 2017).

Lastly, Van Ryneveld (2008), Bickford (2013), Arropet (2017), and Mthimkhulu (2017) have argued that absent or ineffective monitoring and evaluation of public transport interventions as well as resistance to reform it has a knock-on effect on the implementation and management of public transport systems. The question around what informs government's decision-making with regards to public transport interventions remains controversial. This is because the government is continuously reinventing the wheel rather than considering effective ways of improving public transportation. Now that we know the problem, that is, its symptoms, root causes, and consequences; let us turn our attention to understanding the solutions that have been provided thus far.

### **3.2 Addressing Ineffective Public Transport Systems: Results-Chain and -Framework for the Tshwane Bus Rapid Transit Intervention**

Table 1 on the next page illustrates a partial representation of an assimilated results-framework for the Tshwane Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) intervention. We describe alignment of the key components critical for the management of a BRT intervention namely impact, outcome, output, activities and inputs.

As gathered across the various schools of thought, the ultimate impact of the BRT intervention in Tshwane is purposed on improved access to public transport and economic hubs, affordability of public transport, and safety of the public transport system (Pienaar, Van den Berg & Motuba, 2007). In steering towards the goal, the intervention should aim to achieve five outcomes that relate to (i) economic sustainability, (ii) reduced travel time for commuters (iii), reduced traffic congestion, (iv) safe and secure public transport system and (v) improved land use and urban design. These are further described below with their accompanying outputs and activities.

The first outcome, economic sustainability, entails attaining affordability and sustainability of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. As Schwenk (2002) and Carlos (2010) point out, this implies enhancing revenue collection through commuting sales and containing infrastructure and operational costs. With regard to the second and third outcomes, Schwenk (2002), Hongyanga (2013), as well as Suleman and colleagues (2015), reiterate the National Treasury's concern that roads in Gauteng Province are highly densified with a flow of approximately 700 vehicles per kilometer. Therefore, the BRT interventions aims at reducing traffic congestion through a more accommodating road network, increasing the ridership of the commuters, and constructing park-and-ride facilities to access the BRT. In turn, shortened time to accessing public transport consequently reduces travel time (Schwenk, 2002; Pienaar *et al.*, 2007; Venter *et al.*, 2017).

The fourth outcome, safe and secure public transport system, provides for good security at the stations and procuring safe and user-friendly buses (Schwenk, 2002; Knojes, 2016). The last outcome, improved land use and urban design, as implied by Venter and others (2017) calls for strategic management decisions in land use and urban design whilst conceptualising an integrated public transport system. Planners should negotiate and secure infrastructure development and densification close to the BRT network. This means creating economic activity spines, shopping centres, and key facilities along and towards the transport corridors.

Lastly, as Norad (1999), Chaplowe (2008), and the European Union Integration Office (2011) point out, we should attach the results-framework (indicators, baseline values, target values, assumptions, and risks) to each item of the results-chain to help us track and assess the intervention. Inclusion of the assumptions and risks provides for enablers and barriers beyond the control of the intervention that eventually explain the progress of the intervention towards the intended results.

## **4. Methods, Data, Findings, and Conclusions of Studies on and Evaluations of Absent and Ineffective Public Transport Systems**

In Section 3, our theoretical interrogation has established that post-apartheid public transportation interventions have not effectively transformed the

**Table 1: Showing a Partial Results-Chain and Results-Framework for a Bus Rapid Transit Intervention**

Results Chain Level	Description	Indicator(s)	Data or Information Source	Baseline Values	Targets	Assumptions	Risks	
Results Chain	<b>Impact</b> <b>Enhance public transport system and accessibility to livelihood opportunities</b>	% of commuters that can easily access public transport	Municipality, provincial and national departments of	BRT Company Database	BRT Company Database	• Government provides the necessary infrastructure	• Poor public transport services	
		% of commuters that can easily access economic hubs	Municipality, provincial and national departments of					
		% of commuters that can easily access affordable public transport	Municipality, provincial and national departments of					
	<b>Outcome 1</b>	<b>Economic Benefits</b>	Revenue per Km			BRT company database	Revenue exceeds cost	• Poor revenue collection affects sustainability of services
	<b>Outcome 1.1</b>	Proof-of-Payment Fare Collection System	Operating labor opportunity costs			BRT company database	• Funds available to install Proof-of-Payment Fare Collection System	• Crime occurrences • Vandalism
	<b>Outcome 1.2</b>	Ticket or commuter card sales	Total sales made for the month			BRT company database	• Tickets will be sold to riders • Commuters will use the BRT services	• Crime occurrences • Vandalism • Breakdown of machines
	<b>Outcome 1.3</b>	Cost of infrastructure and operations	Total project costs			BRT company	• Funds available for expenditure	• Budget shortfall
	<b>Outcome 2</b>	<b>Reduce travel time for riders</b>	Time spent to arrive at point of destination			BRT company database, commuters	• Infrastructure fully operational to achieve intended travel time	• Glitches in the day-to-day operations of the BRT services
	<b>Outcome 2.1</b>	Increase stop locations (bus stops)	Coverage of BRT bus stops			BRT company database	• Land available to construct infrastructure	• Inability to secure land to construct stop locations
	<b>Outcome 2.2</b>	Timeous bus arrivals	Accuracy of electronic real-time information displays			BRT company database	• Infrastructure fully operational to achieve intended travel time • Use of exclusive lanes for buses	• Glitches in the day-to-day operations of the BRT services
	<b>Outcome 2.3</b>	Reserved exclusive bus lanes	Distance of exclusive right-of-way (kms) / average and maximum bus speed (kms)			Municipality, BRT company database	• Funds available for expenditure	• Budget shortfall
	<b>Outcome 2.4</b>	Bus aligned with boarding location	Time it takes for the bus to line itself up for loading			BRT company database	• BRT stations constructed	• Purchase buses without critical BRT features
	<b>Outcome 3</b>	<b>Reducing traffic congestion</b>	Average speed during peak hours			BRT company database	• Private car owners will change mode of transport to BRT	• BRT may not attract more private car owners
			Time spent to arrive at point of destination			BRT company database		
	<b>Outcome 3.1</b>	Increase ridership of commuters	Quantitative actual number of riders Qualitative – opinions of the service, their reasons for using it, their frequency of usage			BRT company database, commuters	• Commuters will use more of BRT service rather than private cars	• Ridership may not increase as expected
	<b>Outcome 3.2</b>	Formed park-and-ride (intermodal) facilities	Number of park-and-ride facilities within the bus route network			BRT company database	• Land secured to build parking facilities for BRT commuters	• Municipality may not approve land use rights
	<b>Outcome 4</b>	A safe and secure public transport system	% of stations with good security features % of user-friendly buses			BRT company database BRT company database	• Company has funds to provide a secured BRT service	• Budget shortfall
	<b>Outcome 4.1</b>	Visible security at stations	% of stations with CCTV cameras % of stations with security guards			BRT company database	• Company has funds to provide a secured BRT service	• Budget shortfall
	<b>Outcome 4.2</b>	Facilities for the disabled, elderly and mothers with children	% of stations with facilities for the disabled, elderly and mothers with children			BRT company database	• BRT company purchase buses-with necessary facilities for the disabled, elderly and mothers with children	• Buses may be delivered without the agreed safety features
	<b>Outcome 5</b>	<b>Improved land use and urban design</b>	Quality of public space surveys conducted			Municipality	• Private and public sector stakeholders agree to improve land for economic growth	• Public contestation on how the land should be used
<b>Outcome 5.1</b>	Distinguishable BRT stations stops	% of distinguishable BRT stations built along the corridor	BRT company database	• Funds available to build BRT bus stops • Commuters easily identify BRT stops	• Budget shortfall			
<b>Outcome 5.2</b>	Infrastructure development close to the transit stops	% of property developments along corridor	Municipality	• Land secured for infrastructure development along BRT corridors	• Municipality may not approve land use rights			
<b>Outcome 5.3</b>	Infrastructure development close to the transit stops	% of property developments along corridor	Municipality	• Land secured for infrastructure development along BRT corridors	• Municipality may not approve land use rights			

Source: Authors (2022)

lives of those living in South African urban cities especially in marginalised communities. In this Section, we interrogate past and current studies that have attempted to interrogate public transport challenges in South Africa including their accompanying interventions such as the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). From the outset, we establish that literature on BRT interventions is still elementary in South Africa because such interventions were only launched in 2009. As a result, most of these studies focus on establishing the effectiveness of BRT interventions in addressing public transport challenges. Some have also interrogated how the intelligent transport systems have been applied in the BRT (Institute of Municipal Engineering of Southern Africa, 2014).

More specifically, Siyongwana and Binza (2012), Ugo (2014), as well as Manuel and Behrens (2018) interrogate the progress that South African cities have made in implementing the BRT and document their successes and challenges. Rahim (2014) and Ubisi (2016) have established the socio-economic effects of the BRT in various communities. Colin (2017) as well as Abejide and colleagues (2018) have interrogated the application of intelligent transport systems to improve the efficiency of public transport systems. Central to all these studies is the desire, using different approaches, to assess the extent to which the BRT intervention has transformed public transport systems to redress historic apartheid disparities in South Africa.

For us to have an idea on the research strategy, design, procedure and methods that we should employ, we reviewed the approaches that these studies employed. Four of these studies employed the qualitative research strategy, two the quantitative strategy, and one the mixed-research strategy. The qualitative research strategy, as documented, provided for understanding the social actions and behaviours of public transport commuters towards the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system as they narrated changes that the interventions have brought into their lives. These studies – Siyongwana and Binza (2012), Rahim (2014), Ugo (2014), Ubisi (2016), Colin (2017), Abejide and others (2018), as well as Manuel and Behrens (2018) – targeted city residents, BRT commuters, members of the taxi associations, and municipal officials. In addition, Rahim (2014) included private car owners in the target Cities and the owners of business that operate in the vicinity of the BRT. Similarly, Colin (2017) as well as Manuel

and Behrens (2018) included specialists working on these transport interventions.

The empirical research results and findings of these studies – Siyongwana and Binza (2012), Rahim (2014), Ugo (2014), Ubisi (2016), Colin (2017), Abejide and others (2018), as well as Manuel and Behrens (2018) – suggest that commuters appreciate the public transport transformation that the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) intervention has brought. However, they point out that it is still inaccessible to most of the commuters partly because of *poor consultation* to understand the specific needs of all their potential customers (Rahim, 2014; Ubisi, 2014; Ugo, 2014; Colin, 2017). Also, *poor urban spatial and transport planning* is another cog in the BRT intervention (Siyongwana & Binza, 2012). Furthermore, the *failure to integrate the different modes of transportation* is another hurdle to the effectiveness and efficiency of the BRT's effort to improve urban public transportation (Rahim, 2014). These challenges imply that urban public transportation remains problematic despite the implementation of the BRT intervention.

Thus far, the studies that we reviewed show that they employed various research procedures and methods to understand the problems of public transportation and its interventions. None of these studies interrogated the appropriateness of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements to provide for effective implementation of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) interventions. This is despite Seftel and Peterson (2014) expressing concern that studies on the BRT system do not take on board M&E. Therefore, bringing on board M&E arrangements in the implementation of public transportation interventions is important, a sentiment we share with the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (2007). Literature, for example Van Ryneveld (2008), Arropet (2017), and Mthimkulu (2017), have emphasised the need for governments to ensure that interventions are effectively monitored and evaluated to ensure that they remain within the broader policy objectives. Therefore, Bickford (2013) and Thomas (2016) are justified when they question the government's ability to empirically measure performance to inform public transport interventions. It is in this regard that this research proposes the institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation arrangements within the Tshwane Bus Rapid Transit System that should be assisting planners and implementers to shape and improve on public

transport interventions. However, how then can we conceptualise such a study and what are some of the key considerations on how we should undertake its empirical part?

## 5. Conceptualising a Research on the Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements for the Tshwane Bus Rapid Transit System

In this Section, we use information in Sections 2 through to 4 to conceptualise a research on the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the Tshwane Bus Rapid Transit System. More specifically, we present our proposed research problem statement and subsequently the accompanying research purpose statement and the research questions. For completion, even though very preliminary, we also suggest an appropriate research strategy, design, procedure and methods as well as the interpretative frameworks.

### 5.1 The Research Problem Statement

Diedericks and Joubert (2006) have argued that, with an aim of forcefully moving non-White racial groups to the fringes of urban cities, the apartheid South African government established sprawled cities. Such settlement patterns are fundamental to ineffective public transportation in South African cities (Tsotetsi & Mariette, 2016). As a result, the post-apartheid government needed a policy meant to transform South African inequality challenges (Thomas, 2016). Following on this need, they developed the Public Transport Strategy in March 2007 whose aim is restructuring cities and provide an affordable, safe, and efficient public transport network reaching all corners of each city (Jennings, 2015). The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) intervention is an integral component of the Public Transport Strategy (Von der Heyden *et al.*, 2015). The BRT is implemented in about 172 cities across the world including Tshwane following the Cities of Cape Town and Johannesburg (Global BRT Data, 2020; Tancott, 2014).

Past studies have focussed on interrogating public transport system challenges and their interventions. In doing so, they have evaluated the impact of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) interventions even with regards to their role in redressing socio-economic disparities. However, we learn that none of the studies have assessed monitoring and evaluation

arrangements that track and assess public transport interventions. Defined monitoring and evaluation arrangements, especially well institutionalised, are essential to track and assess the performance of interventions. Therefore, this research assesses the suitability and effectiveness of the City of Tshwane monitoring and evaluation arrangements that support the implementation of the Bus Rapid Transit intervention.

