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EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

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FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of Educational Planning is focused on educational planning issues in both K-12 and higher education. It covers an international authorship from North America, Central America, Africa, and Europe. All the articles in this issue deal with student issues: student perceptions of schools, student sense of belongings, student gender equity and student learning in pandemic.

The focus of the Manaze and Ford study is to explore the diversity management issue on public university campuses in Ethiopia. The findings indicate that public universities in Ethiopia are generally ethnically and religiously diversified, and students generally have a positive attitude towards ethnic and religious diversity, low levels of negative diversity related experiences, and moderate levels of diversity related satisfaction. Results showed a moderate yet statistically significant positive relationship between diversity related satisfaction and students' sense of belonging at their universities.

The purpose of the Zimbico study is to analyze the trends of gender equity in admission and graduation, during the twenty years of higher education strategic planning in Mozambique. The author also examined a possible association between admission and graduation rates as a reflection of the gender equity issue. The conclusions are that male students outnumbered female students and that a strong relationship existed between student admission and graduation. The study recommends legal effort to rule gender equity achievements to revise admission policy to make it more sensitive to gender equity.

Henry's study explores students' perspectives on basic education reform in the Caribbean region. The research finds that students view identity, industry and citizenship as fundamental aims of Caribbean education, but consider standardized testing as an impediment to achieving these objectives. The study recommends the incorporation of identity, industry and citizenship through progressivist curriculum, pedagogy and assessment into the reform of basic education in the region.

Lastly, Douse attempts to draw the blue line plan for post-pandemic education. He claims that few educators have embodied radical creativity in their planned transition into post-pandemic period. Many planners have sought for a transition to go back to normal with no courage to meet the opportunity for change. He recommends that student learning should be allowed to be self-directed and self-regulated and that the forthcoming educational transformation should be characterized by Learners Lead.

The four articles selected for this issue have a common theme to focus on issues relating to students: their perceptions of diversity, gender equity, school reform and self-leading study. It calls the attention of educational planners to the fact that whatever effort or direction we plan, we need to be keeping the student benefit in mind. Educational planning can only be effectively achieved when students are showing academic, behavioral, social and emotional improvement.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mike Douse has been engaged in international education covering some seventy developing countries and for well over half a century. He was the Foundation Director of Australia's Disadvantaged Schools Program. Mike has also been the head of secondary schools in Nigeria and in Wales, and a faculty member at a Ghanian university. For the last two decades he has advised the EU, UNESCO, ILO and other agencies on their educational support for development. He has made many conference presentations and published many journal articles. His most recent book, with co-author Professor Philip Uys, is One World One School.

Angela Ford has been working in the field of education since 2007 and has worked in various capacities in both K-12 and higher education and was honored to be a Fulbright Scholar to Ethiopia for the 2019-2020 academic year to conduct research on undergraduate and graduate student motivation and persistence as well as to teach at Addis Ababa University. Angela has a B.A. degree in psychology, an MAT degree in teaching and learning, and an Ed.D. in curriculum development and instruction and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree in educational psychology at Old Dominion University. Prior to working in the field of education, Angela served in the United States Air Force and the Virginia Air National Guard.

Zahra Henry is an advocate for inclusion of marginalized communities in Caribbean public education reform and the United Kingdom higher education management. She is the founder and director of ZLH Francais, an education enterprise specializing in foreign language instruction and career coaching, and is co-founder of the Mona Preparatory School Alumni Association and former Board member of the Sandhurst Early Childhood Development Centre. She holds a Master of Science degree in social policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science and Bachelor of Arts in International Development from McGill University. She is currently the Stakeholder Manager for Kingston Creative and Assistant Project Manager at the Alpha School of Music in Kingston, Jamaica.

Mesfin Manaze, after working as a mathematics teacher for two years, joined higher education and served as lecturer, researcher, registrar, deputy director for students' service directorate, and director for library directorate. He also served as academic coordinator at international school at Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, and education project coordinator for South Sudan refugees at Gambella, Ethiopia. By now, Mesfin is serving as an assistant professor of educational policy and leadership in the Department of Educational Planning and Management at Jigjiga University, Ethiopia.

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CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR DIVERSITY AND STUDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING IN ETHIOPIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Ethiopia is known as a 'museum of people' with over 80 ethnic groups and a variety of religions. In such a diverse country, the need for diversity management is critical and ongoing. This convergent parallel mixed method study explored diversity management on public university campuses, by examining a representative student sample from eight Ethiopian public universities. A stratified random sample of universities was chosen, and 458 students participated in a modified version of the Diverse Learning Environment survey, and 24 individuals were chosen through purposeful sampling for interviews. In addition, documents were analyzed at both the country and institutional levels. The findings indicate public universities in Ethiopia are generally ethnically and religiously diversified, and students generally have a positive attitude towards ethnic and religious diversity, low levels of negative diversity related experiences, and moderate levels of diversity related satisfaction. Results showed a moderate yet statistically significant positive relationship between diversity related satisfaction and students' sense of belonging at their universities. These findings indicate that the climate for diversity on campuses is moderately positive. Recommendations to increase diversity and the students' attitudes toward diversity include policy and planning implications, as well as continued research to increase knowledge and understanding.

OVERVIEW

The enrollment of diverse students in institutions of higher education is considered a major success in the efforts to embrace and even celebrate diversity (Pillay, 2010). University leadership has the obligation to manage diversity by creating a safe, welcoming, and conflict free environment in which each member of this diversified student body has the capacity to succeed and feel a sense of belonging (Onsman, 2012). Fostering a positive campus climate for diversity enhances the development of much-needed multicultural competencies. On campuses with a negative climate, students are less likely to adjust academically or develop a sense of belonging (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013; Locks et al., 2008).

Campus climate for diversity refers to real or perceived observations of the universities' environments as they relate to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions or attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations around aspects of diversity (Hurtado et al., 1999; Hurtado et al., 2008). Campus climates are either supportive of diverse students with the structures, beliefs, and behaviors that produce positive effects on learning for all students or they are not (Hurtado et al., 1999). The assessment and subsequent management of the campus climate for diversity takes into consideration two contexts: external and institutional. While the external context refers to government/policy and socio-historical dimensions, the institutional context is comprised of both institutional level and individual level dimensions. Specific to the institutional level are the institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion; the compositional diversity of students, faculty, and staff; and organizational

structures – institutional policies, curriculum, and processes (Milem et al., 2005). The individual level includes the psychological perceptions of individuals, their attitudes towards the campus for diversity, and the behavioral dimensions that encompass individual actions and intergroup contact experiences (Milem et al., 2005).

In campus climate assessments, students' experiences with different dimensions of diversity, including race/ethnicity, linguistics, religion, gender, and class background (Hurtado et al., 2008) should be considered, as these dimensions affect the relationships students establish with their peers and educators (Dawson, 2007). Though it is necessary to consider many variables when making an assessment of campus climate for diversity, the focus of this study is on two critical variables in the Ethiopian public university context: ethnicity and religion.

