

Editorial

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Background

The SAERA 2024 conference, underpinned by the theme, “Education Ideologies and National Development,” zoomed its radar onto why education ideologies are important and how they influence and shape national development agendas across nations. The interplay between educational ideologies and national development is often overlooked and, at times, totally ignored (Apple, 1979; Garritzmann et al., 2021; Jansen, 1998). This is mainly because this relationship is often subtle and elusive. Even when an ideology is not deliberately identified and intentionally prescribed, there is no education system without an ideology (Garritzmann, et al, 2021), because “ideology” refers to the ideas, values, beliefs, culture, politics, economics, and technologies that guide education policy. Presentations by various researchers at the 2024 SAERA Conference indicated that the relationship between education ideologies and national development agendas does not unfold in a linear trajectory. Often, it is a dual exchange system because national political ideology determines education ideology, and both ideologies influence and shape national development. Although existing political, economic, and socio-technological frameworks shape a nation’s guiding educational ideology, the practical implementation of the planned education system ultimately determines whether the national development goals will be achieved as envisaged—or as half-baked

mutations of the original plan. It is in light of the complexity and multilayered interplay between educational ideologies and national development that this special issue of selected proceedings from the SAERA 2024 conference is published.

Synopsis of articles in this special issue

After a rigorous double-blind peer-review process, a total of 12 articles are published in this special issue. The themes covered in the issue are multifaceted and wide ranging, reflecting the complexity of controversies surrounding educational ideologies and national development.

Using a single case study of a public high school located in a township in Cape Town, Oluwatosin A. Egunlusi traces the use of physical/corporal punishment from the days of the ideology of apartheid up to the present democratic era. Egunlusi employs Michel Foucault's theory of discipline as a lens to understand how too much control creates docility among learners. In traditional school settings, discipline is associated with the use of punishment which, almost always translates to physical punishment. The author links the use of corporal punishment to the teachings of the Bible (Proverbs 13:24), which advises "spare the rod, spoil the child." Egunlusi asserts that, under apartheid, authoritarian disciplinary measures were used in schools to train "Black South Africans to be obedient low-wage labourers while preparing White South Africans for compliant bureaucratic roles in white-collar professions." The paper also shows shifting trends in global perspectives from the 1990s onwards. Corporal punishment began to be viewed as a violation of children's rights in the developed Western world, Australia, and Japan, culminating in its abolition in many countries in the Global South, including South Africa.

In their article titled "Multi-Domain Examination of School Decline Causality: A Narrative Inquiry Into Stakeholders," Sibonelo Blose and Ndumiso Quincy Khuzwayo scrutinise factors underpinning school decline that derails the achievement of desired learner outcomes. While most studies focus on school improvement, this study casts a gaze in the opposite direction by examining causes of school dysfunctionality, offering a refreshing discourse on a phenomenon most academics choose to underplay or ignore.

The power of reflection is a skill that teachers (at any stage of their career development) cannot do without. This is because teachers always need to think before getting into the classroom. They also need to reflect (think backwards) after the teaching experience, so that they judge whether they were able to transition theory into practice. What makes Rosemary Brien's contribution exciting is that she reflects on reflections made by pre-service teachers. You can read "Reflecting on Reflections of Pre-Service Teachers' Application of Theory in Practice" to see how pre-service teachers judge themselves—sometimes harshly and at times romantically.

Jennifer Sheokarah explores how an English language club promotes reading and writing while picnicking in non-conventional learning settings. Her study utilises Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis to learn and teach English as a second language in a more

enjoyable and unrestricted learning environment that does not intimidate learners with the usual threat of failing to speak, read, and write English, which is not their mother tongue. This article is interestingly (and appropriately) titled “#PicnicWriting! How Springboard Activities and Outdoor Inspiration Enhance Process Writing Skills of Second Language Learners.”

While the dual ideologies of globalisation and the knowledge economy have dominated public debate in the 21st century, sleaze and corruption are often talked about in hushed tones. It is often reported in the media that corruption and unethical leadership are scourges destroying African economies and education systems. But research studies on corruption in schools in Africa are still in their infancy. Solomon Chibaya takes the issue of unethical leadership and corruption head-on in his paper titled, “Effective Ethical Leadership Practices in a Context of Turbulence and Multiple Deprivations.” This is an empirical study on ethical leadership under difficult economic conditions characterised by severe deficiencies in a declining national economy in Zimbabwe, forcing school leadership to engage in corrupt practices to survive.