### 5.2 The Research Purpose Statement

To pursue this research, we propose interrogating the current monitoring and evaluation structures and processes meant to track and assess the implementation of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) intervention. Obviously, this means assessing its effectiveness with regards improving the implementation of the BRT. More specifically, we review literature to interrogate the public transport challenges faced by South African urban cities and their social economic consequences as well as the interventions, such as the BRT system, enacted to redress and improve mobility within the city. Second, we should identify measures that provide for implementing an intervention effectively. Further, we should propose institutional arrangements meant to implement, manage, monitor and evaluate the Tshwane BRT system interventions. Lastly, we then propose appropriate research strategy, design, procedures and methods as well as an interpretative framework for assessing the effectiveness of the Tshwane BRT system monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Here we elect social constructivism as the paradigm of this study because, as implied in Saunders and colleagues (2015), it will provide for generating knowledge from those that are closely associated with the Tshwane Rapid Transit monitoring and evaluation.

### 5.3 The Research Questions to Pursue

- What are the successes and challenges of the current Bus Rapid Transit intervention monitoring and evaluation arrangements?
- What is the capacity of the staff in implementing monitoring and evaluation processes in the Bus Rapid Transit intervention?
- What institutional arrangements should be in place to effectively monitor and evaluate a Bus Rapid Transit intervention?



#### 5.4 The Research Strategy, Design, Procedure and Methods to Consider

We propose employing a qualitative research strategy and cross-sectional research design to undertake our research. Further, we should use in-depth interviews to collect empirical information because we want to solicit the views of those involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. Most studies that we reviewed in Section 4 – that is, Siyongwana and Binza (2012), Rahim (2014), Ubisi (2016), Colin (2017), as well as Manuel and Behrens (2018) – also employed qualitative research strategy and one-on-one in-depth interviews as well as focus group interviews. As mentioned earlier, only Ugo (2014) as well as Abejide and colleagues (2018) employ the quantitative research strategy and full structured interview schedules (questionnaires) to collect research data. We should also mention that Ubisi (2016) and Colin (2017) collected their empirical information through observations while Siyongwana and Binza (2012) as well as Manuel and Behrens (2018) employed document analysis.

#### 5.5 The Interpretative Framework to Consider

Apart from Manuel and Behrens (2018), most studies that we interrogated lack an explicit articulation of the interpretative framework that they employed. Manuel and Behrens (2018) employed a multiple-case study to account for factors that lead to the successes and failures of implementing the public transport strategy in three cities namely, George, Nelson Mandela Bay and Tshwane. This includes the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system which is an important component of the integrated rapid public transport network. The research data collection, collation, processing, and analysis was guided by analytical generalisation. Yin (2014) describes analytical generalisation as a two-step process which first proves how the findings of a case study are borne by a particular theory and then follows on using the same theory to explain findings in similar studies.

Manuel and Behrens (2018) applied two frameworks to interpret their empirical research results. The first framework assessed the successes and failures of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects in each of the three cities using accessibility, attractiveness, infrastructure, and operations. The second framework assessed the causal events associated with the successes and failures of the BRT projects.

Jointly, the frameworks may provide insight on the state of the interventions, the underlying reasons and common public transport reform challenges in various South African cities. Unfortunately, this framework cannot be applied in a single-case study as is the case with our research.

### 6. Summary and Conclusion

Whilst we acknowledge that the past and current research has addressed the various aspects of the Bus Rapid Transit intervention, none of the studies assessed the monitoring and evaluation arrangements of this intervention in any of the South African cities. This is an obvious oversight because as Seftel and Peterson (2014) have asserted, monitoring and evaluation specialists are yet to strengthen this tool to ensure the sustainability of the Bus Rapid Transit intervention. In our anticipated interrogation of the monitoring and evaluation arrangements, we will restrict our research to ascertain how the monitoring and evaluation function is organised within the City of Tshwane Bus Rapid Transit Unit to provide for how the Bus Rapid Transit intervention can be systemically monitored to measure performance and evaluated to inform its improvements and policy development where necessary. We will not assess the actual implementation of the Bus Rapid Transit intervention. The study will provide for lessons that other South African cities may implement to improve the Bus Rapid Transit system.

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# Manifestation of Violence in Primary and Secondary Schools in South Africa

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**Abstract:** The level of violence at primary and secondary schools in South Africa is extremely high. As such, there is no evidence to suggest that the Department of Basic Education has been able to address the escalation of violence in schools as well as the factors that contribute towards increased levels of violent behaviour. Therefore, the primary aim of this paper was to critically analyse the various ways through which violence manifests itself in primary and secondary schools in South Africa. Secondly, the paper reflects on various factors that contribute to violent behaviour in schools. The theory of planned behaviour was applied to understand increased levels of violent behaviour at schools. This paper is conceptual because it is based on the systematic review of scholarly and non-scholarly documents on school violence. The paper reveals that school violence manifests in different ways, such as bullying, sexual assault, physical assault, murder and teen suicides. Among the key factors that contribute to violent behaviour are the use of dagga, abuse of drugs, carrying of dangerous weapons in school precincts, learners' socialisation and immediate environment. The main argument is that both primary and secondary schools should strive to control and reduce violence in schools in consultation with the justice cluster institutions to identify practical and viable solutions to school violence. Equally important, the theory of planned behaviour reveals that when school children observe that fellow erratic and problematic scholars are not penalised for their wrongdoing, it is likely that they will engage in similar misdemeanours. This suggests that whoever engages in violent behaviour should be penalised in such a manner that those who are aware of their offences and penalties will not be tempted to commit similar offences.

**Keywords:** Bullying, Murder, School violence, Sexual assault

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## 1. Introduction

"Violence in schools is a global phenomenon and South Africa is not exempt from the scourge" (Banda, 2022a). For example, Khumalo (2019) mentions that countries such as Zimbabwe, Eswatini (Swaziland), Ghana, Canada, Germany, the USA, Australia and New Zealand are constantly faced with the issue of high levels of violence at schools. In line with this view, Leoschut (2008) asserts that although the issue of school violence is not a new social challenge, it creates a concern as it contributes to the death of school learners and teachers. The learning processes of children at school can be easily compromised when school children do not feel secure at school. According to Mncube (2014), the increased levels of school violence in South Africa could be attributed to numerous factors, namely the normalisation of violent behaviour, poor youth socialisation and inadequate child rearing.

Violence is defined as the "intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or

community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:2; Mncube & Harber, 2014:324; Department of Basic Education, 2016:12). Hoosen, Adams, Tiliouine and Savahl (2022) state that violence is an intensely negative process which involves the violation of the physical, social and psychological integrity of one person by another. School violence is specifically defined as "violence occurring on school premises, while traveling to or from school, or during a school-sponsored event" (Lester, Lawrence & Ward, 2017:1). The above definitions show that violence interferes with the freedom and rights of another person. Basically, violence can be categorised into three distinct variances: violence against oneself (suicide), person-to-person violence and collective violence (Department of Basic Education, 2016). Khumalo (2019) asserts that school violence needs to be construed as criminal and aggressive actions that have the potential to hamper the development of learners, since the school environment may no longer be conducive for learning.

According to Burton and Leoschut (2013), violence can have negative effects such as depression and fatigue. Depression can have far-reaching psychosocial effects that can affect the victims as well as their relations with other people. Additionally, Burton and Leoschut (2013) emphasise that violence at schools can affect learners' capacity to form healthy, consistent and strong relationships with other people. This can make victims of violence feel more pessimistic about the future, making it difficult to handle adversarial circumstances in their socio-economic spaces. In line with Burton and Leoschut's view (2013), the Department of Basic Education (2016) highlights that violence can result in the victim's failure to develop mentally and may also lead to physical injury or death. In other words, violence is extremely detrimental to the emotional and psychological well-being of its victims. While extant research (Hoosen *et al.*, 2022; Mncube & Harber, 2014) shows that violence can affect its victims psychologically, physically and emotionally, Burton and Leoschut (2013) argue that the magnitude of violence at schools has the potential to create an environment in which learners could easily choose to stay away from school as a way of avoiding violence.

Violence at schools can be attributed to various factors such as gender and social norms as well as contextual and structural factors. In this regard, it is worth noting that "discriminatory gender norms that shape the dominance of men and the subordination of women and the perpetuation of these norms through violence are found in some form in almost every culture. Gender inequality and the prevalence of violence against women in society exacerbate the problem. Similarly, social norms that support the authority of teachers over children may legitimise the use of violence to maintain discipline and control (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2017:16). Violence in South African schools can be viewed as a systemic and long-standing issue because reactionary measures are applied to deal with violent incidents instead of introducing preventive measures (Banda, 2022a). According to Mncube (2014), although South African schools do have policies that are intended to prevent violent conduct, carrying of lethal weapons into school premises and the use of substances that have intoxicating effects, violence is still prevalent at schools. Clearly, violence at schools is an impediment to the environment and to a climate conducive for effective learning and teaching (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). Therefore, the aim of

this paper is to critically analyse the various ways through which violence manifests itself in primary and secondary schools in South Africa, based on the systematic review of literature. At the same time, the paper reflects on various factors that contribute to violent behaviour in South African schools. As a point of departure, the theory of planned behaviour is presented as a theoretical framework suitable for understanding or explaining high levels of school violence. Notably, this paper could be useful to researchers interested in issues of school safety, educators, principals and the Department of Basic Education, as it highlights factors that contribute to increased levels of school violence and how such violence could be curtailed.

## 2. Theoretical Framework on Violence

The theory that was utilised for the purpose of this study is the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). This theory is important in explaining the incessant violence at schools since it seeks to assist in understanding why people would engage in a specific action. TPB was developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985 as a further expansion of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) and it was used in the field of social psychology to understand and predict human behaviour (Ajzen, 2012). TPB postulates that there are three precursors to or determinants of intentions, while intentions are viewed as antecedents of any behaviour or action (Ajzen, 1991; Allini, Ferri, Maffei & Zampella, 2017). Such independent determinants are attitudes towards the behaviour, perceived social norms and perceived behavioural control (Allini *et al.*, 2017). Ajzen (1991) explains the three precursors to intentions as follows: firstly, the attitude towards the behaviour is concerned with the extent to which an individual finds the evaluation of a specific behaviour to be favourable or unfavourable. Secondly, the perceived social norms suggest that an individual is likely to engage in a specific behaviour based on perceived social norms. Thirdly, perceived behavioural control is concerned with the perceived level of difficulty or ease with which a specific behaviour can be performed.

De Leeuw, Valois, Ajzen and Schmidt (2015:129) argue that attitudes towards a behaviour "are assumed to be based on behavioural beliefs, which are a person's beliefs about the likely consequences of performing the behaviour." This shows that if the performance of violent behaviour at school is associated with negative consequences, the attitude

towards engaging in violence will be unfavourable. In line with the view expressed above, Ajzen (2011) postulates that human beliefs generate attitudes, intentions as well as behaviours that are also in consonance with such beliefs. Further, Ajzen (2011) emphasises that beliefs regarding the possible consequences (whether positive or negative) for performing a specific action are likely to influence the motivation to engage in such act. Zhang (2018) emphasises that attitude serves as a strong determinant of behavioural intention. De Leeuw *et al.* (2015) drew a distinction between injunctive norms and descriptive norms. Injunctive norms refer to individuals' perception of what referent others think they have to behave, whereas descriptive norms refer to beliefs regarding the behaviour of referent others. In other words, people's perception about what other people think is the right or wrong thing to do may influence their intentions to engage in violent activity at school. Similarly, ideas that people start to develop about what another person is doing in the immediate environment tend to influence their proclivity towards performing violent actions. The issue of referent others is important because if referent others who have engaged in similar violent acts have never been penalised, it is more likely that those who were observers may engage in similar acts because of the absence of punishment.

Perceived behavioural control is based on the perceptions concerning the absence or presence of impediments and obstacles that could facilitate or prevent performance of an action (De Leeuw *et al.*, 2015). In this sense, if people perceive factors that could hamper their efforts to perform violent activities at schools, it is more likely that the motivation to engage in such violent acts would be extremely low. This suggests that such individuals may ultimately be deterred from performing violent actions. Conversely, if individuals do not perceive any possible obstacles in their effort to perform violent actions at schools, it could be much easier for them to engage in such actions. Similarly, Zhang (2018) asserts that the extent to which individuals think their actions are controllable is dependent on three aspects: resources, abilities and opportunities. This explains that before individuals engage in acts of violence at schools, they are likely to identify opportune times and abilities to perform such actions. In support of the views expressed above, Scharrer (2016:2) argues that perceived behavioural control "stands for the individual's perceived own capability and ability to conduct targeted behaviour."

### 3. Different Ways in Which School Violence Manifests

The various ways through which violence can manifest at schools in South Africa include bullying, sexual assault, physical assault, murder and teen suicide. These are discussed in detail below.

#### 3.1 Bullying

Research conducted by the 1000 Women Trust indicates that approximately 57% of learners have been bullied at schools (Gcwabe, 2021). Although bullying appears to be a major challenge in primary and secondary schools in South Africa, Gcwabe (2021) points out that it continues unabated because most learners do not report bullying incidents for fear of being labelled weak. Nevertheless, UNESCO (2017) mentions that school learners who reported bullying at schools indicated that they were bullied due to their sexual orientation (25%), ethnicity or national origin (25%) and physical orientation (25%). In Lester *et al.*'s (2017) interpretation, bullying can be viewed as continued aggressive behaviour which reflects power imbalances between bullies and their immediate victims.

The Department of Basic Education (2016:15) states that "bullying happens when someone uses their physical strength, their position (e.g. prefect, teacher, team captain) or emotional force and influence over others, to hurt or frighten another person." In this regard, three forms of bullying can be identified: emotional bullying (making the victim feel scared and less confident), verbal bullying (name calling and labelling of the victim) and physical bullying (slapping, pushing and shoving the victim). An empirical study conducted by Mncube (2014) reveals that educators find it increasingly difficult to address some of the cases of bullying that are reported at schools. This could be due to the fact that bullying takes place out of sight, especially in places such as corridors, change rooms and toilets where school learners are not supervised by their teachers (UNESCO, 2017).