Ethiopian Higher Education

Ethiopia contains a multiplicity of ethnic, linguistic, religious, and diversity markers (Ambissa, 2010; Berhane, 2009; Teshome, 2001) making diversity management one of the central educational and civic missions of higher education institutions (HEIs) (Hurtado, 2007). Over the past few decades, Ethiopian higher education has expanded rapidly, increasing access to a more diversified population. Given this organically diversified growth and the current admission and placement policy in the country, campuses are diversified and are often more representative of the diverse country than the cities or regions in which they reside (Abebaw, 2014).

In support of ensuring positive learning outcomes for all students, the Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation (FDRE, 2019) stipulates that HEIs are expected to develop and disseminate the culture of respect, tolerance, and living together by rendering their services free from any form of discrimination on grounds of race, religion, sex, politics, etc. In principle, this implies that HEIs are expected to have diversity related institutional policies, rules, regulations, and management strategies to ensure peaceful co-existence of students. Current indications are that even though several university leaders throughout the country have taken measures to manage diversity, not all of these plans have been effective (Adamu, 2014; Adamu & Bejitual, 2007; Hailemariam, 2016). Ethiopian public universities continue to experience challenges in relation to ethnic and religious related conflicts, which result in interruptions of academic activities, injuries, and even the deaths (Abeba, 2019; Adamu, 2020).

Researchers claim that causes of ethnic conflict are generally related to ethnic polarization, political rivalry, and historic relationships among ethnic groups (Adamu, 2013a, 2013b). However, clashing also occurs between religious groups and can be started by things as simple as one group playing religious songs and holding religious practices (prayers) which create discomfort for students from other religious groups (Arega & Mulugeta, 2017). Therefore, this study is intended to investigate the critical and current issues surrounding these two aspects of diversity in the Ethiopian higher education system and the impact of campus climate for diversity on students' sense of belonging. This study will add to the understanding of how Ethiopian public university students perceive and understand the concepts and advantages and disadvantages of diversity. The findings can inform public university leaders on the status of campus diversity climates and policy makers on the challenges of diversity being experienced. For researchers, the findings can be used to inform and suggest other areas of exploration around the topic of diversity.

Campus Climate for Diversity

Campus climate for diversity is a framework to examine campus climates through assessing how diverse students are supported and whether the structures, beliefs, and behaviors that produce a positive effect on diversity are being promoted for all students (Hurtado et al., 1999). Embedded in the external contexts, the institutional context of the framework is comprised of institutional level and individual level dimensions. The institutional level factors include the compositional and organizational dimensions.

The compositional dimension, also known as structural diversity, refers to the numerical representation of individuals from diverse social identities among students, faculty, staff, and administrators (Hurtado et al., 1999). The balanced representation of a diverse set of individuals within a college or university can lead to greater opportunities for interactions outside of one's ethnic and religious groups (Thompson & Sekaquaptewa, 2002) and is also positively related to satisfaction with the college experience in terms of diversity as well as ethnic identity development (Hurtado et al., 2012). Regardless of the actual structural diversity, the perception of diversity is seen differently by various populations on campus, therefore should be understood through assessing how diverse the campus *feels* to the students.

The organizational dimension of the campus climate identifies structures and processes that embed group-based privilege and oppression or confer resources such as curriculum and other institutional practices and policies (Milem et al., 2005). One consistent empirical finding is that diversity in the curriculum has the transformative capacity to enlighten and change the perspectives of individuals, especially in reducing prejudice (Denson, 2009; Engberg, 2007). Institutional policies and processes also influence the campus climate and can be seen in policies, programs and services and have the potential to create more equitable conditions and outcomes for diverse students (Hurtado et al., 2012). Institutional commitment to diversity, or lack thereof, is also identified as an aspect of the organizational dimension. Such a commitment is articulated in an institutional mission (Pepper et al., 2010).

The individual level factors include the behavioral dimensions, the psychological dimensions, and attitudes toward diversity. The behavioral dimension refers to the context, frequency, and quality of cross group interactions (Hurtado et al., 2008). Categorizing interactions into formal and informal helps educators to understand interactions they may have control over, as opposed to chance encounters. According to Hurtado (2005), formal interactions are often referred to as campus-facilitated interactions that occur in the classroom or cocurricular settings and are the result of intentional educational practice. The informal interactions occur in the everyday interactions between individuals outside of campus-designed educational activities. Interaction with faculty is another aspect that is associated with student interactions and impacts student perceptions of the campus climate and subsequent outcomes (Cress, 2008).

Another component of the individual level, the psychological dimension, involves individuals' perceptions of the environment, views of intergroup relations, and perceptions of discrimination or racial/ethnic conflict within the institutional context (Hurtado et al., 1999; Nora & Cabrera, 1996) or perceived institutional support/commitment related to diversity (Hurtado et al., 2008). Climate research based on the psychological dimension remains vital to understanding the experiences of multiple social identity groups in order to improve the conditions as a hostile campus has many negative impacts.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following basic questions:

- What is the student composition at Ethiopian public universities?
- How do public university students perceive their campus climate for ethnic and religious diversity?
- Is campus climate for diversity in Ethiopian public universities related to students' sense of belonging?

METHODOLOGY

This convergent parallel mixed method study explored the current state of Ethiopian university campus climates as well as the feelings of belonging of students. Two reasons dominate the use of this design, the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data provide a more nuanced picture (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013) and the convenience of the simultaneous collection of both types of data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In this study the benefits of knowledge gained from both types of data were critical to establish an accurate picture of the current state. In addition, the simultaneous collection reduced unnecessary travel to the sample universities since they are located in all regions of the country.

Participants and Settings

Primary data for this study was collected from students, teachers, and deans of students. A combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used. For the quantitative data, a multistage representative sample was collected (N = 458). First, eight universities were selected using stratified sampling based on the generational classifications of the public universities. Ethiopian university generational classifications are based on the year institutions were established: first generations were established before 2007, second generation in 2007, third generation in 2011, and fourth generation in 2016. Two universities represented each of the four generations. The selected universities, Haramaya University and Hawassa University; Jigjiga University and Dire Dawa University; Debre Tabor University and Woldia University; and Salale University and Raya Universities were selected from the first, second, third, and fourth generations, respectively. Next, four colleges were selected from within each university and then simple random sampling was employed to identify the final student participants within each college. For the qualitative data, purposive, snowball, and availability sampling techniques were used to select eight students, eight teachers, and eight deans of students for interviews to supply the in-depth qualitative data. Therefore, the total number of qualitative participants was twenty-four.

Regarding the background characteristics of the quantitative respondents, 196 (42.8%) of the 458 students were female and 262 (57.2%) were male. Ethnically, 324 (70.7%) students were from Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups, with the remaining (29.3%) coming from no less than 17 other ethnic groups. This appears to be representative of the diversity of Ethiopia since Amhara and Oromo are the two dominant ethnic groups. In reference to religion, 27.9% were Muslims and 52.2% were Orthodox Christians. The rest were from Catholic, Protestant, and Wakefeta religions.

Regarding the background characteristics of the qualitative students, they represented a wide variety of fields of study and years on university campuses as well as a diverse representation of ethnicities and religions. See Table 1.

