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Telephone: ++263 8 677 006 136 | +263 779 279 912

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The purpose of the *Kuveza neKuumba - Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Design, Innovative Thinking and Practice* is to provide a forum for design and innovative solutions to daily challenges in communities.

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The School as a Multi-layered Platform for Learning and a Community Demonstration Centre

RUTENDO S. ZINHU¹, MARLVIN S. MALINGANISO² AND LINDA KABAIRA³

Abstract

The Zimbabwean education system has gone through various reforms in search of frameworks that can inspire socio-economic growth as poor economic performance had crippled the country. There is increasing disapproval over the pertinence of education currently given to students. There is need to produce learners who are problem-solving, prepared for sustainable development and enterprising, who contribute to their country's growth. The article explores and discusses the argument that due to the increase in underdevelopment and societal problems, which include poverty and hyper-unemployment, particularly in Africa, the school should be a focal point for the plan of action and a demonstration centre for the community. The study is a qualitative study with a desktop research approach. The study revealed that the school is a multi-layered platform that can echo resistance of the oppressed masses as a community centre for demonstration in this case, decoloniality and Africanisation of the education sector. The study reveals that the school can be a platform for learning through Education 5.0, that has served as a learning method towards innovation and industrialisation, creating graduate attributes and students that can create than seeking employment. The study concludes that the school system remains both a key to learning and demonstration through liberation of the oppressed minds and suppressed histories.

Keywords: Education 5.0, decoloniality, sustainable development, Africanisation, industrialisation, innovation

¹ Department of Community and Social Development, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe.

² Freelance Researcher, Harare, Zimbabwe,

³ SCOPE-Zimbabwe, Mt Hampden, Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

The 20th and 21st centuries have been characterised as the age of information, social and cultural life become restructured as people evolve into information society (Lambeir, 2005). One of the aims of the educational system in the 21st century is to prepare students to successfully function in the knowledge society. Industrial growth in any country is important to boosting economic growth and citizenry welfare. Therefore, to meet the needs of industry, a competent human capital should be built, by ensuring that tertiary education graduates have job-relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes as exit competences (Matorevhu, 2023). A knowledge economy premised on higher and tertiary education as a major driver of economic competitiveness is important for sustainable development, in both industrialised and developing countries (World Bank, 2019).

Poor economic performance and a lack of a focused national education policy in Zimbabwe saw the country hopping from one policy to the next (Keche, 2022). The development of Education 5.0 has been proposed as the solution to this policy foraging with the aim of creating graduates with innovative job creation skills and industrial worth knowledge to industrialise the country and create a middle-income economy by 2030 (Murwira, 2020). The role of the school actors within them is to mould a passive academic learner or a job seeker but rather one who is prepared for sustainability, future challenges and competencies. The school should be at the centre of innovation in the community. Muzira and Bondai (2020) have alluded that the thrust of an education system like Education 5.0 is on local heritage or indigenous knowledge systems to produce goods through locally available resources.

Education has to shift for a change, a shift in perspective from education that strives to modify behaviour to a participatory approach that includes independent and critical thinking, and encourages students /learners to develop skills for taking action (Jensen and Schnack, 1997). The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro identified sustainable education as a way to preserve and develop learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do

no harm to and create positive benefits for others around us, now and in the future (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). Therefore, the school is a useful opportunity for education for sustainable development based on underlying values that can be examined, debated, tested and applied. Values that bring solutions for the difficulties faced in society include environmental, social and economic issues. This article seeks to bring out the school as a multi-layered platform for learning and as a community centre for demonstration as schools from the Global South continue to search for an alternative discourse that allows for multiple realities.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

For this article, the framing comprises the following components: the school as a platform for learning and how it can initiate the action plan and become a demonstration centre for the community. The purpose of this conceptual framework is to provide a basis for analysis. The system concept generally employs a loop to permit both cognitive reflection and practical measurement of the learning process in terms of changes in learning goals, content and instructional methods.