Mncube and Harber (2014) explain that bullying can result in anxiety, truancy, loss of self-esteem, reduced concentration levels, aggression and stress. It is not only the victims of bullying who are likely to experience adverse effects; the bullies can also experience anxiety and depression while being vulnerable to suicide and self-harm. For the

reasons stated above, Matthews (2021) posits that to address bullying at schools, it is important to ensure that a conducive environment is created to ensure that victims of bullying receive support and protection. At the same time, schools will have to ensure that detailed policies aimed at preventing bullying incidents are formulated and incorporated as part of learners' code of conduct. Mncube (2014) accentuates that bullying must be identified as problematic and addressed without hesitation at schools while also ensuring that anti-bullying policies are in place. In order to address bullying as a form of violence at schools, UNESCO (2017:10) suggests several preventive and control measures such as "strong leadership; a safe and inclusive school environment; developing knowledge, attitudes and skills; nurture effective partnerships; implementing measures for reporting and providing appropriate support and services; and collecting and using evidence." In other words, tackling bullying at schools would require multiple approaches, which should involve all key stakeholders such as parents and community members to play an active role in developing policies on violence prevention at school.

### **3.2 Sexual Assault**

South Africa has alarming rates of sexual violence and rape (Hoosen *et al.*, 2022). The Annual Crime Statistics report for 2019/2022 reveals that over 24 000 children were sexually assaulted in South Africa, while it is estimated that approximately 22.2% of school children have been victims of sexual violence (Bhana, 2021). Furthermore, Bhana (2021) reports that over 160 cases of sexual misdemeanour committed by male teachers were reported to the South African Council for Educators (SACE) between April 2020 and July 2021. According to the Department of Basic Education (2016), sexual violation occurs when the perpetrator touches the genitals of a victim using any body part or making a victim touch the perpetrator in a sexual manner. While incidents of violence against female learners at schools take different forms, such as sexual harassment and rape, Mayeza and Bhana (2021) highlight that these happen in varied school premises such as corridors as well as abandoned buildings on the school precincts. Mncube and Harber (2014) state that when aggressive conduct towards female learners by male learners is normalised and not punished by teachers, an abnormal environment can be created inadvertently where sexual violence could be rife. Nevertheless, Hoosen *et al.* (2022) argue that patriarchy, power imbalances

and socio-economic conditions in South Africa continue to create a difficult environment for young girls who are victims of sexual violence to report their experiences. Consequently, young girls may start feeling hopeless, weak and anxious because of a lack of support. UNESCO (2017:9) also notes with great concern that "sexual violence increases the risk of unintended pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections."

Mayeza and Bhana (2021) suggest the following solutions towards addressing sexual violence against female learners at schools. Firstly, there is a need to address the issue of gender power imbalances. Secondly, schools need to create a safe physical environment thereby identifying and managing spaces that increase the risk of sexual violence. Thirdly, the school curriculum should focus on issues of sexuality and relationships, especially in relation to girls' daily experiences of violence at school. In this sense, a comprehensive sexuality education programme will have to be structured in such a manner that it challenges violence perpetrated by both boys and girls. Fourthly, schools need to provide adequate support to female learners who report incidents of sexual violence. In this regard, schools can promote active bystander programmes that encourage bystanders to take action against violence when it arises. Consistent with Mayeza and Bhana's views, the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2019) points out that sexual violence can be managed by nurturing the school learners' capacity to identify risky and unsafe situations. Moreover, this can include improving the level of awareness about sexual violence and encourage learners to report such incidents. In this sense, clear policies or procedures concerning sexual offences involving learners must be readily available and publicised widely so that school learners are aware of their rights.

### **3.3 Physical Assault**

Ideally, schools are expected to be places where learners can grow and learn in an environment that is safe. However, in South Africa, there is increasing concern about physical violence in the classrooms. For instance, in June 2022, an assault incident occurred in KwaZulu-Natal where a school principal was stabbed in the shoulder by a learner, and a week before that another incident was recorded where a teacher was shot in the head and subsequently died in hospital (Cloete, 2022). In March 2018, a male high school teacher at Bergylam High School

in Mpumalanga was assaulted by a learner in the classroom where he sustained injuries in the head and eyes and suffered fractured ribs (Broughton, 2022). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that teachers are also responsible for physical assault when they enforce corporal punishment as a method of disciplining learners. In line with this view, Stoltz (2022) states that the enforcement of corporal punishment is a major challenge because 169 complaints of corporal punishment were lodged with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) between 2020 and 2021. Further, Stoltz (2022) mentions that most incidents of corporal punishment occurred in rural schools in South Africa.

The Department of Basic Education (2016:17) defines corporal punishment as "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light, by a person in authority." Based on this definition, the primary goal of using corporal punishment is to inflict pain or make another person uncomfortable. This can be interpreted as violent conduct towards the victim of corporal punishment. In 1996, corporal or physical punishment was banned in South African schools and South Africa has since endorsed international conventions such as the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Despite the abolishment of corporal punishment in South Africa, it is evident that some teachers continue to make use of corporal punishment in order to enforce discipline at school. The Department of Basic Education (2016) reports that 49.8% of school learners who participated in the 2012 National School Violence Study revealed that physical punishment was used against them by teachers as well as principals.

Lester *et al.* (2017) note that the use of corporal punishment constitutes school violence. In line with this view, Hoosen *et al.* (2022) found that school learners feel humiliated, resentful and helpless when corporal punishment is used against them at school. When educators are found using corporal punishment against learners to enforce discipline, it is important to ensure that the matter is reported to the law enforcement agencies (Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013). According to UNESCO (2017), fatal and non-fatal injuries are normally reported as a result of physical violence, which includes corporal punishment. However, Cloete (2022) maintains that the issue of physical assault in schools can be

curtailed successfully if parents cooperate with schools when corrective steps are taken against offending children. It is possible for teachers to instil discipline at school without resorting to violent means. For instance, the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2019:37) indicates that teachers can make use of positive discipline which includes "setting clear expectations of behaviour in the classroom and praising and encouraging students who meet those expectations" and use classroom management which requires the creation of a "structured classroom environment that supports academic and social and emotional learning and manages student behaviour in a positive way." However, it is worth noting that some offences by school learners may require measures beyond positive discipline and classroom management. When such a situation arises, it would be prudent to apply school policies and involve law enforcement agencies to deal with such matters. This will ensure that offenders (learners and educators) receive punishment that is commensurate with the offence committed.

### 3.4 Murder

Matthews (2021) reveals police statistics recorded between April 2019 and March 2012 indicating that 9 murder and 19 attempted murder cases were reported at schools. For example, Banda (2022a) reports several incidents of murder that took place at schools: in 2020, a learner was stabbed to death at Eerste Rivier in the Western Cape; in August 2021, a Grade 10 learner from Entokozweni Secondary School in Kwaggafontein, Mpumalanga, was beaten to death by a fellow learner; also in August 2021, a Grade 8 learner from Pholosh Junior Secondary School in Alexandra, Gauteng, was stabbed to death by a fellow learner; another incident in which a Grade 7 learner was stabbed to death at Pholosh Junior Secondary School occurred in September 2021; in January 2022, a deputy school principal from Phomolong Secondary School in Tembisa was shot to death. Boxer (2022) highlights five possible ways through which violent crimes such as murder could be prevented and minimised at schools. Firstly, restricting access to guns is essential because there is a link between high rates of gun murder and access to firearms, irrespective of whether such firearm is legal or illegal. This should also include the prevention of carrying of any other dangerous weapon into school precincts. Secondly, risk assessments must be conducted in schools in order to examine the school learners' inclination towards



violence. However, this should be a team effort that includes police officials, psychologists, counsellors and school teachers. Thirdly, evidence-based strategies meant to decrease violent behaviour at schools must be expanded. The strategies should contribute to the prevention of aggressive conduct, thereby assisting school learners in resolving problems easily when faced with peer conflict. At the same time, school learners who are extremely violent can be taught new constructive behaviours and communication skills. Fourthly, physical security measures at schools should be implemented and maintained. Metal detectors may be used at the entrances of school premises in order to prevent smuggling of lethal weapons which may be utilised to harm others. Lastly, exposure to violent conduct via media and social media must be reduced. Since school learners who are exposed to violence through entertainment media are likely to display aggressive conduct and be callous to violence, it is important to restrict usage of devices that may contain visual images that portray acts of violence.

### 3.5 Teen Suicide

Most teen school learners who experienced discrimination and bullying at South African schools resorted to committing suicide (De Barros, 2022). This explains why teen suicide should be viewed as a reflection of violence at schools. As a matter of fact, the teen suicide rate constitutes 8% of deaths reported in South Africa, while at least 20% of teenagers have reportedly attempted to commit suicide (De Freitas, 2022). Teen suicide is rated as the fourth most common cause of death among 15-19 year olds. This problem has not been given enough attention because of a lack of awareness regarding suicide as a main public health challenge (World Health Organisation, 2021). Further, Shilubane, Bos, Ruiters, Van den Borne and Reddy (2015) note with great concern that teachers at schools are not adequately equipped to deal with issues of suicide among school learners, suggesting that they cannot provide support to school learners who are showing signs of suicidal behaviour. According to the WHO (2021), teen suicide can be managed successfully through collaboration and coordination among key actors in various fields such as law, business, health, education, labour and politics. Shilubane *et al.* (2015) suggest that teachers be given appropriate training in which they can learn to identify school learners who are at risk of suicide and respond by referring learners to qualified health

professionals. Moreover, it is important to ensure that school-based suicide prevention programmes are introduced in such a manner that they can assist teachers in identifying school learners with suicidal tendencies and help learners to cope with incidents of suicide at school.

## 4. Factors Contributing to Violent Behaviour in Schools

There are several different factors that contribute to violent behaviour in schools.

### 4.1 Use of Dagga and Abuse of Drugs

Decriminalising the use of dagga since 2019 has created a huge problem for schools in South Africa. For example, cases of school children who used dagga were reported at three schools in Gauteng, namely: Mamellong Secondary School, 36 Leondale Secondary School and Randfontein High School (Banda, 2022b). Milligan, Radunovich and Wiens (2012) found a direct link between substance abuse and violence among school learners and that the use of dagga was prevalent among school learners in Grades 8-12. In 2018, about 59.9% of primary school children tested positive for drug use and 72.9% of high school learners also tested positive in the Western Cape Province (Malema, 2019). Furthermore, Malema (2019) mentions that the "South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU) reports that 21% to 28% of the patients treated for substance abuse in 2016-17 were under the age of 20." Leoschut (2008) argues that easy accessibility to alcohol and drugs by school learners increases the risk of violence at school. In support of this assertion, Burton and Leoschut (2013) point out that there is a link between school violence and access to substances that have intoxicating effects and that some learners were familiar with individuals that sold illegal drugs such as cocaine, whoonga or nyaope, ecstasy, heroine, tik and mandrax. The problem associated with the use of dagga and drugs can be addressed successfully through the establishment of a safe school environment which involves high levels of cooperation among community leaders, law enforcement agencies, government and educators (Ramorola & Taole, 2014).

### 4.2 Possession of Dangerous Weapons

In 2021, the South African police conducted major operations at schools in Daveyton, Cloverdale

and Etwatwa where dangerous weapons such as knives and scissors were confiscated (Masilela, 2021). According to Leoschut (2008), easy access to dangerous weapons such as firearms creates a precarious environment for the school learners since learners can harm one another. A study conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013) shows that one out of four school learners knew of fellow learners who brought firearms and knives to school. What is concerning is that most incidents go unreported to the school because of learners' fear of victimisation, especially if there are no clear mechanisms in place to deal with such disorderly behaviour by learners. Khumalo (2019) reports that male learners are the ones that frequently carry lethal weapons to school in comparison to their female counterparts. Furthermore, Khumalo (2019) indicates that while knives and guns are frequently carried by learners to school, other dangerous weapons include pangas, bats, screwdrivers and pepper spray. In order to assist schools in addressing illegal behaviour, Mncube (2014) suggests that police need to be continuously and consistently involved.

### 4.3 Learners' Socialisation and Immediate Environment

A study conducted by Hoosen *et al.* (2022) found that young people who are constantly exposed to incidents of violence are likely to develop some short and long-term mental and physical health problems. As a matter of fact, young people who have continuously experienced violence are at risk of higher psychopathology and may start externalising negative behaviour such as bullying and aggressive conduct towards other people (Hoosen *et al.*, 2022). In support of this assertion, South African Council for Educators (2011) posits that when children are exposed to violent situations, they tend to adopt aggressive and violent behaviour or acquire complex social behaviour through the social learning process. Khumalo (2019) also acknowledges that "experiences of violence during adolescence and childhood will affect the health, wellbeing, and capacity of the next generation to shape society, as they navigate rapid social and political change." In other words, when learners are exposed to violent action from an early age, they are more likely to perpetuate and condone violent behaviour. In support of this argument, Hoosen *et al.* (2022) state that the culture of violence can create an intergenerational legacy where victims of violence turn to be perpetrators of violence in their own spaces.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidence from the review of literature reveals that school violence in South Africa has some major negative physical, psychological and emotional consequences on its victims as well as perpetrators. School violence manifests through bullying, sexual assault, physical assault, murder and teen suicide. With regard to bullying, most school children continue to experience bullying due to their sexual orientation, ethnicity or national origin and physical orientation. In order to address bullying at schools, it is imperative to ensure that policies that prohibit and provide clear sanctions against the perpetrators of bullying are in place. South Africa has the highest rate of sexual violence involving young school children in which male educators are primary perpetrators. Evidence suggests that young girls are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases due to forced sexual engagements. Sexual violence at schools can be minimised by addressing gender power imbalances and creating an environment that allows victims of sexual violence to report without fear while also providing emotional and psychological support to the victims.