Table 1
Student Qualitative Research Participant Background Characteristics

Participant's Code	Sex	Ethnicity	Religion	Year of Study	Field of Study
Student 1	Male	Oromo	Protestant	III	Civics
Student 2	Female	Amhara	Orthodox	IV	Civil Engineering
Student 3	Male	Wolita	Protestant	III	Sociology
Student 4	Male	Tigraway	Orthodox	II	Mathematics
Student 5	Female	Amhara	Muslim	III	Psychology
Student 6	Male	Amhara	Muslim	III	Economics
Student 7	Male	Oromo	Orthodox	II	EdPM
Student 8	Male	Sidama	Protestant	IV	Computer Engineering

The teachers and deans of students represented a variety of professional levels, from lecturer to associate professor. The teachers also ranged in years of experience from five to 15 years. The area of gender was less diversified, however remained representative of the population of higher education faculty throughout the country. See Table 2.

Table 2
Teacher Qualitative Research Participants Background Characteristics

Items	Category	Count	%
Sex	Male	14	87.5
	Female	2	12.5
Educational Background	MA/MSC	13	81.3
	PhD	3	18.7
Academic Rank	Lecturer	11	68.8
	Ass Prof	5	31.2
Professional Experience	0-5 years	-	-
	5-10 years	10	62.5
	10-15 Years	6	37.5
Experience as Dean of Students	1-3 Years	7	87.5
	3-6 Years	1	12.5

Data Gathering

The quantitative survey instrument, a student questionnaire, was developed based on the Diverse Learning Environment Instrument used by Hurtado et al. (2012). The questionnaire, apart from its introduction, had five parts which measured the campus climate for diversity and sense of belonging, with a total item number of 50. The developed questionnaire was piloted, and the validity and reliability measures were calculated for the whole instrument and for each dimension. The analysis of the pilot study data indicated that the dimensions of the questionnaire had good internal

consistency with Cronbach's alphas between 0.73 to 0.91 and the overall was 0.95. Also, based on the comments of pilot study participants, difficult wording was adapted to increase clarity and content validity and two repetitive items were deleted.

After the validity and reliability of the instrument were established, 718 questionnaires were distributed. More specifically, 231, 197, 181, and 109 questionnaires each were distributed for the first, second, third, and fourth generation universities, respectively. Out of the distributed questionnaires, 469 (65.3%) were completed and returned. Out of the 469 questionnaires returned, 11 questionnaires were void as many dimensions as possible of the questions were not properly completed, leaving the final viable questionnaire responses at 458.

In-depth interviews and consultation of documents constituted the qualitative data gathering tools. In-depth interview guides were used to stimulate discussions and understand participants' views on items on the questionnaire that needed detailed explanation and to explore the challenges Ethiopian public universities have in managing their diversity. Relevant documents such as students' higher education placement guideline, universities senate legislations, universities' students' discipline policy and the new education development road map were also consulted to add depth to the analysis. To this end, availability, contents, and applicability of documents related to strategic plans, senate legislations, and students code of conduct were reviewed.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS 23 for analysis. Measures of frequency, percentages, means, and standard deviations were produced. Correlation analysis was performed to examine predictive relationships between dimensions of campus climate for diversity and students' sense of belongingness.

The qualitative data were analyzed using a thematic approach. In doing so, the qualitative data was systematically transcribed and translated (for the interviews made in Amharic), categorized, reduced, and organized depending on the identified major themes related to each dimension of campus climate for diversity. The qualitative data were used to expand the breadth and depth of the quantitative data.

RESULTS

The first question this study addressed was, *What is the student composition at Ethiopian public universities?* Document review on students' placement revealed that the student bodies of Ethiopian public universities are indeed diversified, as almost all of the sampled universities had students from different ethnic and religious groups. Abebaw (2014) argued that this diversification of the student bodies in Ethiopian public universities is not a deliberate action by the government to maximize the benefit of diversity, but rather seems to be the result of the diversification of the country in general. Also, despite the diversification, as the interviews revealed, there is a dominance of some ethnic and religious groups on some campuses based on location. Interviewees noted that there is a tendency to place students in a university located close to their place of residence, mostly in regions where they completed high school, and this has created dominance of students from local areas. One student stated,

> I can definitely say that students from this region where the university is located are many in number. (Student #2, November 2019)

Two reasons were mentioned for the dominance of local ethnic groups in Ethiopian public universities. The first one was the preference of students to enroll in institutions near their families or at least in their home region. Due to a string of conflicts between students, which have resulted in injuries, property damage, and even deaths, parents prefer not to send their children far away. Parents appear to advise their children to select a university near them or in the region they are living. The placement criteria favor them to do so as long as the students have the required grades and test scores. For example, the placement policy of MoE states,

> Students who scored an entrance point that makes them eligible for higher education will chose a university of their choice in order and will be placed by Ministry of Education accordingly. (2002, p.13)

The Ministry's recent assessment (MoE, 2018) of the current pattern of student placement was, however, critical of the present trend, arguing that it does not promote unity and diversity.

> To promote unity in diversity, the current student placement system has to be revisited and replaced with a system that avoids the dominance of campuses by students from certain regions only. (2002, p.25)

The second factor mentioned to create dominance of certain ethnic groups at universities is the transfer of students from their original placement to another university located in their home region. The main reasons for students to ask for transfers to other universities were concerns of conflict and feelings of insecurity. Unless transferred to places of their ethnic origin, they expressed concern that they could become victims of violence due to their ethnic identity. A student stated,

> Many Oromo students used to be assigned to this university. But, after staying here for a semester or two, they get a transfer to other universities mostly to their region and will leave this university. Again, due to the conflict of Amhara and Oromo students taking place this year, many Oromo students left the university; it is really very sad. (Student #3, December 2019)

In agreement with the above student's opinion, transfer of students especially in relation to students leaving campuses due to conflicts in the country and inside universities, a dean of students also said the following:

> Two years before, there was a conflict between Oromo and Somali students in our university. Due to that conflict, not only Oromo students but also teachers who served this university, beginning from its establishment, left the university. After they left this university, we heard that they have been placed to universities in Oromia region, I mean including the teachers. The loss was twofold for us: it decreased the diversity of our students and loss of best minds (Dean of Students #2, November 2019).

In general, the sample universities were found to have a diversified student body, yet the feeling among students and teachers was that students from the region where a university is located or from local areas are found to be dominant.

Attitude of Students Towards Diversity

The second question guiding this study was, *How do public university students perceive their campus climate for ethnic and religious diversity?* This question is answered through investigation of students' *attitudes* towards diversity, their diversity related *experiences*, and their diversity related *satisfaction*. The first aspect assessed was the *attitudes* of students towards students of different ethnic and religious backgrounds and having a diversified student body in general. The statements for this portion of the survey are in Table 3 and the scale was from one, meaning strongly disagree, to five, meaning strongly agree.

