Editorial

Editor

Folake Ruth Aluko – *University of Pretoria, South Africa*

Associate Editor

Wenceslas Nzabalirwa, *College of Education-University of Rwanda, Rwanda*

The aim of the Distance Education and Teachers' Training (DETA) biennial conference is to create a platform for African educationists and all those collaboratively working with them on the continent to share knowledge and deliberate on educational issues. The 2017 conference held in Rwanda was no exception as participants met to deliberate on how Africa could get practical about achieving SDG 4 in Teacher Education in Africa. Since 2011, the conference has been publishing its proceedings. Participants to each conference are invited to submit their papers for blind peer review, and reviewers are drawn from beyond Africa. Over the years and with four biennial editions, participants have come to look forward to the *Proceedings* due to the rigorous process it goes through and the robust debates it generates. Thus, the conference committee decided to turn the *Proceedings* into an OER journal. It was thus renamed *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE) with a focus on the developing contexts. This is the maiden edition of the journal.

The theme of the 2017 conference was *Getting practical about Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 in Teacher Education in Africa*.

The term sustainable development was introduced to the United Nations some 30 years ago through the "Brundtland Commission" (World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), 1987). According to the agreement reached, sustainable development is the "Development that meets the needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 2017). Morton, Pencheon and Squires (2017) described the 17 SDG goals as being intimately interwoven. The Sustainable Goal 4 (SDG4) which the conference focused on aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2018). According to the organisation, "Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to creating sustainable development". Barbier and Burgess (2017) suggest that sustainable development is "the intersection of all the goals" which the authors "attributed to three interlinked systems: environmental (or ecological), economic and social". However, citing Holmberg and Sandbrook (1992), the authors agree that "attempting to maximize the goals for just one system does not achieve sustainability, because the impacts on the other systems are ignored". For example, although the authors attempted to classify SDG#4 "Quality Education" as essentially a social system goal, they were quick to point out that "given the importance of schooling to human capital formation and thus long-run economic development", it could also fall under an economic system goal.

The reasons for poor quality education are multi-faceted highlighting the need for adequately trained teachers, improved quality of schools and equity matters (United Nations, 2018). However, it is not enough to have the goals and their targets beautifully stated. In tandem with the Education 2030 agenda (United Nations, 2015), Africa as one of the countries that fall within the global South needs to develop its own roadmap to attaining the goals. Africa needs to be involved by "getting its hands dirty", hence, the conference's 2017 theme. According to Morton, Pencheon and Squires (2017), "in contrast to the MDGs, the SDGs are both broader in scope, more collective in action, and more detailed in content, including a clear message that every nation must act if success is to be realized". The conference sub-themes were

i.   Promoting inclusive education for access
ii. Implementing strategies to address disability issues in education
iii. Ensuring quality education for development
iv. Enacting competency-based and Africa-centric curricula and classroom practices
v.   Modelling Information Communication Technology (ICT) and Open Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) modes of provision for education and teacher development in Africa

vi.   Developing professional learning communities.

In exploring these issues, the nine papers in this edition touch on most of the seven outcome targets and the three means of implementation of the SDG 4.

In the first article, Kisirkoi, Kariuki and Kadenyi (2019) citing the example of Kenya, probe the need to constantly reconstruct the philosophy of education and the role, which philosophers have to play in the process. This becomes necessary if the country hopes to achieve its Vision 2030 in line with the SDGs. The authors recommend Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism to expedite the process.

Ndiku's (2019) paper titled "Teacher Empowerment Strategies for Conflict Transformation and Peace Building in Kenya" highlights the massive impact of violent conflict on the quality of education. He argues that teachers through distance education need to be adequately trained for empowerment in conflict transformation and peacebuilding strategies. Guided by the Conflict Transformation Theory and a cross-sectional mixed methods research design, the study emphasises the value of Life Skills curriculum and peace education.

In the following article, Banja (2019) reports on research work concerning the perceptions of newly qualified teachers and heads of department (HODs) regarding the roles of formal mentors in helping newly qualified teachers in selected secondary schools in Zambia. The purpose of his study is to identify what the teachers and the HODs believed to be the key areas in which such teachers should be mentored. A quantitative study guided by Kram's Mentor Role Theory shows a considerable inconsistency in what both groups believed. In order to address the situation, Banja puts forward a policy and a mentorship framework to aid the understanding of mentorship and its effective implementation.

From South Africa, in their work, Du Preez, Hannaway, Joubert and Masola (2019) draw attention to the value of role modelling as a teaching approach and a teaching resource due to its ability to promote acceptable social and academic behaviour in young children. The authors reiterate this through a community project tagged the "Reading, Rugby and Responsibility project". The findings of their qualitative study

nestled in the Community of Inquiry framework shows that children yearn to engage with role models and be part of a community. The authors, therefore, recommend the approach as a hybrid pedagogy and as a resource.

The South African Institute of Distance Education – Saide, (an NGO that acts as an advocate, catalyst, and facilitator to bring about change in existing educational practices https://www.saide.org.za/), launched its African storybook initiative to create a platform for digital storybooks in diverse African languages (Saide, 2019). Research generally indicates the lack of online reading materials written in African languages and reflecting African contexts. Niyibizi, Sibomana, Uwizeyemariya, Ntabajyana and Niyomugabo (2019) in their qualitative paper, share Rwanda teachers' experience with online translation of reading material in the Kinyarwanda language. Their findings show "differences in story reading levels between the original Kinyarwanda folktales and English translated versions". They thus advise teacher educators and translators to be mindful of maintaining the "meaning and moral lesson of the original tale in order to make it enjoyable for children."