The issue of physical violence in South African schools is a growing concern because on the one hand school learners unleash violence against educators and fellow school learners using lethal weapons, while on the other hand some educators make use of corporal punishment to instil discipline, despite the fact that physical punishment has been banned in South Africa. South African schools should be able to take proactive steps to involve parents as active partners in dealing with misconduct concerning their children while also making use of positive discipline and classroom management approaches. Incidents that cannot be addressed using the above approaches may need to be reported to the law enforcement agencies, depending on the magnitude of offences by learners or educators. Incidents of murder are also one of the ways in which violence manifests in South African schools. It is therefore important to introduce various programmes in schools that could help reduce the level of aggression often displayed by school learners against one another or the educators. At the same time, the use of detectors by security personnel at school entrances could help reduce the number of dangerous weapons on the premises. It is worth emphasising that where murder has taken place, the matter cannot be handled by a school; instead,

the police must immediately be informed. This will ensure that a thorough investigation takes place so that offenders receive punishment commensurate with the offence. This view is in line with the theory of planned behaviour. Teen suicide is also on the rise in South Africa because young school learners who feel discriminated against and ill-treated resort to suicide. To deal with this challenge, it is necessary to equip educators and train them in basic skills to identify learners who portray suicidal tendencies so that such learners can be referred to psychological professionals.

Evidence emanating from the above research has shown that the use and abuse of drugs are directly linked to increased levels of violence in South African schools. Safe school environments need to be created in order to restrict and prevent the use of dagga and drugs on school premises. Regular unannounced searches must be conducted at schools in order to deter learners from carrying any substance that has an intoxicating effect. Possession of dangerous weapons on school premises by learners is also linked to various forms of violence occurring at schools in South Africa. To deter the possession of dangerous weapons on school precincts, metal detectors should be used regularly. Equally important, a learner's socialisation and immediate environment can immensely influence their proclivity to commit violent acts. This is because when learners are exposed to violence incidents, they tend to exhibit violent behaviour themselves. This is also consistent with the theory of planned behaviour, which reveals that those who observe an occurrence use it to evaluate their intended actions. For this reason, it is important that those who engage in violent action receive a penalty proportionate to the offence in order to deter those who may wish to engage in similar conduct, hoping to escape without any consequences.

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# South African Public Secondary School Administration Machinery: A Case of Three Educational Institutions

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**Abstract:** This paper examines how a public secondary school administration machinery could be made more responsive to the attainment of an institution's mandate of quality instructional practice. The paper is both conceptual and empirical in nature within the qualitative research paradigm. Narrative enquiry and interviewing techniques were employed to generate data. Out of the population of 15 public secondary schools in Mopane District in Limpopo Province, South Africa, three were conveniently sampled and in each secondary school, a school principal and a deputy principal became research participants. Research findings revealed that lack of accountable institutional leadership contributes to unaligned administration machinery. Secondly, the absence of ethical institutional leadership contributes to administration machinery being in disarray. Thirdly, the absence of solidified work ethic contributes to unaligned administration machinery. Lastly, lack of consequence management for derelict of duty promotes utilisation of inappropriate administration machinery. The researcher recommends for the repurposing of administration machinery to contribute to its efficacy.

**Keywords:** Accountability, Administration, Consequences, Machinery

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## 1. Introduction

Schooling comprises the primary, the secondary and the tertiary sector. Of these three sectors the middle one is more than critical in view of its positioning. This is the sifting sector in terms of checking as to whether the preceding sector, as well as the succeeding sectors, are fit for purposes (Leshoro, 2022). Administration machinery of a secondary schooling sector has to operate like a well-oiled machine which is efficacious. Any gap of dysfunctionality by this sector is likely to be a recipe for disaster for the other two sectors. Ill-prepared learners from the primary schooling sector has to be identified by the secondary schooling sector and remedial intervention be applied on that scholar to get a learner ready for the next schooling sector. A secondary schooling sector is the refinery sector for the primary schooling sector and the tertiary one. A solid administration machinery is indispensable (Lee, 2022). This underscores the importance of the secondary schooling sector getting its administration machinery to be vivacious and efficacious. Administration machinery is likely to bring about a secondary schooling sector that is characterised by institutional efficacy. That occurs where the principles of good governance like openness, transparency, consultation and participation are observed at all times (Fox, 2010; Theletsane, 2014).

Many educational institutions have poor administration machinery. Placing inadequate attention to accountable and ethical governance of administration machinery has to be avoided (Moyo, 2015).

Masina (2015) narrates that where there is an ethical, healthy and responsive administration machinery, the delivery of educational service to the recipients is likely to be satisfactory. A will-power by headmasters and headmistresses of educational institutions, and their subordinates, to accountable, ethical and solidified work ethic plus ethical leadership matters (Khoza, 2015). To keep a secondary school's administration machinery contributing to the good performance of a school, is imperative to address the absence of an unaligned governance structures which are known to be compromising the efficacy of administration machinery. Administration machinery persists to operate with inherited meek and strange governance patterns that are based on their erstwhile colonial masters, something deserving to be eradicated (Tisdall, 2015). That perpetuates subjugation and delivery of poor educational standards to learners.

Nkuna (2015) remarks that untransformed administration machinery whose governance is shaky and at times unethical and leaderless in nature, instils in organisational incumbents a sense of self-doubt and

inferiority complex. Accountable and ethical institutional leadership in educational administration machinery is indispensable (Yukl, 2006; Motsepe, 2015). Where administration machinery operates with unaccountable and unethical institutional leaders that are indescribably inefficacious after nearly three decades of independence, deserves to be avoided. Siswana (2007) asserts that conspicuous indicators of unaccountable and unethical institutional leadership in secondary school administration machinery are the dysfunctional institutional systems and structures applied. Their manifestations could be the unending inability by educational institutions to attain their mandate. There is an amount of reluctance by myriad administration machinery of educational institutions, to transform and reposition themselves through placing adequate attention to accountable and ethical institutional leadership and appropriate governance structures to operate differently (Khoza, 2015; Shejvali, 2015).

## 2. Literature Review

The review of literature highlights that the South African secondary schooling administration machinery needs to be healthy to cope with its mandate (Nkosi, 2022). A secondary schooling sector resembles a refinery for the wrongs that occurred at the primary schooling sector in preparation of the graduates for the tertiary schooling sector. That is possible where a school's administration machinery is sufficiently aligned to institutional objectives (Mzileni, 2022). That could be possible in case an administration machinery of an educational institution is structured in such a manner that it at all times promotes the principle of meritocracy within the incumbents. That can better be served where an administration machinery is ever responsive to the faced institutional hurdles, be they of learner indolence to their studies, lack of teacher devotion to their work and the experienced leadership and management vacuum as created by organisational heads (Pelo, 2022). An administration machinery could demean a secondary schooling sector when not appropriately structured. This will be evident as an administration machinery is seen creating an increase in trust deficit within the institutional incumbents. The review of literature emphasises that with no strong administration machinery, an educational institution could show its true twisted face (Sobuwa, 2022). Literature review shares that where poor administration machinery is missing, an education sector is unlikely to afford sufficient

attention to any emerging concerns and interests of institutional incumbents and those of others. The other side of a coin is that with dubious administration machinery in place, an education sector could experience a level of unprofessionalism, job dissatisfaction by teachers and low learner morale which could precipitate institutional under-performance and a general hostile schooling environment for institutional members (Dooms, 2022).

Literature reviewed shows that a strong administration machinery in an education institution is necessary due to its ability to transform an organisation into a champion of humanism. This is where institutional incumbents are adequately motivated to carry out their organisational responsibilities out of no coercion. Where an administration machinery is shaky, there could be manipulation of institutional incumbents' emotions and contamination and exploitation of their natural desire for organisational harmony (Monyooe, 2022). With proper administration machinery in place, a secondary schooling sector could have morally upright institutional members. That is essential in view of its ability to place the well-being of organisational incumbents above everything else (Mzileni, 2022).

The review of literature reveals that of the available theoretical perspectives, in view of the nature of this research, together with the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study, the Critical Theory was exposed as the most relevant theoretical perspective for this paper. The theory sufficiently illuminates issues of how an appropriate administration machinery serves as a cornerstone for the excellent teaching and learning delivery by a secondary schooling sector (Allen, 2015). The Critical Theory helped the researcher to make meaning from the whole notion of the partnership of the performance of a secondary schooling sector and the prevalence of a solid administration machinery in a school. Briefly, one of the principles of Critical Theory is that very often the truth serves the status quo. The other principle relates to the question of: why is it that certain groups of people are so privileged? These fundamental principles were helpful in clarifying how lack of good institutional and ethical leadership, delay the enhancement of administration machinery of a secondary schooling sector (Motsepe, 2015). The selection of Critical Theory in this paper, is informed by its encouragement of reflective and analytical thoughts about inefficacious administration machinery. It is the Critical Theory

which is better placed to adequately respond to a question of whether the relationship between the performance of a secondary schooling sector and its administration machinery is a permanent or a temporary one (Moyo, 2015). The Critical Theory reveals that poor performance in a secondary schooling context could be entrenched if the administration machinery is weak. The Critical Theory serves as a basis for understanding and interpreting the whole issue of secondary schooling administration machinery at times demonstrating lack of accountable and ethical institutional leadership. Higgs and Smith (2010) advise that knowledge and how we understand truth, including scientific truth, moral truth and historical truth should not be separated from everyday life. The Critical Theory helps in the better understanding of strong and weak administration machinery in schooling. The Critical Theory assists in arriving at the root cause of the absence of accountable and ethical institutional leadership in some secondary schooling administration machinery (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009). The Critical Theory emphasises ethics in administration machinery of secondary schools. It has a potential of uncovering whether the process of inability to create structures and systems by some administration machinery of the secondary schooling sector, in order to service learners well, is deliberate or unintentional.

Through the Critical Theory, the problem of this paper is better illuminated. The problem centres around explaining the opportunity missed by the secondary schooling administration machinery by taking their own learners for granted through managing and leading their administration machinery without accountable and ethical institutional leaders and managers. The Critical Theory advocates for the critical reflection on society, in order to discover the hidden assumptions that maintain the existing power relationships between leaders and followers (Higgs & Smith, 2010). Embracing a Critical Theory by the researcher, centres around the theory advising against separating the context of unaccountable, unethical and inefficacious institutional leadership in educational administration machinery of Limpopo Province, South Africa and the learnt social oppression which practitioners in secondary schooling administration machinery, have been subjected to during the era of apartheid and colonialism. Administration machinery requires to be emancipated from unethical and inefficacious governance (Arden, 2013; Tisdall, 2015).

The problem in this paper rests on how the secondary schooling sector struggles to produce excellent learner results due to utilising a disabling administration machinery. This is a predicament to overcome because its existence prevents schooling from servicing learners as expected through a solid administration machinery characterised by ethical leadership with appropriate governance systems and structure (Hofstee, 2010; Doods, 2022). The research questions addressed in this paper are anchored on the Critical Theory as the theoretical perspective that underscores this paper (Higgs & Smith, 2010). The research questions are as follow: What are the roles and significance of ethical and good governance structures and systems that are carefully crafted in line with the resoluteness of an administration machinery of a secondary schooling sector, in creating a secondary schooling like no other in terms of perpetually producing above average learner results? What are the ideas, concerns and aspirations of incumbents of educational institutions in maintaining the efficacy of their administration machinery?

### **3. Research Design and Methodology**

This is a qualitative case study paper. The problem was found to be researchable along the qualitative school of thought as against the others (Dawson, 2006; Levin, 2005). The choice of the qualitative research methodology was triggered by the fact that the paper is being underscored by the Critical Theory. The combination of the two, helped immensely in terms of illuminating issues of how the utilisation of an improper and disabling administration machinery by some secondary schooling sector emerged being one of the sources of under-delivery of the secondary schools (Masina, 2015). Unaccountable and unethical institutional leadership practised within an educational institution bereft of a solid work ethic within the institutional incumbents and lack of consequence management for institutional incumbents who dodge doing their work, contribute to the poor academic learner outcomes by myriad schooling sectors. With the Critical Theory underpinning this paper, the researcher utilised it, to interrogate how the secondary schooling sector normally understands accountable and ethical institutional leadership as part of the requisite administration machinery capable of generating efficacious governance in educational institutions. The theory was also applied to establish the common reactions by members of educational institutions

that are perpetually inefficacious owing to utilising disabling administration machinery. There was a need to amalgamate the Critical Theory and the qualitative research approach aiming at maximising the ability and strength of the Critical Theory towards the exposure of how inefficacious administration machinery that are manifested through unethical governance, amongst others, rob some educational institutions of the quality educational service (Creswell, 2010). Partnering the qualitative research approach and the Critical Theory enabled the researcher to make an in-depth understanding of how despite many years since apartheid formally collapsed, its effects remain firmly in place. Such effects manifest where certain administration machinery applied does not lead to top performing schooling (Welman *et al.*, 2005). Both the narrative enquiry and the interviewing techniques were utilised to construct data relevant for this paper. To triangulate the gleaned data, interviewing was conducted with six school principals, two from each, in the three conveniently sampled secondary schools. Responses were audio-taped for transcription later on (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Findings arrived at in this paper, are in relation to the research title whose focus is: how a public secondary school administration machinery could be made more responsive to the attainment of an institution's mandate. The basis of the findings is the analysed data which were generated through the narrative enquiry and the interviewing techniques. Administration machinery was examined with regard to their contribution to good learner performance in secondary schooling sector. Paying attention only to those three secondary schools, where each contributed a principal and a deputy for interviewing, ought not create an impression that they were the only administration machinery that were worse off as regards unaccountable and unethical institutional leadership in Limpopo Province of South Africa. They were selected because down the years, the researcher familiarised himself with issues of poor and inefficacious administration machinery in those institutions. The Critical Theory has been sufficiently instrumental in assisting in the analysis of data to ultimately emerge with these findings. Findings and discussion for this paper are the following: the absence of solidified work ethic, lack of accountability institutional leadership and lack of consequence management.