As can be seen in Table 3, students had a good attitude for diversity with mean scores between 3.51 and 4.26. While the lowest mean score was associated with the perception about socialization of students from different religious backgrounds (M = 3.51, SD = 1.24) and the second lowest result was related to socialization of students from different ethnic backgrounds (M = 3.75, SD = 1.15), these were still above the middle score of 3 indicating agreement with the statements. The highest score was about the practice of having a friend from another ethnic background (M = 4.26, SD = 1.01), indicating students may embrace individuals from outside of their own group.

According to one student, dorm placement was a positive way to encourage diversity through exposing students to others that are different from them and expanding their views.

> If there are other students in your dormitory or classroom who speak other language than yours, which is the reality in most cases, and if they are willing to teach you, it means you get the chance to know other language. For example, if I know many languages, which I am very eager to know, it will give me an opportunity to work anywhere in Ethiopia. That is a real advantage as job opportunities are very rare if you focus only to work in some areas. (Student #5, 2020)

Though the basis for socialization for students in most cases was with those that share the same ethnic or religious background, Table 3 shows students believe that it is good to attend universities with students from different ethnic (M = 3.99, SD = 1.08) and religious (M = 4.12, SD = 0.99) groups. Moreover, students indicated that they should have basic understandings of other ethnicities (M = 4.06, SD = 0.96) and religions (M = 4.00, SD = 1.03) and develop meaningful relationships with students of different ethnicities (M = 4.05, SD = 1.02) and religions (M = 4.00, SD = 1.02).

The qualitative results also showed many students believed it was good to have interactions between students of diverse backgrounds as it is beneficial in learning different languages and cultures. They also mentioned that when students know languages and cultures other than their own, they may be motivated to explore other languages and cultures and may even work after graduation in regions different from where they were raised. Here is an example of what a participant had to say on the issue.

> Definitely, it is excellent to have diverse student body at university campus. For example, if there are students who speak a language different from yours, you get a chance to learn that language which is an excellent opportunity. Not only the language, but you could also have a good opportunity to know about another culture, dressing style, type of food, and so on. I am highly appreciative of having a diverse student in universities. (Student #1, November 2019)

Table 3
Mean Ratings of Respondents about Attitude towards Diversity

Items	Mean	SD
In this university, it is good to have students from different ethnic background	3.99	1.08
In this university, it is good to have students from different religion background	4.12	.99
As university students, I should have basic understanding of other ethnicities	4.06	.96
As university students, I should have basic understanding of other religions	4.00	1.03
I should develop meaningful relationships with students outside my ethnicity in this university	4.05	1.02
I should develop meaningful relationships with students outside my religion in this university	4.00	1.02
I accept the different way of life of other students from different ethnic background of me	4.07	.99
I accept the different way of life of other students from different religion background of me	4.02	1.04
In this University, I have friends from different Ethnic groups	4.26	1.01
In this University, I have friends from different religion groups	4.23	.98
In University, I often study with students from different ethnic backgrounds	4.08	.99
In University, I often study with students from different religious backgrounds	4.00	1.03
At this University, students from different Ethnic groups socialize with one another	3.75	1.15
At this University, students from different religion groups socialize with one another	3.51	1.24

The data from Table 3 also show that, in practice, students had friends from different ethnic groups (M = 4.05, SD = 1.18) and religious groups (M = 4.03, SD = 1.05) which gave them a very good opportunity to know about different ethnic groups and religions and also languages, cultures, and other positive values.

These results indicate that there are still a number of students not willing to go out of their ethnic and religious groups to make friends, spend time together, and know about other ethnicities and religions. However, they are not the majority. Efforts to encourage cross social group interactions are not always successful. For example, the following was stated by a dean of students in relation to encouraging the socialization of students in campuses when they may avoid experiences that cross ethnic or religious lines.

> In the beginning of the academic year, we make dormitory assignment of students based on alphabets only. We also warn them not to change their dormitory unless they have critical health issues so that they can be together with a student that can help them. But, still we find students changing their dormitory when we make supervision to join their friends from the same locality, ethnic and religion group. This is a very common trend. (Dean of Students, #6, 2020)

In general, the results showed that students have a good attitude towards having a diversified student body in terms of ethnicity and religion at university campuses. Moreover, they showed a good perception towards exploring other ethnicities and religions and socializing with students of different background.

Diversity Related Experiences of Students

Another aspect of campus climate is the *experience* students have with diversity issues, for this study specifically ethnicity and religion related diversity. As can be inferred from the results displayed in Table 4, the mean ratings of respondents to items in this dimension ranged from 2.16 to 3.50 with an average overall mean score of 2.67. This indicates a relatively good experience as the items in the dimension were worded negatively with a one representing very often and a five representing never. Even though most of the responses indicated a relatively positive experience, the data show that many of the respondents have observed ethnic based conflict (M = 3.50, SD = 1.29) among students on their campuses which were difficult to control (M = 3.30, SD = 1.36). The respondents also indicated that they heard offensive jokes about some ethnic groups (M = 3.08, SD = 1.31) and personally experienced discrimination because of their ethnic background (M = 3.01, SD = 1.44).

Table 4
Mean Ratings about Diversity Related Experience of Students

Items	Mean	SD
I have experienced Ethnic discrimination at this University from Students	3.01	1.44
I have experienced Religious discrimination at this University from Students	2.60	1.44
At this university, I sometimes hear offensive jokes and stories about people from some Ethnic groups	3.08	1.31
At this University, I sometimes hear offensive jokes and stories about people from some Religion groups	2.85	1.30
I have been treated unfairly by a teacher or staff member because of my Ethnicity	2.38	1.45
I have been treated unfairly by a teacher or staff member because of my Religion	2.16	1.39
At this university, I had experienced physical assault/injury because of my ethnicity	2.32	1.43
At this university, I had experienced physical assault/injury because of my religion	2.20	1.39

At this university, I had experienced property damage because of my ethnicity	2.39	1.44
At this university, I had experienced property damage because of my religion	2.16	1.36
At this university, I have observed conflict among students because of ethnic issues	3.50	1.29
At this university, I have observed conflict among students because of religion issues	2.76	1.36
Ethnic conflicts are very difficult to control at this university	3.30	1.36
Religious conflicts are very difficult to control at this university	2.72	1.41

The qualitative data also showed that in the majority of sampled universities, there was a conflict among students for different diversity related issues, however the dominant aspect that elicits conflict was ethnicity. A dean of students recalls,

> On 2 August 2019 at 11:30 PM, one student was thrown from a building and was severely injured. After he was taken to hospital, he died of the severity of the injury that he experienced. Immediately, a conflict started between two ethnic groups of students, Amhara and Oromo. Regrettably, in that conflict, two Amhara students died, five students from both groups severely injured. Due to this conflict, still there are eight students in prison at the zonal correction center. (Dean of Students #1, November 2019)

A story was narrated by a student about conflicts that took place between Oromo and Amhara students.