THEORY OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Through the continuous endeavours of educational leaders and researchers in a variety of fields (e.g., Lewis, 2005; Tribe, 2002), sustainability education has advanced steadily as a complexity of overlapping learning initiatives. Nkhata and Breen (2010) stated that “understanding of an integrated learning system is essential if we are to successfully promote learning across scales as a fundamental component of adaptability and management”. In reviewing the concepts of functioning, capabilities and agency, as originally outlined by Sen (1989) and Landorf, Doscher and Rocco (2008), offer a framework for assessing ESD-related learning outcomes, teaching practices, curricula, and knowledge and skills acquisition. They redefine ESD as education for sustainable human development to emphasise that education should focus on enhancing well-being, based on a practice of democratic dialogue, and forms of learning that include local cultural and social realities. Accordingly, the educator is responsible for evaluating the contextual circumstances that will impact the students’ well-being, and for providing a form of teaching that enables

students to understand their capabilities. Curriculum for sustainable human development goes beyond environmental education while focusing on ‘locally determined basic capabilities’. The educator’s role is to guarantee that the curriculum is built through a process of democratic dialogue, where learners and community stakeholders ‘address what students must know and learn to achieve valued functioning. There is a wide body of literature on how ESD is meant to achieve its aims. Hoffman *et al.* (2006) articulate how the four ‘pillars of learning’, as defined by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (Delors *et al.*, 1996), provide connecting parts with Sen’s vision to move towards achieved functioning. The four pillars (learning to know, learning to be, learning to live together and learning to do) provide a parallel to Sen’s concepts of reasoning, agency, and potential through social capital.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The section presents the body of literature that was reviewed by the study to craft the discourse for this study along the lines of the role of education in communities as education has multifaceted roles in communities from community development to social reforms.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN COMMUNITIES

The school has great potential to develop the community, ultimately, they are community institutions. Intentionally involving community resources, energy and expertise in schools improves learning outcomes for students and has a positive impact on the community. Tractenburg *et al.* (2018) observe that schools provide sustainable learning to communities, that lasts and is retained and maybe transferable after exposure to it and it may involve the process of learning to learn. Dill (1995) observes that schools provide an education that is informed by competitive markets the application of inducements for exceptional innovations and industrial activities and processes of self-regulation through Education 5.0. A visual representation of the community and the various skills people have to offer is an essential way to understand what community resources are available (O’Keefe, 2011).

Chitumba (2013) notes that schools and the education system can be used as a tool for guarding against the invasion of foreign cultural practices and as a medium and form of cultural affirmation as schools can be used in the teaching of *Ubuntu* and safeguarding the African culture. Dube (2021) observes the degeneration of culture in most areas and Muzvidziwa and Muzvidziwa (2012) observe that highly performing schools are characterised by the presence of *Ubuntu* among learners, indicating that schools instil discipline in learners through the impartation of *Ubuntu*. Zhao (2021) observes that the role of schools and education is to influence industrial development through vocational education as this has transformed North East China industrial development since 1932. Ren *et al.* (2017) articulates that education in practical education and apprenticeship match well with industrial developments, therefore, education has served its purpose as the spark for industrial development in communities.

Bjaelde *et al.* (2017) posits that the Danish Education system uses continuous assessment in higher education (HE) institutions and it has a paramount role of transforming and making the education system effective and changing communities. Muzira and Bondai (2020) observe that education should lead to the creation of new jobs, reduction of unemployment, generation of foreign currency from the export of goods and services produced through the beneficiation of raw materials and also help in the reduction of some vices such as drug abuse and criminality induced by poverty and unemployment with reference to Education 5.0. Lee *et al.* (2005) allude that the continued evolution of HE curriculum is necessary as a curriculum should provide solutions to challenges like economic problems, that are faced by society the world over. Maria, Shahbodin and Pee (2018) allude that Malaysia implemented a higher and tertiary education reform they termed Education 4.0 meant to align the HE system with global trends and the need to balance between both ethics and morality, along with knowledge and skills. This literature shows that education plays a pivotal role in communities, i.e. it has a multi-layered impact on society as it can provide learning and become a community centre for demonstration.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article is housed in the qualitative methodology with a bias towards the descriptive research design. The article was built through a desktop study involving a multi-perspective comprising literature and documentary review. To craft the discourse for this study, the researchers engaged literature review to understand how the school can be a multi-layered platform for learning, equipping learners with the knowledge to inspire socio-economic development, and as a vehicle for social change through being a community demonstration centre countering power structures within society. Snyder (2019) observed that a literature review-based study can provide a transdisciplinary approach to social phenomena, as such, this study intends to bring a transdisciplinary understanding to the study. Data was also collected using archival methods where documents were purposively selected.