#### 4.1 The Absence of Solidified Work Ethics

For any secondary school administration machinery to be credible and ethical, a display and exhibition of a solidified work ethic by every institutional incumbent is essential and imperative. Embracing the Ubuntu philosophy and the Batho Pele Principles pave a way for the demonstration of devotion to render an impressive and an extra-ordinary educational service to the learner population with aplomb and distinctions (Baloyi, 2019). School Principal 1 of School A complains that:

*"the dilemma with myriad secondary schools is that their administration machinery are tailored along the governance models which were utilised by the apartheid and the settlers' regimes prior to 1994".*

Deputy School Principal 3 of School C responds that:

*"The reality is that the appropriate and necessary administration machinery that resembles ethical governance systems and structures are vital to support a public administration machinery to reinforce the culture of professionalism in its operations, but such is unfortunately missing in the bulk of the secondary schooling institutions".*

Madue (2013) and Khaas (2019) emphasise that the existence of professionalism leads to the sowing of the solidified work ethic which is vital for the competency and productivity of a schooling sector. This distinguishes one public administration from the rest. Operating with structures and systems whose development was foreign to institutional set-ups, was a grave error. Whether current administration machinery itself will ultimately be able to sever the historically established ties with their erstwhile apartheid regimes, it is a matter of wait and see (Tsheola, 2002). Zwane (2015), Mbele (2019) and Musyoka (2019) articulate that structurally, nothing has changed in administration machinery since the collapse of apartheid. Formally, apartheid may have been outlawed but practically it continues to wreak havoc on the lives of many members of the civil society and their institutions like secondary schooling administration machinery. Apartheid appears to have been internalised by some public servants to the level where anything and everything whose genesis is not from the previous regime, is being held with low regard. Small wonder then that it has to be easy for some administration machinery and their



practitioners to marvel and celebrate the persistent use of inherited administration policies instead of having developed theirs that were not alien to the present context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century schooling. These contradictions of certain administration machinery as found in myriad secondary schooling sectors, ought not be countenanced to eternity. Some patriotic African administrators keep on reminding that, 21<sup>st</sup> century was supposed to be an African century in every respect (Mbeki, 2003).

#### 4.2 Lack of Accountable Institutional Leadership

Accountability matters where an administration machinery has to be functional and extra-ordinarily good (Brown, 2019). School Principal 2 of School B emphasises that:

*"accountability and stability of a public administration machinery determine the level at which that public administration would be able to attract the positive image or not".*

Deputy Principal 3 of School C contends that:

*"the fact that the majority of public administration machinery are characterised by either instability or disharmony, is not helping the course in an attempt to have public administration machinery operating in a functional and an efficacious way to enhance the level of educational service delivery to the learner population".*

Arden (2013) & Bell (2019) remark that a fundamental question to pose is: why is accountability as one of the essential elements of ethical institutional leadership missing in myriad of the public administration machinery? Literature review reveals that a large amount of the enemies of accountable and ethical institutional leadership in administration machinery are incumbents themselves. Where there is lack of sufficient accountability as part of good and ethical governance, a public administration machinery stands to lose the positive image it has being enjoying (Omano, 2005; Gobillot, 2008; Owabe, 2013; Mooney, 2019; Musyoka, 2019). This is not ignoring the political influence that keeps on rearing its ugly head that directly or indirectly impacts on the accountability level of administration machinery. Efficacious and ethical governance within a sound administration machinery, creates an environment of accountability where the desire by public servants

to offer excellent service delivery reigns supreme (Cunha, Filho & Goncalves, 2010). Failure to do so may continue to plunge administration machinery in the quagmire of perpetual underachievement manifested in poor academic learner outcomes, particularly from the secondary schooling sector service delivery point of view (Jim, 2019).

#### 4.3 Lack of Consequence Management

Everywhere in the world, whenever there is derelict of duty by incumbents, there must be consequences. That aims at deterring further derelict of duty. Allen (2014) remarks that as long as the creation of efficacious and ethical governance for sound public administration machinery is not taken as a priority by myriad administration machinery, replacement of underperformance with performance by learners, may take a while to occur. School Principal 3 of School C reminds that:

*"a number of factors account for that state of affairs such as inability to appoint sufficiently dedicated and honest people as public servants, being part of the reason".*

Deputy Principal 2 of School B advises that:

*"lack of alignment of skills, leadership and organisational capabilities to the services to be delivered to the stakeholders, also contributes to dissatisfactory educational services rendered by public administration machinery to stakeholders".*

Mbele (2019) adds that another factor that could make an administration machinery to lack behind from others is permitting the absence of consequence management for the derelict of duty by incumbents. Consequences management could serve as an appropriate deterrent. In addition, an alignment of aims to avoid never compromising the quality of educational service delivered to stakeholder is imperative. Where alignment exists, there is likely never to be business as usual in the form of replacing underperformance (Musyoka, 2019). Application of consequence management becomes practicable where every incumbent is clear about what has to be performed in an educational institution. Thornhill & Van Dijk (2010) remark that bad customer service by administration machinery is avoidable as long as the right basics are in place and organisational practitioners abide by them to prevent arriving at the stage of consequence

management (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Sebola, 2012; Brown, 2019). Consequence management has to be applied where institutional incumbents were provided with the requisite resources and skills to do the job (Tisdall, 2005; Khaas, 2019).

## 5. Conclusion

Administration machinery in myriad secondary schools in Limpopo Province, South Africa, needs to deal with their challenges of unaccountable, unethical institutional leadership and the absence of solidified work ethic in the ranks of their institutional incumbents. This will enable their administration machinery to improve service delivery to their learner population. Administrators need to ascertain that their learner population is in a trajectory of forward development by offering them decent and quality educational opportunities. This is possible with solidified work ethic from institutional incumbents which enables them to prioritise high level quality teaching and learning to scholars. Evidently, administration machinery of substance needs to embrace consequence management for derelict of duty by institutional incumbents. A proper alignment of governance structures and other organisational elements to avoid compromising the success of an existing administration machinery is imperative. The study therefore recommend the following:

- There is a need for public administration machinery to emphasise accountable and ethical institutional leadership at all times by the institutional incumbents to render a schooling service like no other.
- There is a need by administration machinery to promote solidified work ethic within the institutional incumbents with more emphasis on getting every institutional member to offer a quality educational service out of free volition.

Lastly, there is a need to address leadership and management deficit, experienced in myriad administration machinery that prevent the appointment of honest public servants with the good service-oriented attitude and mentality.

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# Urbanization of Rural Areas Towards Spatial Justice and Rural Development in South Africa: A Theoretical Evaluation of Selected Cases

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**Abstract:** Urbanization is one of the most essential features of spatial development, and it has historically been described using a few indicators on a somewhat coarse spatial scale also regarded as the mass movement of populations from rural to urban settings and the consequent physical changes to urban settings. However, urbanization encompasses not just land-use changes, but also socio-economic developments that may or may not emerge as physical deviations in the built environment and its land use. In South Africa, attitudes regarding urbanization are predominantly complex and vague, reflecting a history of institutionalized discrimination, urban segregation, and rural poverty. Additionally, the spatial link between population increase, employment opportunities, and availability of basic services and infrastructure as well as housing, is given special attention during urbanization. This urbanization has become excessive and unmanageable, resulting in unlawful land occupations, booming informal settlements, unparalleled housing constraints, overburdened infrastructure, and social instability. Given that rural development is mainly characterized by economic development, it has recently become appropriate for some countries to urbanize their rural areas with the hope of addressing backlogs in basic service delivery and infrastructure and most importantly the decentralization of economic activities ultimately achieving spatial justice and, South Africa is not an exception. Therefore, this paper seeks to theoretically evaluate the effectiveness of urbanization in South Africa's rural areas with the hope of achieving spatial justice and satisfactory rural development. The paper discovered that decentralization of economic services is mostly regarded as the main activity of urbanization in rural areas. Furthermore, the adopted approach is more likely implemented in townships that are more accessible to most of these rural areas rather than in these rural villages themselves. The paper concludes that urbanization of rural areas can potentially reduce poverty by enhancing economic growth, development and prosperity, permitting more effective public and private service delivery and infrastructure development in rural areas, and not just decentralizing selected economic services to nearby townships.

**Keywords:** Urbanization, Rural Areas, Spatial Justice, Rural Development, South Africa

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## 1. Introduction

Traditionally, a rural area with low population concentration, minimal urban land use or density and a high level of primary production might be regarded as being farther from urban influence (Madsen, Kristensen, Fertner, Busck & Jørgensen, 2010; Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2014; Hussain & Imityaz, 2018; Kuddus, Tynan & McBryde, 2020). Additionally, these locations are classified using a variety of socio-economic characteristics. Remote rural areas are a distinct subgroup of locations with development issues, such as sustained declines in population, income levels and employment opportunities, among others. These regions frequently have poor connection to economic centres and are frequently classified as being peripheral, distant, or deeply rural. Their indirect effects of urbanization include

the possibility that they are popular tourist sites or have significant concentrations of rented houses and traditional tourist activities (Hussain & Imityaz, 2018; Lazaro, Agergaard, Larsen, Makindara & Birch-Thomsen, 2019; Kuddus *et al.*, 2020). Whereas urban areas are understood to provide a variety of purposes in all societies such as being the center for scientific advancement and economic expansion (Kuddus *et al.*, 2020). However, urban neighbourhoods are also a haven for environmental risks, communicable diseases, and poverty and inequality. (Madsen *et al.*, 2010; Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2014; Hussain & Imityaz, 2018). To address the adverse effects of urbanization, rural development is one of the development strategies adopted by various countries. Given that rural development is mainly characterized by economic development, it has recently become appropriate for some countries

to urbanize their rural areas with the hope of addressing backlogs in basic service delivery and infrastructure and most importantly the decentralization of economic activities ultimately achieving spatial justice and, South Africa is not an exception (Madsen *et al.*, 2010; Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2014; Lazaro *et al.*, 2019; Hussain & Imitiyaz, 2018; Kuddus *et al.*, 2020). The potential of urbanizing rural areas in South Africa and towards spatial justice relates to issues of spatial planning and rural development.

Spatial injustice and rural development challenges in South Africa entrench inequalities along the lines of race, class, gender, age, and geography. There is a plethora of definitions of spatial justice. For purposes of this paper we draw from a meta-synthesis of various attempts including Pirie's (1983) use of territorial and social justice concepts, the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996; Harvey, 2003, 2009; Marcus, 2009), the theory of justice (Rawls, 1971), social justice and the city (Harvey, 1973), and the just city theory (Fainstein, 2010) – embedded on the South African context, to define spatial justice as 'the spatial distribution and allocation of a diverse range of resources, services and opportunities by means of criteria of democracy, equity, diversity and fairness in all spaces and communities of an urban/rural region; with specific reference to socially- and culturally-valued, priorities and basic needs in terms of education, employment, transport, health and housing and a focus on the disadvantaged and impoverished communities that have previously been denied access to, and/or benefits of, such opportunities and basic needs' (Adegeye & Coetzee, 2018). It entails the fair and equitable allocation of opportunities and socially valued resources in physical space, and meant to promote systematic urbanization through rural industrialisation activities to catalyse the economic and social development in lagging village and rural areas. Notionally, spatial justice is supposed to induce the formation of other sectors of industry which mean that employment will be created at the same time keeping the industrial hub flourishing by attracting external investment that would input capital into several developmental projects and economic services.

Unjust geographies as well as instances of spatial injustice, globally and locally, can be caused by various factors such as segregation, apartheid, political organisation of space, gated communities, and inequality in the distribution of public goods

and discrimination in geographies, corruption, and general impunity for corrupt practice. While apartheid caused spatial injustice in South Africa, other factors are still contributing to it such as the actions of the government, for example, in delayed implementation of land reform; creation of toll roads and evictions for mega infrastructure developments like World Cup; inequalities in distribution such as in the public transport system in Gauteng Province where the elite few have access to the Gautrain services, while the previously disadvantaged have inefficient means of transportation. In this corollary, the provision, accessibility and opportunity to use public services and goods such as health, education, housing, employment and transport, which are also listed as basic human rights (African National Congress, 1994; National Planning Commission, 2011) are important aspects to be acknowledged in the realisation of spatial justice, and that would support progress towards SADC Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2030, AU Agenda 2063, and the universal Sustainable Development Goals (especially 3 on health; 10 on reduced inequalities; 11 on sustainable cities and communities; and 16 on access to peace and justice). In terms of the ensuing human security, failing to handle the current rates of unchecked urbanization has a substantial negative impact on the South African economy particularly on health, education, housing, economic, political, and social fronts. Therefore, this paper seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of urbanization in South Africa's rural areas with the hope of achieving spatial justice and satisfactory rural development. To achieve its purpose, the paper focuses on urbanization and rural development in South Africa; South Africa's spatial development with specific reference to reflections of the nature of urbanization; urbanizing rural areas towards spatial justice and rural development; and, the effectiveness of urbanization of South Africa's rural areas with the hope of achieving spatial justice and satisfactory rural development.

## **2. Methodology**

The study design will adopt a qualitative mixed methods rapid review of the existing data on the effects of urbanization of South Africa's rural areas towards achieving spatial justice and satisfactory rural development. Current empirical literature that reflects on the urbanization of rural areas and spatial justice was reviewed. Purposive sampling was used to select Lebowakgomo, Seshego

and Mankweng Townships in Limpopo Province as cases of reference. While the data was generated from existing literature and no primary data was collected from the sample, the selected cases were used as references for drawing examples for evaluation purposes.