> Though I am not quite sure about the real cause of the conflict, there was a conflict between Amhara and Oromo students in our university. Due to last year incident, many students from both sides were injured. Again, this year, after the Woldia University incident, there was a series of conflicts between the same groups of students which resulted in many injuries. Most significantly, the class was interrupted for long and only resumed a week earlier. This is really very sad. (Student #7, February 2020)

The incident mentioned by this student occurred during the 2019/2020 academic year resulting in a conflict between Amhara and Oromo students causing the deaths of two students from Oromo ethnicity. After this incident, there were clashes between these two groups of students in many public universities around the country which resulted in further deaths of students, property damage, and students leaving their campuses. The problem predominantly affected universities located in the Amhara and Oromia regional states. Though many of the 2019/2020 conflicts between these two groups was mainly thought to have resulted from the Woldia University incident, most of the respondents take the case further and attribute the cause to the general political scenario of the country and provocation of outside forces. Authors such as Dawson (2007) also stated that political realties could impact attitudes of students and the relationships they make with peers outside of their ethnicity. Arguing that the root cause of the conflict among students is more political than ethnic, a dean of students of one university had this to say,

> I definitely think that the current political condition and outside factors are mainly causing conflicts between students. For example, a simple conflict between two students from two ethnic groups can easily grow to group conflict which you cannot control easily. Then after the conflict, when some of the students involved in the conflict try to leave the campus, other who were not involved in the conflict also follow suit. … when you make a discussion to solve the conflict after incidents, the discussion agenda will be immediately changed to other issues which are directly related to politics, mainly issues that are being circulated by activists. This definitely tells you that the cause for the conflicts are deeply rooted to the political scenario of the country and even some agendas are being thrown for the students by external forces or activists. (Dean of Student #2, November 2019)

Efforts are made to encourage diversified student interactions. One such attempt is to assign students to dorms based on the alphabetical order of their names as opposed to student choice or group status. Responses garnered from interviews revealed that this is the case in almost all universities, creating a high probability that students from diverse backgrounds are placed in the same dormitory. However, in cases where students from one ethnic group are dominant at department level, a student may be assigned with other students of the same ethnic group. One student mentioned this as a probable reason for discriminations or experiencing offensive jokes about ethnicity. In the words of a student,

> When you are assigned to a dormitory, if the other dorm mates are from an ethnic group different from yours and you cannot understand their language, they are likely to discriminate you by not talking to you and study with you. They may sometimes try to say something uncomfortable about your language or ethnicity. For this reason, after the initial dormitory assignment, if students feel discriminated by their dorm mates, they try to change dormitories complaining to the proctors. If they fail to change, they spend most of their time with their friends outside their dormitory and go to their room only to sleep. (Student #5, December 2019)

A dean of student from one sample university gives a comparable account of placement of students in dormitories.

> … dormitory placements are made before students arrive to the university using alphabetical orders taking their departments as a base. In less than a month following the completion of students' placement, my table becomes flooded with request of students to change their dormitories. When I ask some of the students their reasons to change, most mention language and culture difference. Though rarely, some others state religion difference as a reason for wanting to change. But as a rule, unless a student has a very serious medical case which needs a close assistance from a friend, we do not change their placements. Though that is the case, most of the time, when we make some unnoticed checkups, we find students who come from the same area, ethnic group and sometimes religion in the same dormitory. (Dean of Students #8, February 2020)

The data indicate that students did not perceive religious issues to be as challenging as ethnic issues. Participants indicated relative minimal unfair treatment by a teacher or staff member because of their religion ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.39$), little damage of personal property due to their religion ($M =$

2.16, SD = 1.36), and an absence of physical assault or injury due to their religion (M = 2.20, SD = 1.39). The qualitative data obtained from both students and deans of students were confirmatory. A student participant said,

> I do not observe religion to be a factor for division or conflict between students at this university. As the main issue at the country level is ethnicity, every student is more alert about it. If there are issues about religion, mostly it is about dissatisfaction by the university cafeteria service provision during fasting periods. Those issues also, most of the time, will be solved easily and will be forgotten immediately. (Student #8, March 2020)

In summary, the results showed that students have a better experience with religious diversity experiences than with ethnic diversity experience, that students value cross group experiences and yet many still tend to remain within their ethnic groups when possible. The responses also point to political reasons for the ethnic conflict that is experienced on university campuses.

Diversity Related Satisfaction of Students

The next aspect of campus climate for diversity refers to *satisfaction* of students towards their campuses. For these responses a score of one represented *very dissatisfied* and a score of five represented *very satisfied*. As can be seen from the data in Table 5, students indicated a moderate satisfaction in many diversity related issues and dissatisfaction in others with the overall average mean rating of 3.13, the lowest being (M = 2.88, SD = 1.30) and the highest being (M = 3.46, SD = 1.20). While the highest mean rating was related to satisfaction with the religious diversity of students on their campuses, the lowest was related to administrative responses for ethnic discrimination/conflict.

In addition to dissatisfaction of administrative responses to ethnic conflicts/discrimination, the results from these data showed students were dissatisfied with fasting cafeteria services (M = 2.90, SD =1.39). This is a food service provided during fasting periods for Orthodox Christian and Muslim students. Students also indicated dissatisfaction with administrative responses for incidents of religion related conflicts (M = 2.96, SD =1.29). However, this was not as high as that for ethnic related conflict.

Even though the student interviewees tended to support the quantitative findings on the issues of dissatisfaction on fasting cafeteria service, deans of students did not always share the claims of the students. For example, one of the deans of students stated:

> When a fasting period approaches, for both Christians and Muslims, we announce for fasting students to get registered to make arrangement for the cafeteria service. Then based on the number of students we get, we try to serve them accordingly. Of course, sometimes students go too far and ask for the cafeteria time to be adjusted like the cafeteria to be opened at 3PM in the afternoon, for Christians, or early at 4AM, in the case of the Muslims. Even though this is directly in contradiction with the secularism principle universities are supposed to advance, we open the cafeteria as per their need and tell them to serve themselves as we cannot afford to make cafeteria workers serve them as it has many implications in terms of time and finance. Also, in both Christians and Muslims holy days, we prepare a special meal and serve it with soft drinks and fruits. Especially, since the area our

university is located is very famous for its cheese and since there is a good supply of it, on holy days students are served at lunch and dinner times (Dean of Students #1, November 2019).

Table 5
Mean Ratings of Respondents about Diversity Related Satisfaction

Items	Mean	SD
Ethnic diversity of students' body	3.02	1.21
Religious diversity of students' body	3.46	1.20
Ethnic diversity of teachers	3.37	1.18
Religious diversity of teachers	3.39	1.17
Ethnic diversity of support staff	3.19	1.21
Religious diversity of support staff	3.15	1.20
Interactions among different ethnic background students	3.04	1.23
Interactions among different religion background student	3.32	1.20
Atmosphere for ethnic differences	3.02	1.18
Atmosphere for religious differences	3.04	1.15
Administrative response for incidents of ethnic discrimination/conflict	2.88	1.30
Administrative response for incidents of religious discrimination/conflict	2.96	1.29
Fasting Cafeteria services	2.90	1.39

The same dean of students related the points of dissatisfaction of the students with the cafeteria service to another case.