“Braving Educational Research Ideology in Higher Education: An Arts-Inspired Collaborative Self-Study Using Visual Art-Work” is a novel study challenging traditional research by reflecting on the researchers’ own artwork and critiquing it. Oftentimes, educational researchers focus on other academics’ educational practices and offer recommendations on what others are doing. Linda van Laren and Wendy Smidt challenge traditional research approaches by using what they call “a starting-with-ourselves approach” to search for sustainable improvement through arts-based inquiry. The paper utilises the expressive and imaginative power of visual arts and poetry, among others, to explore complex ideas, emotions, and experiences.

In their article, “The Discrepancies Between ICT Policy and ICT Usage in English Second Language Teaching and Learning in Zimbabwean Rural Secondary Schools,” Saziso Mukomana, Naomi Nkealah, and Quinta Kemende Wunseh take us down this often trodden but troubled road littered with a “pitiful history” (Cuban, 1993, p. 182) of implementation failure and unfinished business. The gap between policy talk and policy implementation has fascinated researchers for centuries (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017). But instead of closing or narrowing, this gap appears to be widening with the proclamation of new curriculum reform policies in many countries across the globe. So, while curriculum reform policy in Zimbabwe advocates ICT-based pedagogy in all school subjects, the use of digital technology in English classes remains a mirage on the horizon.

Omar Esau details a teacher educator’s action research journey at Stellenbosch University to enhance digital literacy in a Bachelor of Education programme in his paper titled “A Teacher Educator’s Experience in Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Digital Literacy in a BEd Undergraduate Classroom.” The pre-service teachers engaged in a variety of activities that included a pilot AI chatbot, interactive digital workshops, flipped classrooms, and gamified learning. Challenges like digital access disparities highlighted ongoing equity issues

in accessing digital tools that enhance teaching and learning, not only in South Africa but the world over.

Globally, coding and robotics are current buzzwords. Mmakgabo Angelinah Selepe integrates coding and robotics through play-based approaches in the South African Foundation Phase curriculum to enhance young learners' mathematical skills. Her article is aptly titled "Coding and Robotics Meet Early Mathematics: Foundation Phase Teachers' Perceptions of Play-Based Approaches in Curriculum Transformation." However, a shortage of adequately trained teachers and limited access to digital technological tools pushes teachers to rely on non-digital manipulatives like Lego Six Bricks for hands-on learning.

Cosmas John Kathumba and Clement Simuja investigate concept mapping as a pedagogical intervention to develop pre-service teachers' (PSTs) computational thinking skills in a Physical Sciences PGCE programme. The study titled "Working with Physical Sciences Pre-Service Teachers in Developing Computational Thinking Skills Through Concept Mapping" established that both paper-based and computer-based concept mapping significantly improves PSTs' abilities in pattern recognition, decomposition, and algorithmic thinking, thereby enhancing their problem-solving competencies. Although the PSTs encountered challenges like cognitive overload, abstraction, and organisation, this research highlights the potential of scaffolding and guided practice in advancing science teacher education for the 21st century.

Sanction Madambi unpacks the challenges faced by South African Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges in implementing occupational qualifications introduced to replace pre-2009 qualifications. Among the key challenges are inadequate resources, shortage of qualified lecturers (especially in historically disadvantaged rural areas), and inadequate work-integrated learning placements. The pivotal argument in his study is that these challenges are rooted in the legacy of apartheid and the broader political economy of inequality in South Africa in general, and education specifically. Thus, context-sensitive approaches, TVET-industry partnerships, and targeted funding can ameliorate some of these challenges.

Tensions between Western neoliberalism (inherited from the colonial legacy) and the Indigenous philosophy of botho/ubuntu have been simmering for decades in education debates in post-colonial Africa. In an insightful paper titled "The Potential of Ubuntu in Shaping an African Perspective of Entrepreneurial Education," Gosaitse Ezekiel Solomon and Suriamurthee Moonsamy Maistry explore how a botho/ubuntu-oriented pedagogy can be infused to promote entrepreneurial education in Botswana's school curriculum. While neoliberal entrepreneurial education nurtures competition, individualism, and profit, botho/ubuntu values communalism and solidarity. This paper argues for a balanced approach that fosters individual and social entrepreneurship for the collective benefit of society through community-serving projects aligned with African values of collectivism rather than purely individualistic neoliberal ideals.

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