### 3. Urbanization and Rural Development in South Africa

According to Davis (1965), urbanization is a limited process that countries go through when they make the transition from an agrarian to an industrial civilization. Davis defines urbanization as the transition of individuals from agrarian to industrial occupation, which results in urban habitation. Therefore, the mobility of people to jobs in urban settings where they can be tallied is the focus. Since 1994, three distinct rural development programmes related to urbanization and spatial justice have been considered in South Africa, viz. the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) 1994-2000; the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) 2000-2009; and, the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) 2009-present. Whereas rural development is regarded as the process of improving rural residents' quality of life partly through economic development. Rural development is a comprehensive and multifaceted concept that entails raising the standard of living for those who reside in rural areas, e.g., through agriculture and related activities. Additionally, rural development is a phenomenon that arises from the interactions of numerous physical, political, technological, economic, sociocultural, and institutional elements (Madsen *et al.*, 2010; Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2014; Moselane, 2015; Lazaro *et al.*, 2019; Hussain & Imityiaz, 2018; Kuddus *et al.*, 2020).

Rural development is an important global human security issue. A large amount of the population lives in rural areas and where millions are deprived of better education, decent housing, proper communication, adequate nutrition, employment opportunities, good health, appropriate public transport, and social justice by virtue of location. The World Bank estimates that in 2022, 32.15% of South Africa's population would live in rural areas, while 67.85% will live in urban areas. Accordingly, 11% of the 67.85% of people who reside in urban areas do so in squalid shacks and informal settlements (Urbanet, 2020; PMG, 2020; SANSA, 2019). The backwardness of the rural areas including villages and

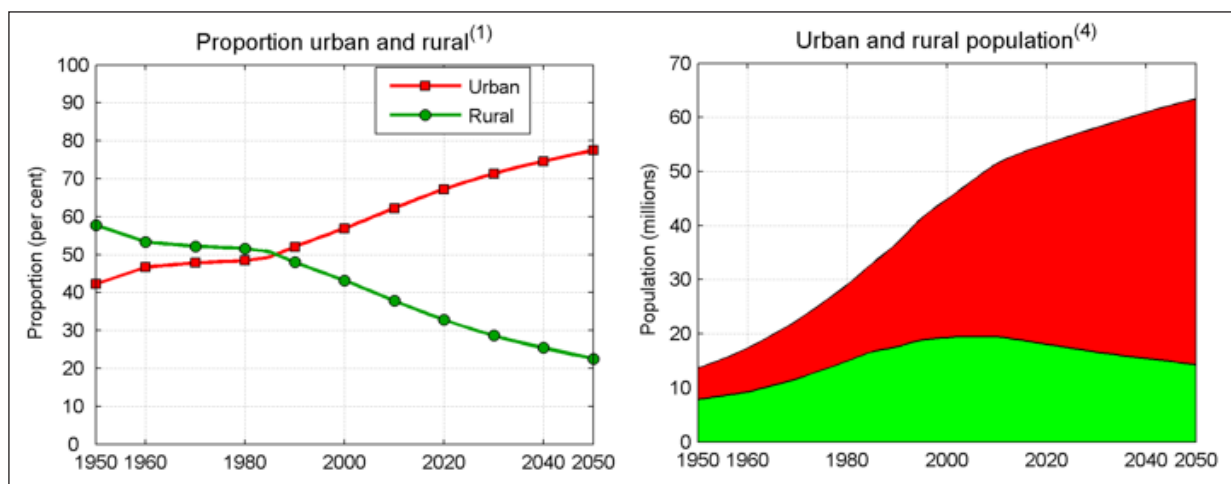
urban informal settlements is a significant obstacle to the economy's overall development. They face several challenges including meeting the needs of their mushrooming informal settlement populations and providing means of livelihood in rural areas. Furthermore, making provisions for infrastructure, transportation, housing, energy, and employment, as well as for essential services like water and sanitation, education and healthcare, is one of these challenges (Moselane, 2015). In the period of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), without meeting this enormous population's basic needs, meaningful development cannot be anticipated in villages and rural areas.

### 4. Reflections on the Nature of Urbanization

In South Africa, attitudes regarding urbanization are predominantly complex and equivocal, due to the history of institutionalized racism and discrimination, urban segregation, and rural poverty (Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2014). Additionally, the spatial link between urban population increase, employment opportunities, and availability of basic services and infrastructure is given special attention during urbanization. This urbanization has become excessive and unmanageable, resulting in unlawful land occupations, booming informal settlements, unparalleled housing limitations, overburdened infrastructure, and social instability (Madsen *et al.*, 2010; Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2014; Lazaro *et al.*, 2019; Hussain & Imityiaz, 2018; Kuddus *et al.*, 2020). As aforementioned, urbanization is usually referred to as the large movement of people from rural to urban areas, the physical built environment changes that result in urban environments, and the socio-economic changes that may or may not be reflected in those physical changes in the built environment and land usage (Lazaro *et al.*, 2019).

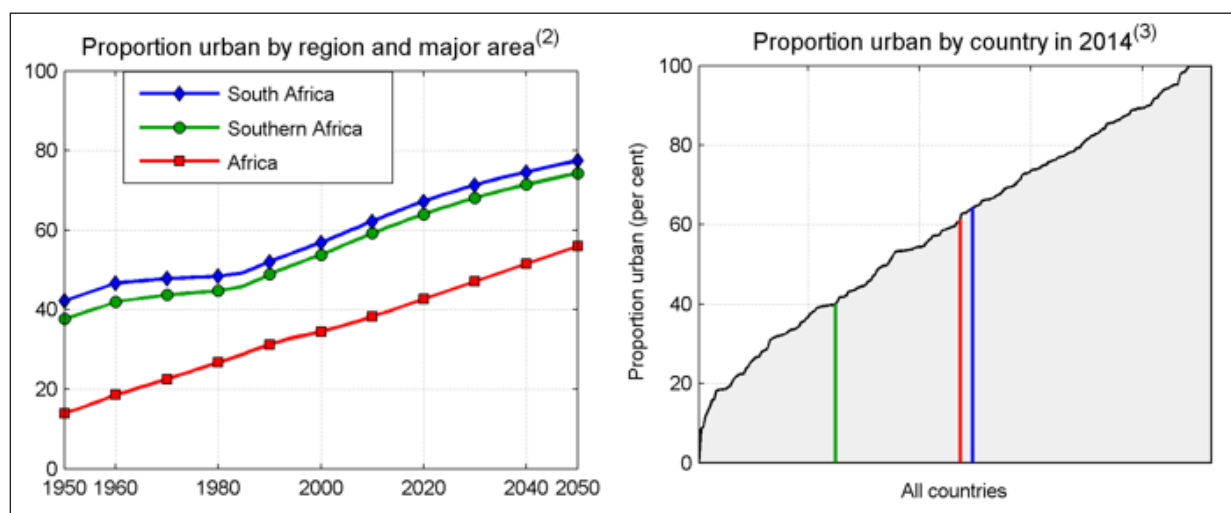
Approximately 67.85% of South Africans currently reside in urban regions, and by 2030, that number will increase to 71%. In contrast, by the middle of 2014, 35.7% (18.9 million) of South Africans were living in rural areas. From about 43% (5.8 million of 13.7 million people) in 1950, South Africa's urbanization patterns are predicted to reach 77.4% (49.1 million of a projected 63.4 million people) in 2050 (Figure 1). On the other hand, the percentage of people living in rural areas is predicted to drop from 59% (7.9 million) in 1950 to 22% (14.3 million) in 2050 (Urbanet, 2020; PMG, 2020; SANSA, 2019).

**Figure 1: Urbanization in South Africa**



Source: BusinessTech, 2014

**Figure 2: Urbanization South Africa vs Region**



Source: BusinessTech, 2014

Urbanization patterns in South Africa are significantly higher than the norm for the Southern African area and the entire African continent (Figure 2).

For inhabitants and residents in those key or nodal locations, urbanization offers substantial prospects for economic development and access to jobs as well as other development-related options. However, if it is not properly managed, it also brings with it a host of problems, such as negative effects on the environment (directly affecting wildlife and natural habitats), unemployment and urban poverty (bad living conditions), crime, the loss of the original society fabric due to changes in living

conditions, harm to heritage and culture, urban congestion, and an increase in the cost of living (utilities and basic services) (Madsen *et al.*, 2010; Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2014; Hussain & Imityaz, 2018). The urban poor bear the brunt of these. The spatial planning practices left behind by apartheid, such as Bantustans and forced relocations, created difficulties. These include the need to strengthen the state's capabilities as well as spatial injustice, instability, unsustainability, lack of quality, inefficiencies, and resilience in space. Apartheid spatial patterns were maintained by four main factors: persistently segregated metropolitan areas, unequal income distribution and access to services, unsustainable

infrastructural networks and consumption patterns, and the utilization of already existing markets and land (Lazaro *et al.*, 2019).

Against this background, the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF) adopted by Cabinet in April 2016 needs to be understood and superimposed with various legislation and three rural development programmes related to urbanization and spatial justice have been considered in South Africa, viz. the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) 1994-2000; the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) 2000-2009; and, the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) 2009-present. These initiatives set out principles, policies and programmes to achieve inclusive urban and rural development improving the quality of life of all people in rural areas, informal settlements, and previously marginalized in urban settings. Fundamentally, "inclusive development" involves three distinct but related dimensions: (a) economic dimension, which entails giving poor and low-income households the ability and opportunities to benefit from economic growth; (b) social dimension, which entails promoting gender equality, women empowerment and providing social safety nets for vulnerable groups; and (c) political dimension with a focus on increasing the chances for low-income and underprivileged rural residents to actively and fairly participate in local political processes. Overlapping across includes gender mainstreaming values embedded to respond to sexual gender-based violence and femicide which is a characteristic pandemic of contexts of rapid urbanization and incidence of spatial injustices in South Africa.

## 5. Urbanizing Rural Areas: Towards Spatial Justice and Rural Development

To understand 'what works' in urbanizing rural areas towards spatial justice development in South Africa, this section outlines the legislative framework in relation to spatial planning and rural development.

### 5.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996)

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (108 of 1996), with reference to the principle of development in South Africa, plays a vital role in the manner in which development planning and management are conducted. It can be described as a transformation action because it is dedicated to

making up for past wrongs and creating a society based on democratic principles, social justice, and human rights (Olivier, 2013:254). Section 25(5) of the Constitution declares that, in addition to other substantive articles requiring land reform, enhancing and insuring secure tenure rights, redressing other inequities caused by previous land disposessions, and preserving property rights:

*"The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis."*

In terms of spatial planning the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) section 24(a) (b), and states that everyone has the right "to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and, to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that: prevent pollution and ecological degradation; promote conservation; and secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development" in order to "heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights; lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the local communities and every citizen is equally protected by law; improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations".

### 5.2 Land Use and Management Legislation

To enable South Africa to deal with these post-apartheid transformations, new legislation with regard to spatial planning and management had to be developed (Cilliers, 2010:51). The following outlines the principal legislation related to spatial planning and rural planning that contributed to the development of land use and spatial planning in the country until the Development Facilitation Act (DFA) constitutional court judgment in 2010.

#### 5.2.1 Physical Planning Act 125 of 1991

The Act encourages the Republic's orderly physical development and makes provisions for the Republic's regionalization, the creation of national and regional development plans, regional structure



plans, and urban structure plans by the various physical planning authorities, as well as matters related thereto. The division did not restrict the rural areas, but the development of the policy plan thereof. This Act and its development principles are focused on the urban areas, thus the influence in rural areas is indirectly included in the division of regions.

### **5.2.2 Development Facilitation Act 67 of 1995**

The Act's goals were to promote security of tenure, establish measures to facilitate and hasten the implementation of land-related reconstruction and development projects and provide for the establishment of development tribunals in each province with the authority to decide disputes involving such projects. The DFA encouraged that all policy, administrative practice and laws should provide for "urban and rural land development and also facilitate the development of formal and informal, existing and new settlements and the discouragement of the illegal occupation of land, with due recognition of informal land development processes".

### **5.2.3 The National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998**

By establishing institutions that will support cooperative governance, procedures for coordinating environmental functions performed by state organs, and principles for decision-making on matters affecting the environment, the Act promotes cooperative environmental governance. It also addresses matters related thereto. The National Environmental Management Act (107 of 1998) promotes the South African Constitutional right of everyone to an environment that is not damaging to their health or well-being. In that situation, the distribution of the environmental impacts must not be done in a way that unfairly discriminates against anyone, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people (mostly found in rural areas). It is clear that NEMA (67 of 1998) complies with Agenda 21's sustainable development goals and objectives. It is vital that the NEMA (67 of 1998) be consulted when decisions are made in terms of spatial planning, to ensure sustainable development of the environment.

### **5.2.4 Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998**

The Act aims to provide criteria for deciding the category of municipality to be founded in a region, to allow for a proper division of tasks and powers amongst categories of municipalities, and to build a framework for establishing municipalities. In

accordance with the regulations relating to categories and types of municipalities, the Act also provides for the establishment of municipalities. The municipal council's long-term development vision, an evaluation of the current state of development, development priorities and targets for its elected term, and a framework for spatial development are all encouraged to be included in the integrated development plan's components. Within the municipal authority, the integrated development plan promotes development in both urban and rural areas.

### **5.2.5 Municipal System Act 32 of 2000**

To establish a clear and supportive framework for the fundamental planning, performance management, resource mobilization, and organizational change processes that support municipalities' progress toward the social and economic uplift of local communities, to guarantee universal access to basic services that are affordable for everyone, to enable community involvement, and to provide the fundamental principles, mechanisms, and processes that are required. The Municipal System Act 32 of 2000 does not specially make reference to rural areas and its development, but the fact that rural areas are also part of the municipal areas that the municipalities should maintain, is addressed by the Act, although decisions made in municipalities in terms of development may in most cases focus on developing the urban areas rather than rural areas.