> Almost all of the local peoples around our university are orthodox Christians. This has an implication in the religion composition of our cafeteria workers. Almost all are orthodox Christians as we hire administrative staffs from the local area. For this reason, I had been approached by some Muslim students who expressed their dissatisfaction with cafeteria workers and type of meat served for them. But as this university has an obligation to create a job opportunity for the local people. I told them we would not entertain their request. I think the dissatisfaction is mainly related with this issue (Dean of Students #1, November 2019).

A similar argument was made by dean of students of a university located in a Muslim dominated area. There, the dissatisfaction was expressed by Christian students. In relation to the university administrative responses to conflicts, both ethnic and religion related, one student said the following:

> The university leaders do not meet and share the different concerns of the students unless there is a serious conflict. Even when there is a conflict, their response is not quick especially if the incident takes place at night. Again, I am not satisfied

> with the way they take disciplinary measure. For example, after conflicts we still see the main actors in conflicts being free and measures taken against many innocent students who were in the conflict area by chance. For this reason, most of the time conflicts recur again very shortly (Student #5, February 2020).

On the other hand, as can be observed from Table 5, religious diversity of students' body (M=3.46, SD=1.20) and teachers (M=3.39, SD=1.17), ethnic diversity of teachers (M=3.37, SD=1.18), and interactions among different religion group of students (M=3.32, SD=1.20) were identified as moderate areas of satisfaction. During interviews, one of the student participants said the following in relation to interactions among students of different ethnic and religion groups.

> Most of the students want to socialize with students who came from their locality, region, or ethnic group. But as different religion followers can be found in the same ethnic group, you can see that different religion backgrounds socializing at campus level (Student #8, March 2020).

Many of the deans of students agreed that students often gravitate to those from the same ethnic group irrespective of religion. In support of this, a teacher said the following:

> I think the order of the day is to be with your ethnic group. Inside the class you see students who come from the same locality sticking together. I think that they feel very comfortable talking to a student who talks their language they can easily understand. But when we see it in relation to the current situation of the country in general and the politics in particular, I feel that they deliberately stick with a student of their ethnic group. (Teacher #2, November 2019)

In general, the results showed that students have a good attitude towards having a diversified student body in terms of ethnicity and religion at university campuses. They also showed a good perception towards exploring other ethnicities and religions and socializing with students of different background. Therefore, taken together, the campus climate for diversity in Ethiopian public universities can be considered as moderately positive constituted by conflicts among students for diversity related issues mainly ethnic issues.

Relationship between Campus Climate for Diversity and Students' Sense of Belonging

The third guiding question for this study was, *is campus climate for diversity in Ethiopian public universities related to students' sense of belonging?* As can be seen from the results displayed in Table 6, there was a weak yet statistically significant positive relationship between students' attitudes towards diversity and their sense of belonging at their university (r =.143, $p < 0.05$). The $R^2 = 0.020$, indicated that attitude towards diversity explained 2.0% of variance in students' sense of belonging at their university.

The relationship between diversity related satisfaction and sense of belonging indicated a moderate, statistically significant positive relationship ($r = .468$, $p < 0.05$) and the $R^2 = 0.219$ indicated diversity related satisfaction explained 21.9% of variance in students' sense of belonging towards their university. The data did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between students' diversity related experience and a sense of belonging at their university (r =-.075, $p > 0.05$).

Table 6

Correlations between Dimensions of Campus Climate for Diversity and Students' Sense of Belonging

	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Sense of Belonging	1			
2	Attitude towards Diversity	.143**	1		
	Sig. Level	.002			
3	Diversity Related Satisfaction	.468**	.221**	1	
	Sig. Level	.000	.000		
4	Diversity related Experience	-.075	-.079	-.052	1
	Sig. Level	.111	.090	.270	

** Pearson Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Pearson Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PLANNING AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings of this study, the following policy, practice, and further research implications can be made. Policy implications include examining and adapting policies at the university and national levels, particularly in reference to written diversity policies and establishing and maintaining diversified student bodies. Planning implications include establishing and maintaining a diversified student body on each campus, increasing faculty diversity, and planning for ways to encourage cross group interactions. Future research could include examining other aspects of diversity, such as gender and political views, and further examining why ethnicity is more challenging to handle than religion. Many of these implications would not be linear and do not clearly fall into one category, but would be highly interactive and possibly circular, as policy will affect planning, and research could provide more information to assist with policies and planning.

Policy

The results show that policies need to be examined and established in a couple of critical areas both at the national as well as the university levels. As mentioned earlier, at a national level, the placement criteria of students to public universities should give due attention to intentionally create diversified student bodies on public university campuses. Policies of the Ministry of Education (MoE), including placement and transfer, have not prevented the domination of some ethnic groups at universities. One of the main policies surrounding this issue is that of the transfer policy, allowing students to transfer to the university of their choice. Therefore, it is suggested that due attention be given to these policies and emphasis on their fair implementation as this contributes or hinders diversification of student bodies at Ethiopian public universities. Policy related to plans and methods to avoid the recurrent conflicts between students and university administration should be devised together with strict implementation guidelines. Also, at the national level a policy could be examined that would require universities to have a diversity statement as part of their mission and/or vision.

At the institutional level, universities should show commitment to promote the diversity of their student body in the form of a mission, vision, or diversity statement that clearly embraces students of various ethnic, religious, and other diversity groups. As this study revealed, mission statements of

many Ethiopian public universities do not consistently contain such language. Another step would be to include such statements in strategic and operational plans.

Planning

The data showed that students were dissatisfied with administrative responses for diversity related conflicts, whereas students were moderately satisfied with religious diversity and related issues. Since the creation of positive campus climate for diversity largely depends on institutional commitment and appropriate responses to diversity related issues such as tensions and conflicts on campus (Gurin, 1999; Hurtado et al., 1999), the gaps observed by the selected sample public universities deserve attention.

University administrators also could improve plans to make their campuses attractive enough to be primary choices for students by properly showing commitment in addressing students' diversity issues. For this, having a specific structure working on diversity issues is critical. Since students choose to enroll in universities close to their home or choose to transfer when possible, universities could strive to make their campuses an attractive and viable choice for incoming students, and a place where those currently attending choose to remain until completion of their programs. This may be achieved by establishing safety and security for all students as well as embracing diversity and encouraging students to interact outside of their ethnic and religious groups.

This tendency to stay within one's ethnic or religion circle may pose a problem for students' life in campuses as they may be obliged to live in the same dormitory, form discussion groups for academic purposes in classrooms, and work on assignments with students unlike themselves. For example, in relation to religion, some authors suggested that it is a key factor that determines students' relationships in educational environments (Sharabi, 2011) and can affect the teaching learning process (Dawson, 2007) and create deep divisions among students characterized by conflicts (Figueroa, 1999). Efforts by university administrators, faculty, and staff could focus on demonstrating and leading cross group interactions as a safe way to encourage these activities.

One dissatisfaction point of students about their campus climate for diversity is the lack of diversification of the academic staff, mainly the instructors. Most public university administration have autonomy to recruit their academic staff and could take advantage of this freedom with a plan to increase the diversity. A diverse staff could assist in efforts to manage students' diversity.