According to Ocansey and Gyimah (2019), pupils with special educational needs require guidance and counselling services to overcome their social and psychological challenges. The authors through a concurrent triangulation mixed-method research design, explore available guidance and counselling services in three special schools in Ghana. Their findings reiterate the value of guidance services, which would necessitate the supervision of Regional Education offices to ensure widened service access and effective implementation.

In the following paper, Sibomana (2019), due to the importance of learning activities in distance education materials, focuses on the design by the University of Rwanda's College of Education of one of its distance education materials. Findings from his qualitative study showed the encouragement of assessment of learning which tends towards a surface approach to learning. Rather distance education materials need to focus more on deep learning that encourages application of learning.

Wambua (2019) in her work titled "Learner support system and academic performance of distance learning students in selected Kenyan public universities", highlights the

age-old concern of the quality of distance education in comparison to campus-based programmes. The focus of her study is the significant role learner support systems could play in ensuring the quality of distance education programmes. Her findings suggest that "a learner support system statistically, significantly and positively influences academic performance of distance learning students, although at a low level". She recommends "remotely accessible guidance and counselling services" for distance education students due to their diverse contexts.

Country report

Kisalama and Kibedi (2019) report on how video-based self-reflection and college-based mentorship system has been used to strengthen the adoption of learner-centred pedagogies in teacher education in Uganda. Using the mixed-methods research design, their exemplary report reiterates the value of college-based mentors to teacher-trainers, irrespective of the latter's years of experience; "the opportunity for self-reflection and collegial critique afforded students by video"; and the yearning of teacher-trainers for mentorship activities to include subject-specific pedagogical support.

In summary, the papers in this themed edition have shared how African countries can get practical with the SDG# 4. Given the African context from which they have emanated, all the studies can be replicated (with varying degrees).

We, the editors of this volume appreciate the quality that the reviewers have brought to the papers by their rigorous evaluation. We also thank Dr Tony Mays for his constant support throughout the "move from conference Proceedings to an online journal", and Mr Hendri Kruger for his technical support.

References

Banja. 2019. The perceptions of teachers and heads of department on the roles of a formal mentor in a Zambian Secondary School. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE), 1(1). http://www.tetfle.up.ac.za/

Barbier, E. B. & Burgess, J. C. 2017. The Sustainable Development Goals and the systems approach to sustainability. Economics, Vol. 11, 2017-28. [Online] Available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.5018/economics-ejournal.ja.2017-28

Distance Education and Teachers' Training in Africa (DETA). 2017. DETA Conference 2017. http://www.deta.up.ac.za/

Du Preez, Hannaway, Joubert and Masola. 2019. Reaching out with rugby role models to inspire literacy in young children: Informing hybrid pedagogy. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE), 1(1). http://www.tetfle.up.ac.za/

Holmberg, J. and R. Sandbrook. 1992. Sustainable Development: What Is to Be Done? Chapter 1 in J. Holmberg, ed. Policies for a Small Planet: From the International Institute for Environment and Development. Earthscan Publications, London, pp. 19–38.

Kisalama and Kibedi. 2019. Strengthening the Adoption of Learner-Centred Pedagogies in Teacher Education in Uganda through Video-Based Self Reflection & College-Based Mentorship System. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE), 1(1). http://www.tetfle.up.ac.za/

Kisirkoi, Kariuki and Kadenyi. 2019. Reconstructing Kenya's Educational Philosophy to steer attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and Kenya's Vision 2030 Plan. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE), 1(1). http://www.tetfle.up.ac.za/

Morton, S., Pencheon, D. & Squires, N. 2017. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their implementation: A national global framework for health, development and equity needs a systems approach at every level. *British Medical Bulletin*, Volume 124, Issue 1, 1 December 2017, Pages 81–90. [Online] Available from: https://doi.org/10.1093/bmb/ldx031

Ndiku, J. 2019. Teacher Empowerment Strategies for Conflict Transformation and Peace Building in Kenya. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE), 1(1). http://www.tetfle.up.ac.za/

Niyibizi, Sibomana, Uwizeyemariya, Ntabajyana and Niyomugabo. 2019. From an African Oral Tale to an English Picture Book: Rwandan Teachers' Experience with Online Translation of South African Institute of Distance Education's African Storybooks. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE), 1(1). http://www.tetfle.up.ac.za/

Ocansey and Gyimah. 2019. Guidance and counselling for pupils with special educational needs in Accra, Ghana: Implications for inclusive education. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE), 1(1). http://www.tetfle.up.ac.za/

Sibomana. 2019. Learning activities in the University of Rwanda's distance teacher education materials: some lessons for designers. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE), 1(1). http://www.tetfle.up.ac.za/

South African Institute of Distance Education (Saide). About us. https://www.saide.org.za/

United Nations. 2015. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld.

United Nations. 2018. About the Sustainable Development Goals. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

Wambua, R. 2019. Learner support system and academic performance of distance learning students in selected Kenyan public universities. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa* (TETFLE), 1(1). http://www.tetfle.up.ac.za/

World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). 1987. Our Common Future. Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York.