### **5.2.6 The Local Government Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations, 2001**

It offers guidance in relation to Local Government Municipal System Act 32 of 2000. With relation to the necessity of spatial development frameworks, a more thorough explanation is provided in section 2, where the emphasis is on the specifics of IDPs. A key component of the establishment of the IDP and SDF is the Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations, which give local governments the required parameters for developing and implementing the IDP. The IDP is a powerfully documented that describes the local municipalities and its plans and performances. It is clear that rural areas are mostly influenced by urbanization and the migration process, nevertheless most municipalities result in 80% of their projects focusing on urban or even more rather than rural areas. This regulation directs the municipalities with spatial planning and integrated development planning, with no specification to either urban or rural areas.

### **5.2.7 White Paper on Spatial Planning & Land Use Management (2001)**

The White Paper focuses on the development of policies that will lead to the most "effective use and sustainable management of land; improvement and strengthening of planning, management, monitoring, and evaluation; strengthening of institutions and coordinating mechanisms; development of mechanisms to make it easier to meet the needs and objectives of local communities and communities at large on a local level". The general guidelines for land use are against low-density, segregated, fragmented, and mono-functional development and favour compact, integrated, and mixed-use settlements. The principles thus try to impose a general policy orientation on the numerous decisions made in light of numerous laws. Their application has thus far been sporadic. According to the White Paper on Spatial Planning and Land Use Management (2001), it will be important to deal with issues related to natural resource management, land rights and tenure arrangements, land capability, farm consolidation and subdivision, and the protection of prime agricultural land in the context of rural areas.

### **5.2.8 Spatial Data Infrastructure Act 54 of 2003**

The Act hopes to create the South African Spatial Data Infrastructure, the Committee for Spatial Information, and an electronic metadata catalogue; to determine standards and guidelines for the sharing of spatial information; to capture and publish metadata; to prevent duplication of such capture; and to address issues related thereto. Both users and governmental agencies with access to spatial information are covered by this Act. The South African Spatial Data Infrastructure was created as the country's technical, institutional, and policy framework to simplify the collection, management, upkeep, integration, dissemination, and use of spatial data. This Act responds to the consideration of spatial data in general, and in support of capturing spatial data as a development tool, notwithstanding urban or rural areas in its considerations.

### **5.2.9 Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) 16 of 2013**

After the Constitutional judgment of 2010, the DFA that was intended to be an interim measure was repealed by the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Bill in 2012. In 2013 the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform adopted the bill as an Act called the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) 16 of 2013.

Section 2(2) of the SPLUMA stipulates that "except as provided for in the Act, no legislation not repealed by this Act may prescribe an alternative or parallel mechanism, measure, institution or system of spatial planning, land use management and land development in a manner inconsistent with the provisions of this Act" (George, 2014:1). The SPLUMA's primary goal is to "correct historical inequities in the implementation of spatial development planning and land use management systems while ensuring that the system of spatial planning and land use management promotes social and economic inclusion" (Ogunronbi, 2012:1). The principles of the SPLUMA encourages that urbanization and rural development should provide for both rural and urban areas in terms of the repair of spatial settlement patterns that have historically been distorted by an integrated land-use and development approach.

They include the principles of spatial justice, spatial sustainability, efficiency, resilience and good administration (RSA, 2013). For the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on the principle of social justice which states that:

"Past spatial and other development imbalances must be redressed through improved access to and use of land; Spatial development frameworks and policies in all spheres of government must address the inclusion of persons and areas that were previously excluded, with an emphasis on informal settlements, former homeland areas and areas characterized by widespread poverty and deprivation; Spatial planning mechanisms, including land use schemes, must incorporate provisions that enable redress in access to land by disadvantaged communities and persons; Land use management systems must include all areas of a municipality and specifically include provisions that are flexible and appropriate for the management of disadvantaged areas, informal settlements and former homeland areas; Land development procedures must include provisions that accommodate access to secure tenure and the incremental upgrading of informal areas; and A municipal planning tribunal considering an application before it, may not be impeded or restricted in the exercise of its discretion solely on the ground that the value of land or property is affected by the outcome of the application" (RSA, 2013:18). Therefore, SPLUMA encourages the sustainability of the environment and the provision of adequate basic human services including housing,

water and sanitation in relation to spatial planning and land use management.

### 5.3 Relevancy of SPLUMA to Urbanization and Rural Development

With the inauguration of the Zuma presidency in April 2009, rural development was elevated to a top-priority program for the ensuing five years (2009-2014) (Olivier *et al.*, 2010:101). One of the main pillars of South Africa's status as a developing state is that the Republic of South Africa's 1996 Constitution establishes the following as a legally obligatory framework for the planning, coordination, and execution of development (including rural development):

- The SPLUMA promotes better access to and use of land in order to address historical spatial and other development inequities.
  - The inclusion of people and areas that were previously excluded must be addressed by the spatial development frameworks and policies in all realms of government, with a focus on informal settlements, former homeland territories, and areas marked by pervasive poverty and suffering.
  - Land use plans and other spatial planning tools must include clauses that permit disadvantaged communities and individuals to get access to land.
  - All areas of a municipality must be included in land use management systems, and they must have measures that are adaptable and suitable for the management of disadvantaged areas, informal settlements, and former homeland areas.
  - Land development practices must have clauses that provide for access to stable tenancy and the gradual improvement of informal areas.
  - The state must work to satisfy the basic needs of formerly underserved communities and respect, defend, promote, and carry out the social, economic, and environmental rights of everyone.
  - To address the lack of formal integration of informal and traditional land use development processes into systems of spatial planning and land use management;
- Ensure that prime and distinctive agricultural land is protected with special regard.
  - The concept of spatial resilience, which calls for accommodating flexibility in spatial planning, policies, and land use management systems to enable sustainable livelihoods in populations most likely to be affected by economic and environmental crises.

In order to ensure that land development benefits both current and future generations, the SPLUMA promotes social inclusion, spatial equity, desired settlement patterns, rural revitalization, urban regeneration, and sustainable land use for urban and rural areas (SPLUMA, 2013). In addition, theories of justice and concepts related to justice (such as diversity, equity, democracy, just distribution, benefit of the least disadvantaged, and resources needed to meet basic needs like housing, education, employment, health, and public transportation) advocate for specific standards in urbanization and spatial development to foster opportunity and access to resources, particularly for the least advantaged. Accordingly, the processes leading to unjust geographies reveal that a lack of these necessary resources, among other things, leads to injustice in our geographies. The incidence of spatial injustice indicates sources of spatial injustice, which include discrimination, lack of necessary resources and neglecting the least advantaged members of society.

### 6. The Effectiveness of Urbanization of South Africa's Rural Areas: Towards Spatial Justice and Satisfactory Rural Development

While the necessary resources required to meet the basic needs in urbanization and rural development vary, and can also be classified into various categories, for the purpose of this paper, and within the context of spatial justice, the most important resources or spatial-related components identified include housing, education, public transport, health, employment and income. Indeed, to achieve spatially just urban development means meeting the needs of the citizens by providing access to housing, employment, health, transportation and education. This does not mean that other sector areas are not important, but rather that these five areas are the key areas that should be explored in understanding the application of spatial justice in this study. Further, it is evident from this foregoing discussion that

spatial planning legislation forms the most important element in South Africa with regard to spatial development. In fact, since 2009, one of South Africa's top priority programs has been rural development. By promoting sustainable land use in both urban and rural areas and considering both long-term planning and ongoing land use management, the SPLUMA set a roadmap that will benefit both current and future generations (Olivier *et al.*, 2010:101).

Yet, given the speed at which urbanization is occurring, for example, around villages, peri-urban areas of Capricorn District Municipality like Lebowakgomo, Seshego and Mankweng Townships in Limpopo Province the local authorities in these areas face several challenges which include:

- Providing services and infrastructure to an increasing number of homes while also addressing service backlogs and sustaining current infrastructure.
- Difficulty in restructuring the urban spatial form with the hope of increasing urban effectiveness and promoting more sustainable use of resources, including land.
- Constraints in bringing marginalized populations closer to basic services and employment opportunities to achieve social integration and inclusion and improve household health and well-being.

When resolving backlogs in housing, education, healthcare, student housing, and access to a steady supply of energy and water, infrastructure design and delivery should take the effects of urbanization into account. In order to meet the demands of all inhabitants, local governments work to offer excellent services in urban, peri-urban, village, and rural regions, such as housing, water, sanitation, and social amenities, in a timely way. This is the main cause of the protests against service delivery, which have sharply increased in recent years. There were 237 documented service delivery demonstrations in 2018, which is a 24% rise from 2014, a general election year. For the period 2005-2018, that year saw the nation's second-highest number of service delivery protests (Brown-Luthango, 2019). As the ANC elective and policy conference approaches in November/December 2022 and national elections in 2023 more violent service delivery protests are likely to occur; and especially, in informal settlements in metros like Cape Town and Ekurhuleni.

Dealing with the problems of fast urbanization and spatial injustice requires land and the reform of unfair, exclusive, and unsustainable land use management policies (Brown-Luthango, 2019). Despite the fact that these problems are complicated and frequently appear insurmountable, local governments have a variety of tools at their disposal to start tackling some of the issues. Basic human rights and the general good are at stake when it comes to land reform and equal access to natural resources. In fact, the goal of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA), No. 16 of 2013, is to ensure that those who were previously denied these rights have "more access to and use of land" in order to advance "spatial justice, social and economic inclusion, and a more equitable distribution of land." Retaining unoccupied property that is privately owned for speculative purposes is one of these unfair land use practices. Local governments have the authority and instruments needed to address it through legislation. Land is kept off the market by speculation, which raises its price. There are additional societal expenses associated with vacant property since these areas frequently turn into hotspots for crime and violence. In order to deter the ownership of land for speculative purposes, municipalities have the option under the Property Rates Act of 2004 to charge a higher rate on vacant land. Additionally, as stated by Brown-Luthango (2019), there is a chance in the ongoing discussion of expropriation, which is typically focused on rural land reform, to carefully consider the urban environment and how this tool might be applied to ensure that underutilized, unproductive unoccupied land in cities can be expropriated for the purpose of housing the urban poor and providing them with other services. Therefore, the paper discovered that decentralization of economic services is mostly regarded as the main activity of urbanization of rural areas. Furthermore, the adopted approach is more likely implemented in townships that are more accessible to most of these rural areas rather than in these rural villages themselves, which does not address the current spatial injustices.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

In order to promote settlements' equity, resilience, and sustainability and mostly achieve spatial justice, the paper's conclusion is that there has been a long-standing need to improve planning, infrastructure, and services in villages and rural regions. Elevating rural areas boosts local village economies

and offers opportunities in construction, waste management, and other fields, in addition to improving living conditions and general public health. Residents may have more financial security and better access to job possibilities and formal work structures if their property tenure and title are recognized and they have access to reasonably priced mass transit. Enhancing rural and village areas also aids in putting lagging settlements on the path to sustainable development that concentrates on reducing poverty, improving livelihood chances, and providing basic amenities and infrastructure facilities through innovative programmes that support :1) life-sustenance (i.e. in order for people to survive with basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing, health care facilities and security as vital importance for economic growth and prerequisite for development); 2) self-respect (i.e. some basic form of self-respect, dignity, honour and self-esteem); and 3) freedom (i.e. freedom from all suppressions to live in harmony with nature). SPLUMA's approach towards social injustices especially in rural areas is clear and hopes to address the associated challenges in a fair and just manner which includes poverty reduction and improved economic development. Given the apartheid history, there is also a need for models that address inequalities through human rights-based approaches as well as the realisation of the NDP vision 2030. The paper concludes that urbanization of rural areas can potentially reduce poverty by enhancing economic growth and prosperity and enabling more efficient delivery of public and private services and infrastructure in rural areas and not just decentralizing selected economic services to nearby townships. Therefore, this paper recommends that rural development approaches must take into consideration the socio-economic characteristics and context of the rural people as well as the areas in question. The advancement of national development cannot be realised if rural areas continue to be regarded as secondary wherein development is concerned. Therefore, the decentralization of economic activities, services and infrastructure including other development initiatives must be directly implemented in rural areas, informed by their socio-economic characteristics.

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# The Role of Educational Institutions in Development and the Economy: A Human Resource Perspective

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**Abstract:** This paper interrogates the contribution of educational institutions to the development of an economy of a community. The paper is both conceptual and empirical in nature within the qualitative research paradigm. Narrative enquiry and interviewing techniques were applied to generate data. Out of a population of 13 public secondary schools in Vhembe District, in Limpopo Province, South Africa, three were conveniently sampled. In each of the three sampled secondary school, a principal and a deputy principal became research participants. Research findings revealed that firstly, there is a connection between schooling, the development of a community and its economy. Secondly, quality schooling has a potential of contributing to the eradication of poverty. Thirdly, loose educational structures struggle to enhance human resource development of a community through schooling. Lastly, inability to translate the Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (MNSPSI) into tangibles is a problem. The researcher recommends for the prioritisation of rewarding excellence and the punishment of mediocre work for the benefit of developing communities and their economies. Furthermore, the researcher recommends for the declaration of schools as national key points to enable them to impact on an economy of a community.

**Keywords:** Development, Economy, Human, Poverty, Skill Development

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## 1. Introduction

Sithole (2022) accentuates that schools need not be in a state of paralysis. This is when schools do not contribute to the development of their community and its economy. That renders that school less impactful on an area of vital need. There is a connection between a school, the development of its community and its economy. The quality schooling has a potential of developing its community and its economy (Leshoro, 2022). Quality schooling could contribute to the eradication of the treble challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty. Appropriate and relevant interventions are required where a school exists yet it struggles to contribute to the development of its community and its economy. Schools need to ascertain that they succeed in translating the MNSPSI into tangibles. This signifies that an era of schooling existing as an ivory tower of its own community and its economy has long elapsed. Maloka (2022) reminds that the logic of insanity that appears to have taken over in this world is exactly what a quality schooling intended to contribute to the development of its community and its economy has to resist and shun away. No quality schooling has to equivocate when coming to its fair share as regards the development of its community and its economy. Gold (2016) emphasises that

good governance remains a stress-buster for all the organisational incumbents. This suggests that with a sound governance in place in a quality schooling, not a single member would be heard of complaining of stress-related challenges. The governance under discussion in this paper, is being comprehended by Sebola (2015) as the creation of a structure and order which cannot be externally imposed, which result from interaction between a multiplicity of governing nodes which influence each other in the creation of a certain order or behaviour.