In addition to diversifying the academic staff, a due emphasis could be given to provide diversity sensitivity and professional ethics training for faculty, staff, and students. One such effort was initiated at Jigjiga University in January 2020 by the U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa through a series of conferences titled *Peaceful and Purposeful Education* (U.S. Embassy Addis Ababa, 2020). During this conference students received motivational as well as sensitivity training and faculty received training on working with diversity in their classrooms. Future planning could encourage increased activities and trainings on campuses.

Future Research

The issue of diversity management in the higher education settings is still widely unexplored in the Ethiopian context. Therefore, other research areas can be recommended such as examining relationships between student management with other important variables such as students' academic achievement, management of academic staff, institutional performance, etc. Research could be conducted that would bring a deeper understanding of the dynamics of a number of variables.

Comparative studies both internal to Ethiopia as well as international comparative studies could be conducted. Comparisons among Ethiopian universities of different generations or in different regions might provide an indication of different practices and experiences that have been successful and those that have not. Comparison studies could be conducted with universities in other countries that have found success in diversity related issues, especially those that have diverse ethnic populations. Since the issues with ethnicity in Ethiopia seem to loom larger and have a greater impact than those surrounding religion, more effort for policy, planning, and future research should be made to further alleviate the ethnic issues that lead to academic disruptions and possible harm to individuals.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study include the timing of the data collection and the scope of the study. The data for this study were collected during a time of unrest on university campuses creating difficulty in data collection and also a potential effect on the data that were collected. Tensions were high and it may have been more challenging for both the students and the faculty participants to be honest about their particular experiences and challenges. Even though anonymity was emphasized, fear of being identified may have affected the information provided.

The scope of the study was also a limitation since the diversity variables of focus only included ethnicity and religion. Diversity has many additional dimensions including gender and political affiliation, etc. These dimensions could also critically affect students' diversity experience during their stay at their respective universities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn. The campus climate for diversity in Ethiopian public universities is moderate on many campuses, yet dominance of some ethnic groups does exist due to student and family preference. Students generally have positive attitudes toward the diversity in the student body both for ethnicity and religion. The students indicated positivity toward exploring other ethnicities and religions through socializing with peers unlike themselves. Overall, the students' responses showed that experiences related to religion were not as negative as those related to ethnicity. The experiences of ethnic related conflict seem to support these perceptions.

Positive diversity related experiences, including relationships with peers and teachers, is a prerequisite for students' sense of belonging. The relative absence of ethnically mixed academic staff, mainly teachers, and the presence of ethnically motivated conflicts between students made students leave their campus due to a belief that they may be in danger of an attack due to their ethnic background.

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HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLANNING IN MOZAMBIQUE

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at analyzing trends of gender equity in admission and graduation, during the twenty years (2000-2020) of higher education (HE) strategic planning in Mozambique, to ascertain the extent to which gender equity is being achieved. I also examined a possible association between admission and graduation rates. To address these trends, I adopted a basic research design with three characteristics: quantitative, descriptive, and correlational. The sample consisted of the entire population of students, from public and private higher education institutes. The main conclusions are: (i) Male students outnumber female ones, in admission and graduation although in 2011 and 2018 female students outnumbered slightly male ones. This means that the system fails to promote gender equity in both dimensions. (ii) There is a statistically significance (at ≤ 0.05) and strong relationship between admission and graduation, meaning that the normal flow of students is under the risk of system congestion since graduation rates are about 63.7% of new admission. The study recommends legal effort to rule gender equity achievements as well to revise admission policy to make it more sensitive to gender equity.

OVERVIEW

Strategic planning (SP) is deemed to be critical for any institution. It can assist organizations, including higher education institutions, to face challenges, minimizing uncertainty, planning for the future, and providing sustainable advantages. Mintzberg (1994) defines SP as a "formalized procedure to produce an articulated result, in the form of an integrated system of decision" (p. 12).

According to Chang (2006), often, education policies are defined, among others, from the dimension of admission (i.e., participation, including gender and equity issues). Thus, "these dimensions are addressed (i) either as a whole, by program component or by sub-sector, or (ii) with target indicators by time range and with a few quantitative indicators" (p. 9). Since 1975, when Mozambique became independent from Portugal, gender equity is emphasized as a priority and the need to reach is reaffirmed through the Higher Education Strategic Plans (HESP) 2000-2010 and 2012-2020. Based on the fact that 2020 is the final year for the HESP 2012-2020, this study focuses on the analysis of gender equity, from 2000 to 2020, to ascertain the extent to which strategic planning is assisting Mozambican higher education to achieve gender equity in the dimensions of admissions and graduations.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The trends of gender equity are approached in two dimensions: admission and graduation. Regarding admission, Jurajda and Münich (2011) analyzed Czech university programs and they found that female applicants performed substantially less well than similar male when the admission rate was below 19 percent. These authors also found that men and women are similarly successful when the admission rates are higher. Jurajda and Münich (2011) noted that not only their findings are important for the formation of admission and educational support policies, but also that the Czech system is typical of several other EU tertiary systems that apply school-specific selection at entry. This mechanism also applies to Mozambique, where higher education institutions have similar

selection procedures. Thus, in this study admissions are represented by the total of entries to public and private higher education institutions throughout the country.

The second dimension, graduation, corresponds, according to DeAngelo et al. (2011), to the "expected degree attainment rates, the essential information by which to assess institutional degree attainment success" (p. 28). Therefore, institutions that are highly successful in retaining and graduating their students would be projected to have actual degree attainment rates that exceed their expected rates. In contrast, say DeAngelo et al. (2011), those institutions that are relatively less effective in graduating their students would be projected to have actual attainment rates that fall substantially short of their expected rates.

In this study, I compare the admission and graduation of men and women, using similar statistical data in comprehensive and noncompetitive achievements. The rate of men's graduation rate will also be compared with women's graduation rate to determine if there is any significant difference.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the approval of the first version of Act n. 4/83, March 23,1983 (the National Education System), higher education institutes have been responsible for ensuring scientific and technological training. Recently, the Parliament of Mozambique (2018) reaffirmed this aim through the revision of Act n. 4/83 by Act n. 18/2018 of December 28, 2018.

While some developing countries (e.g., South Africa and Namibia) have been adopting strategic planning successfully (Hayward, 2008), no empirical basis is found in assessing the trends of gender equity in higher education admission and graduation in Mozambique. Since 1998, one of the priorities of Mozambique higher education has been the promotion of "strategies aimed at increasing the representation of women among students" (Ministry of Education [MoE], 1998, p. 42). One of the goals in the HESP 2012-2020 consists of promoting "the expansion of and equitable access to higher education with international quality standards" (MoE, 2012b, p. 97). Priority strategic actions being implemented include "expanding access, taking into consideration the reduction of gender disparities" (MoE, 2012b, p.101). However, a diagnostic measure within the scope of the HESP 2012-2020 revealed "low efficiency of higher education institutes (i.e., the quality of products, graduates and research results is below the levels at regional and international level)" as being a weakness, whereas "uncontrolled expansion of HE" was seen as a threat (MoE, 2012b, p. 12).