KEY THEMATIC ARGUMENTS

The study reveals that the school in Zimbabwe has proved to be a multi-layered platform for learning and a community centre for demonstration as the education curriculum reform in Zimbabwe through Education 5.0 has been used in the demonstration or decolonisation of the colonial education system that aimed to create subservient job-seekers not job creators. Through Education 5.0, the Government in Zimbabwe has strived to create a platform for learning that creates graduates who can add value to the goods and services created by local industries. By doing away with Education 3.0 and creating Education 5.0, the school in Zimbabwe emerged as a multi-layered platform for learning and community centre for demonstration, as the system created an education that teaches innovation and industrialisation, while demonstrating through the decolonisation of the education system. Concurrent with these findings is Deng (2010), who observes that, in Singapore, the curriculum reform helped create skills (also referred to as graduate attributes or 21st century skills) that are lifelong skills not specific to any class or subject that students need to learn. The introduction of technological innovations into schools and the integration of online technologies in education is a process that calls for instructional strategies. Education systems around the world are required now, more than ever

before, to adapt to the spirit of time and to embrace technological innovation (Fullan, 2006). To structure learning, students engage in an iterative process that includes identifying the problem, deconstructing problem frames, reframing the problem, analysing problem facets and integrating findings (Moust *et al.*, 2005), furthermore, fostering lifelong learning in line with the opportunities and challenges of society through re-learning to learning, embracing ICTs and e-learning, flexibility and adaptability, critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving.

The study reveals that the school system in Zimbabwe has played the role as the platform for learning and community demonstration in terms of climate change and disaster risk management. The study has reveals that the education system has mainstreamed climate education in primary and secondary education, targeting children, as the change agents that can push climate education into communities. The study reveals the system has also been used as a community demonstration platform as the curriculum has been reformed in Geography to include indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) to create a climate change response model that is informed by locally-based experiences. In support of these findings is Tanyanyiwa (2019), who observes that knowledge creation about climate change in Zimbabwe has to involve IKS as they espouse lived experiences and lessons that can be used in the future. Natural capital covers natural resources, ecosystems, and biodiversity, while cultural capital holds cultural property (tangible and intangible), cultural networks and support systems and cultural diversity (Throsby and Petetskaya, 2016). Thus, curriculum integration is required to enrich learning and to connect the information learned.

The school in Zimbabwe has become a multi-layered platform for learning and a community demonstration centre as it has been used to counter Eurocentric ideologies and provides the country with the much-needed human capital in the fight against economic sanctions imposed on the country by Western countries. Nani and Shervashidze (2017) observe that due to high unemployment bedeviling Zimbabwe, entrepreneurship has been introduced into the tertiary education curriculum with

the hope that graduates can create their own jobs than being job-seekers. The findings reveal that the school in Zimbabwe has been used by advocates of Afrocentrism to demonstrate against Western European ideologies, with Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) requesting a rewriting and reconstruction of the whole panorama of human history in its account of the origin of mankind, the origin of philosophy, science, medicine and agriculture. The findings indicate that Mavengano, Marevesa and Nkamta (2022) protest the use of Western knowledge systems advocating for Africanisation of the University curriculum in Zimbabwe, in an effort to debunk Eurocentric thinking characterised by binarisms, racial biases and discriminatory attitudes towards Africans.

The findings reveal that the school in Zimbabwe has become a multi-layered platform for learning and community centre for demonstration as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015), protests the misconstruction of the African identity by positing that Africanisation of curriculum in Zimbabwe can help the dismembered people be re-membered, relaunch themselves from being non-being into the world of being, recapture their lost land, power, history, being, language and knowledge. Murwira (2020) states that the Education 5.0 is a heritage-based curriculum that aims to reposition indigenous knowledge into the education system to equip students with African experiences and solutions. Rusiro (2019) found out that in pursuit of the decolonisation project, the Government of Zimbabwe has integrated indigenous knowledge into the Zimbabwean Geography curriculum as modern Eurocentric weather forecasting is becoming less reliable due unpredictable weather changes. Mavengano *et al.* (2022) observes that the university curriculum Africanisation can provide answers on how Africans can regain their identity, power and history through discourses of decoloniality, Africanisation and liberation as they address the impacts of colonialism on Africans and their contemporary existential circumstances.