Clarke (2009) and Msila (2016) articulate that governance has a potential of steering the half-sinking ship into the bay of educational transformation and social change. A sound governance is known to be able to teach how to decimate organisational challenges other than magnifying or aggravating them (Fox, 2010; Theletsane, 2014; Moyo, 2015). Khoza, (2015) and Masina (2015) contend that where there is a healthy and responsive governance and administration, the delivery of quality schooling to all learners and the contribution of a school to the development of its community and its economy could be envisaged. Yukl (2006), Motsepe (2015) and Leshoro (2022) stress that no educational institution has to write itself off as regards having a share to the uplifting of its own community and its economy



banking on the quality graduates which a school produces (Shejavali, 2015; Siswana, 2007).

## **2. Literature Review**

The review of literature highlights that schooling by its very nature is people-intensive. This signifies that all incumbents involved in the enterprise of schooling need to be treated with utmost honour to inspire them to continue to make schooling a success (Sithole, 2022; Zwane, 2022). As long as there is unbreakable connectivity between schooling and the development of communities and their economy, then all the human resources involved will need to be approached with circumspect to keep their morale up. The review of literature indicates that as long as institutional incumbents that are responsible for the success of schooling get an impression that they are being valued, they are not likely to disappoint. But, messing up with them could be a start of the deterioration of schooling especially in terms of continuing to contribute to the development of their communities and its economy (Dooms, 2022). With institutional incumbents always in high glee, schooling stands to stand out with whatever service it is rendering, inclusive of contributing to the development of its community and its economy. The prevalence of a school in a community has to be a marvel and a celebration for that community and its economy. This has to be a case bearing in mind how much a school could serve as an asset. Leshoro (2022) asserts that schooling could assist in getting labour to be more productive through improving training and education. Where schooling capacitates its graduates with the necessary skills and competencies, those graduates could excel in the labour market. Schooling is anticipated to contribute to the growing of an economy. That could happen in many ways one of which is helping in the resurrection of a country's industrialisation.

Schooling has to push for a philosophy of developmentalism for a country's people and its economy. This adds to the point that in a South African context where there was COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 KwaZulu-Natal Province and Gauteng Province's mass looting, any economic recovery plan thought of to restore economic order and stability requires the influence of schooling (Bell, 2022). Literature review advises that for schools to service their communities and their economies adequately, they need to prioritise planning, organising, monitoring and evaluation skills to benefit communities and economies.

The review of literature reveals that of the available theories, the one relevant in this paper is the Critical Theory (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). Its choice rests on the relevance the researcher finds in it in terms of sufficiently illuminating the contribution of schooling to the development of a community and its economy.

The Critical Theory helped the researcher to make meaning from the whole notion of community and economic development from the point of view of schooling. Briefly, one of the principles of the critical theory is that very often truth serves the status quo. The other principle relates to the question of "why is it that certain groups of people are so privileged in life than others"? These fundamental principles of this theory were helpful in clarifying how lack of sound governance and administration machinery perpetuate inequality between communities through allowing the development of some communities and prevent the development of others through schooling (Motsepe, 2015). Lack of strong governance in an educational institution may make it difficult for a school to contribute sufficiently to the development of its community and its economy. The selection of the Critical Theory in this paper, is informed by its encouragement of reflective and analytical thoughts as regards inequality in communities and their economy where a school exists and it is expected to serve as a leveller or equality provider. The Critical Theory is better placed to respond to issues of development and community economy (Moyo, 2015). In this paper, the Critical Theory reveals that inequality in schooling in the form of having a sound governance and failure to have it, could be entrenched if community members are not standing up for their own trampled upon rights such as the absence of a healthy governance and administration that are known to be facilitating the involvement of schooling to the development of communities and their economies. On that note, the Critical Theory serves as a basis for approaching, understanding and interpreting the whole issue of community development and its economy being traceable to the contribution of its schooling. Higgs and Smith (2010) advise that knowledge and how we understand truth, including scientific truth, moral truth and historical truth should not be separated from everyday life. This implies that comprehending the trend on how decent schooling contributes to the development of communities and their economies, is very imperative. The Critical Theory assists in arriving at the root cause of inefficacious governance

and administration which disable myriad schools from developing their communities and their economies as required (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009). The other relevance of the Critical Theory for this paper is its emphasis of public administration ethics.

The Critical Theory has a potential of uncovering whether the challenge of inability to create structures, systems and processes by some educational institutions to enable the success of governance there, is a deliberate or unintentional exercise. The credibility of Critical Theory as regards the worrying effects of inefficacious governance and administration machinery which prevent some schools from servicing their communities as required, is not in doubt. Critical Theory stands out in advising against separating "real life testing" from scientific theories. The researcher contends that not every theory other than the Critical Theory could productively illuminate a problem of this paper like the chosen theory (Allen, 2014). The problem of this paper centres around explaining diverse hurdles which educational institutions have to overcome to be in a position of contributing to the development of their communities and their economies. Critical Theory advocates for critical reflection on society which includes schooling, in order to discover the hidden assumptions that maintain the existing power relationships that keep some societal members perpetually under-developed though in a different form and guise (Higgs & Smith, 2010). Critical Theory teaches that schooling requires to be emancipated from inefficacious governance and administration machinery experienced daily (Arden, 2013; Tisdall, 2015).

Hofstee (2010) stresses that there is a need for educational institutions to be aware of their mandates. This relates to schooling being firmly grounded to be able to contribute to the development of the economy of their communities. The problem statement of this paper relates to diverse hurdles which schooling lives to overcome to be in a position of contributing to the development of the economy of their community. The research questions addressed in this paper are anchored on the Critical Theory as the theoretical perspective that underscores this paper (Higgs & Smith, 2010). The research questions are as follows: What are the roles and significance of governance structures and systems that are carefully crafted which are likely to enable schooling to contribute to the development of its community and its economy? What are the ideas, concerns and

aspirations of institutional incumbents regarding making their school contribute to the development of its community and economy?

### 3. Research Design and Methodology

This is a qualitative paper and the design of an article is a case study. The problem which the paper pursued, centred around explaining diverse hurdles which schooling has to overcome to contribute to the development of its community and its economy (Dawson, 2006; Levin, 2005). The choice of the qualitative research methodology was triggered by the paper being underscored by the Critical Theory. The researcher found a need to create a synergy between the Critical Theory as the theoretical perspective undergirding the paper, as well as the qualitative approach as the overarching research methodology (Hofstee, 2010). The combination of the two helped immensely in terms of illuminating issues of educational institutions having to develop their communities and their economies (Masina, 2015). With the Critical Theory underpinning the paper, the researcher utilised it, to interrogate how stakeholders in schooling comprehend the role of their secondary schools to the development of a community and its economy. The theory was also applied to determine the common reaction by secondary schools as regards utilising sound governance structures to better position their schools to be responsive to community and economic needs and aspirations of their stakeholders. Partnering the qualitative research approach and the Critical Theory enabled the researcher to make an in-depth understanding of how despite many years since colonialism and apartheid schooling have formally ceased to exist, their effects remain firmly in place. Such effects are still so severe such that many public secondary schools find it difficult to directly contribute to the development of their communities and their economies. Narrative enquiry and interviewing techniques were utilised to construct data relevant for this paper. To be precise, the six research participants with two from each of the three sampled educational institutions, were offered an opportunity of narrating their views on the role of educational institutions to the development of their communities and economy. To corroborate and triangulate the gleaned data, interviewing was conducted with those six members, sourced from three educational institutions. Responses were audio-taped for transcription later-on (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

## 4. Results and Discussion

The findings arrived at in this paper are in relation to the research topic whose focus is: the role of educational institutions in development and the economy: a human resource perspective. The basis of the findings is the analysed data which were generated through the narrative enquiry and the interviewing technique. The six research participants, sourced from three educational institutions were interrogated as regards their views pertaining to how schools could contribute to the development of their communities and their economies. The research participants, were being referred to as School Principal 1A and 1B referring to the principal and deputy principal, School Principal 2A and 2B referring to the principal of School B, and his deputy and School Principal 3A and 3B referring to the school principal 3 and his deputy principal. That was done to protect the actual identities of schools and their principals. Paying attention only to those sampled schools ought not to create an impression that they are worse off as regards servicing their communities (Hofstee, 2010). Suffice to disclose that the choice of those three educational institutions was on the basis of the researcher having familiarised himself with issues of the development of communities and their economies by those educational institutions. The Critical Theory has been sufficiently instrumental in assisting in the analysis of data to ultimately emerge with these findings. Findings and discussion for this paper are the following: connection of schooling to community development and economy. Quality schooling eradicates poverty and loose educational structures betray human resources and skills development. A detailed discussion of each finding follows.

### 4.1 Connection of Schooling to Community Development and Economy

Schools and their communities belong together and enjoy unbreakable partnership (Brunton, 2003; Zwane, 2022). It comes as no astonishment when the development of a community and its economy is being traced to the contribution of a school in its proximity (Leshoro, 2022). On the above issue, School Principal 1A from School A recounts that:

*"in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is as important as breathing that the working relationship between schools and their communities have to be kept as harmoniously as possible to enable the reciprocity of the two entities to live longer".*

Deputy Principal 3B of School C suggests that:

*"it can be beneficial for all the schooling sectors, in case it could be made mandatory by the Department of Basic Education policies that it is a transgression for any school to be found to have severed its relations with its closest community."*

Sentiments expressed by research participants are pointing out to the single fact of schools and their communities as being mutually inclusive. It is this inclusivity which by and large, could enable the two to continue to co-exist and depend on their mutual co-existence for their individual prosperity (Tsheola, 2002; Mbeki, 2003; Madue, 2013; Zwane, 2015). It is advisable for every educational institution to put to good use the existing co-existence with its community to come up with development initiatives for the benefit of a community and its economy. That is likely to strengthen the ties between the two entities (Dooms, 2022).

### 4.2 Quality Schooling Eradicates Poverty

Macha (2016) and Leshoro (2022) reason that where poverty and other social ills in a community are aggravating, a question as regards the role of schooling in that regard has to be asked. Quality schooling has a potential of pushing back the frontiers of poverty in a community. School Principal 2A of School B utters that:

*"getting our education systems to be responsive to the bread and butter issues plaguing a society such as inequality, unemployment and poverty could contribute in no small scale to their lessening".*

This point is being shared by a Deputy Principal 3B of School C in reminding that:

*"28 years into the new dispensation, the rate of poverty within the African population appears to have doubled, something traceable to the kind of the education system being fed to graduates which is devoid of the necessary skills demanded by the knowledge economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century".*

Evidently, current schooling in comparison to that of prior 1994 is a little bit irrelevant judging by its failing capability to fight down rife poverty, inequality and unemployment plaguing communities. Despite

this, the power and capacity of quality schooling to eradicate poverty in a community is not in doubt (Gobillot, 2008; Cunha, Filho & Goncalvers, 2010; Sithole, 2022).

### 4.3 Loose Educational Structures Betray Human Resources and Skills Development

Allen (2014) and Maloka (2022) emphasise that as long as the creation of efficacious governance and a sound administration machinery are not prioritised by many educational institutions, then dispensing skills required by an economy to enable graduates from a school to be employable, could remain a pipe dream. School Principal 2A of School B narrates that:

*"it takes an educational institution an awareness of keeping tight and functional educational structures to know that it is those structures that shall enable an institution to capacitate its graduates to go out in a community to reduce the prevailing inequality and poverty plaguing a society".*

Deputy Principal 1B of School A reminds that:

*"the failure by authorities in the Department of Basic Education, to train all School Management Team members about the importance of ascertaining that schools they are leading and managing are run with appropriate governance structures in place that enable the delivery of rare skills to learner population, is a huge disservice to the human capital and economic development awaited by communities".*

This point suggests that schooling can only capacitate their graduates or human resource to make a difference in terms of developing their communities and their economies when they are first characterised by enabling tight educational structures (Omano, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Thornhill & Van Dijk, 2010; Sebola, 2012; Qwabe, 2013; Tisdall, 2005).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidently, it is an educational institution like no other that could contribute to the development of a community and its economy. Educational institutions with loose educational structures are likely to struggle to dispense skills and competencies developing community economies. Educational institutions need to deal with their challenges of inefficacious governance

and poor administration machinery to enable them to dispense expertise, skills and competencies to graduates so that they develop their communities and the economy. As per the findings shared in the preceding paragraphs, the era of educational institutions being detached from their communities and their economies has long past. The 21<sup>st</sup> century educational institutions need to contribute to the alleviation of social ills of a community such as poverty, inequality and unemployment. Findings in this paper have shown that a prerequisite for an educational institution being able to contribute to the capacitation of the human resources for the development of a community and an economy is that it creates a relevant governance structures with a sound administration machinery. The study therefore recommends the following:

- There is a need for educational institutions to establish for themselves why is it that myriad schools appear not to be contributing as required to the development of their communities and their economies, 28 years into the new dispensation.
- There is a need for educational institutions to embrace an awareness that translating the Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure into tangibles is what every school has to do to service its human resource, which will make the difference in the development of a community and its economy.
- Lastly, there is a need for educational institutions to stop operating with loose educational structures that suffocate schooling when it has to contribute to the development of the economy of its community.

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