Murwira (2020) perceives that Zimbabwe has the best literacy rate in Africa and the world, but its industrialisation is remarkably low, implying that knowledge, skills and awareness,

crucial determinants of the degree of industrialisation, are inadequate. This inadequate industrialisation is premised on Education 3.0 that had three missions: (1) Teaching; (2) Research; and (3) Community Service. This was a colonial government curriculum that produced workers instead of producers of goods and services (Matorevhu, 2023). Mutorevhu (*ibid.*) asserts that to decolonise the education system, the post-colonial government of Zimbabwe created Education 5.0 that has five pillars: (1) Teaching; (2) Community Service; (3) Research; (4) Industrialisation; and (5) Innovation. This curriculum was against the colonial curriculum that created workers and not employment creators, hence the school becomes a multi-layered platform for learning and community demonstration as students are taught to be innovative and industrious, rather than wait for employment.

Chingozha *et al.*, (2022) claim that higher tertiary education plays a key role in innovation and economic growth through universities and colleges that develop new knowledge and technologies and applying them in economic growth. Matorevhu (2023) avers that Education 5.0 advocates for innovation in teacher education in the 21st century, including the integration of ICTs, i.e. computers, software, networks, satellite links, websites and other related systems into teaching and learning of teacher education programmes to make the school a platform for learning. Dziwa and Postma (2020) opine that Education 5.0 makes creative graduates with an eye towards industry and elevating the middle-income economy. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (2018) reveals that the Ministry developed the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and one of the key messages of the plan is to mainstream climate change and disaster risk reduction into the formal education curricula. This makes schools multi-layered platforms of learning and community centres for demonstration.

DISCUSSION

A functional school should have a coherent curriculum. The school must be a purposeful place, with a clear and vital

mission, be a communicative place where people speak and listen carefully to each other, be a just place where everyone is treated fairly, be a disciplined place, with clearly defined rules of conduct and it must be a caring place where students, teachers and parents feel secure (Boyer, 1995) The community, without question, is the glue that holds together an effective school. The study reveals the need for decoloniality, Africanisation and liberation of the education system so as to reposition, re-member Africa in the knowledge creation system through school curriculum Africanisation, hence making the school a platform for community centre for demonstration. Concurrent with these findings are Lebakeng *et al.*, (2006), who note that the resuscitation of local knowledge and problematisation of epistemic reliance on the West could be realised in the inclusion of African indigenous epistemology. Congruent with the findings is Ngugi (2009), who posits that Africanisation of education in Africa can re-humanise and re-memberise African humanity, previously dehumanised and dismembered by the process of colonialism. Concurrent with the study is the theoretical framework the education for sustainable human development (Tribe, 2002) as the decolonisation and Africanisation of the education system can create an education for sustainable human development as the education can give identity to Africans while demonstrating against the control of the discourse (cf. Guli, and Mamuladze , 2017). This positions the school as a platform for community demonstration against the dominant colonial forms of education that have, for a long time, been imposed on African communities through the universalisation of Western knowledge systems.

CONCLUSION

For generations, wars have been fought and, after the wars, victors have used education to subjugate the vanquished. Education has also been used as a decolonial tool by the oppressed as education embodies the power to teach and equip revolutionary mentalities to the oppressed and inspire change. The study concludes that the education system has been used

in Africa as a multi-layered platform for learning and as a community demonstration centre through various decolonial initiatives that have seen the Africanisation of the education system countering the universalism of Western knowledge systems. The education system in Zimbabwe has been used as a platform for learning in the area of climate change, as well as a platform for protest as Zimbabwe education system has included IKS in climate change studies. Education is a complex system requiring multiple perspectives and levels of analysis to learn, It, thus, has the power to guide learners to not only be theoretically equipped, but also have practical skills. These skills can equip students to sustain and fend for themselves even if not formally employed, engaging them in the community and become problem-solvers, and preserve culture through IKS. Skills can make them innovative through integrating online technologies into their learning and also through re-learning to learning, embracing ICTs and e-learning, flexibility and adaptability, critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving. The school, therefore, is a thriving centre for learning, a place with curriculum coherence, a climate for creative learning and a commitment to building the community.

Future studies should look into the impact of Education 5.0 on the school system in climate change studies to understand if it has brought to the studies innovations and resilience capacities to the communities. Future studies should also look into the impacts of innovation and industrialisation, espoused in Education 5.0 on rural development to understand if it has developed and transformed the rural livelihoods as lack of entrepreneurship skills have been indicated to be the impediment of rural development. These studies should regard the schooling system as a platform for democratic transformation of societies and understand how schools can play a role in alleviating political problems bedeviling Zimbabwe. Future studies can look in how the school, as a platform of learning, can help in the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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