Even with this great expansion in recent years, with 50 higher education institutes (19 public and 31 private) and a total population of 213,930 students, there is a risk of failure in promoting equitable participation and access in higher education, unless strategic actions aimed at gender equity are rigorously implemented (MoE, 2020). Hence, a problem arises that can be formulated through the following question: after twenty years of higher education strategic planning in Mozambique (2000 to 2020), what gender equity trends can be assessed in the dimensions of admission and graduation?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An abundance of literature explains different achievements of higher education strategic planning. For instance, Bacig (2000) and Hinton (2012) argued that, while most higher education institutes in developed countries transform themselves through strategic planning, many of such in developing countries have been struggling in that regard, or have not attempted it at all, due partly to their inability to understand, design and implement strategic plans. It is further argued (Hayward, 2008,

& Mensah, 2020) that although some of the higher education institutions in developing countries have followed the paths of their counterparts in the developed countries in implementing strategic planning, many others, particularly the emerging private institutions have not due to inexperience.

Inga et al. (2021) warned the importance of strategic planning in the academic and administrative fields in Latin America, evaluating the future careers which generate technology transfer. A similar scenario is also found in China, where the authorities grant relative autonomy to higher education institutes. As a result, Chinese higher education institutes are seen as being more ambitious in their respective missions. The university leaders, professors, heads of schools and heads of university offices have a strong influence over strategic planning (Hu et al., 2018).

In Malaysia, giving full autonomy to the public universities was seen to be inappropriate (Sirat, 2010), while in Nigeria strategic planning should be imperative in the management of higher education, and every institute should uniquely design its strategic planning procedure that fits its specific needs (Modebelu & Joseph, 2012).

From 2000 to 2005, Mozambican higher education reforms had started but had to be reviewed, since sustained progress toward the objectives of Education Sector Strategic Plan II (ESSP II) required more attention (MoE, 2006). It was considered critically dependent on the implementation of several policy reforms, particularly those related to sustaining reforms of higher education designed to enhance quality and efficiency (MoE, 2006). It was further noted, from the assessment of the ESSP II, that "graduation rate fell, compared to 2005, in both public (from 13.4% to 11.3%) and private institutes (from 11.4% to 8.4%)" (MoE 2012a, p. 98).

Regarding gender, it is argued that in the past decades, women, in most western societies, surpassed men in their educational attainment. Nevertheless, most of these studies examined educational gender differences in a single country or assessed them cross-nationally at one point in time (Van Hek et al., 2016). According to Hadjar et al. (2014), in many countries, gender differences in educational success are part of long-standing political, public, and scientific debates about education. Thus, while in the 1960s, the educational disadvantages of women were central to debates about gender, by the end of the 20th-century attention had turned to men. However, say Hadjar et al. (2014), the focus of the gender difference debate changed, and higher education was male dominated.

A study by Nyoni et al. (2017) identified three main barriers for women under-representation, namely ethnic, administration and personal barriers. These barriers are not only found in Tanzania. Another example comes from Turkey where it was revealed that many science teachers did not think there was any gender equity in science teaching programs or their textbooks, suggesting that there were no gender policies in Turkish science education. However, "they believed gender equity issues were important for students' science achievement" (İdin & Dönmez, 2016, p.119). Afghanistan is another country struggling for gender equity under war conditions. Nonetheless, amazing progress has been made both in transforming Afghan higher education and in improving the situation for women students over the last few years (Hayward & Karim, 2019).

Judging from recent trends in international data, it seems likely that "female dominance in educational attainment is becoming stronger in the coming decades" (Pekkarinen, 2012, p. 33). However, the experiences examined by Hayward (2008) suggest some conclusions for developing countries where the strategic planning process produced positive results.

While South Africa and Namibia made substantial progress in transforming higher education

(Hayward, 2008), in Mozambique, between 1992 and 2014, the higher education system has evolved from 3 to 48 institutions and developed from an entirely public system to a mixed system with public and private providers, and the system was almost completely concentrated in Maputo while now it is present in all provinces (Jongbloed, 2018). Starting "with just about 3,750 students in 1990, higher education enrolment has grown to 13,600 students in 2000 and to 123,800 in 2012, of which 34 percent are in private institutions, Mozambican demand for higher education is largely outpacing GDP growth" (p. 16). As a result, the growth of public funding is constrained and expenditure per student is eroding at an ever-faster rate, undermining the ability of public higher education to provide quality.

While Mozambique is catching up with other countries in the region, in terms of the number of graduates per thousand people, the mismatch of available skill sets with those in demand by the labor market is not being resolved. The state has responded with the creation of more public institutions-such as polytechnics-in the areas that provide a better alignment with the labor market needs and long-term development needs of the country. Given the limits of the public institutions in keeping up with demand, the proportion of students studying in private institutions is growing, gradually shifting part of the burden to family incomes. Private institutions, however, tend to provide the more lucrative low-cost programs, adding more graduates in areas that are already oversupplied (Jongbloed, 2018).

In South Africa, gender equity among students was achieved in less than five years, and racial restrictions were ended (Hayward, 2008). Additionally, says Hayward (2008), several universities in South Africa began to shift their academic focus from the arts and humanities to science and technology, with a target of enrolling 60 percent of their students in those areas. In addition, major financial support for disadvantaged students in the form of both loans and grants was introduced and continues to operate effectively (Hayward, 2008). In Namibia, The University of Namibia made major progress in strengthening its academic programs, attracting substantial external funding to rebuild its decaying infrastructure, encouraging faculty research, and improving university governance, including offering workshops for its council members (Hayward, 2008).

There is a presumable relationship between and graduation. According to Hunsaker and Thomas (2013), the nature of students in higher education is changing. Thus, underrepresented populations, specifically non-traditional students, comprise a greater portion of an institution's student body than at any point in history. Although the impact of this evolution must be adequately assessed in the graduation rate literature, results of "Graduation Rates and the Higher Education Demographics Evolution" indicated that "while selection criteria play a role in graduation rates, the influence of non-traditional students on graduation rates is also notable" (Hunsaker & Thomas, 2013, p. 29).

Tusime et al. (2017) found that the number of male graduates from public higher education institutes was more than double that of females in the same higher education institute. This study also found that admission to higher education was influenced by many factors that affected male and female students differently (Tusime et al., 2017).

However, these trends are not linear. For instance, Madara and Namango (2016) found that female undergraduate engineering students, although heavily underrepresented, performed as well as, and, in some cases, even better than their male counterparts, despite negative beliefs held by both women and men that women's suitability for technical subjects must be avoided.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the trends on gender equity in the dimension of admission to higher education in Mozambique from 2000 to 2020?
- What are the variations of gender equity in the dimension of graduation from higher education in Mozambique from 2000 to 2020?
- Is there any significant relationship between the admission and graduation rates by gender from 2000 to 2020?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will benefit the academic community, considering that the trends on gender equity, in the dimension of admission and graduation, as well as a possible relationship between these dimensions, from 2000 to 2020, play an important role in higher education policy making, strategic planning, and operational interventions toward improvements. The greater demand for explanations about gender inequity justifies the need for more trustworthiness of all decisions regarding higher education admission policy in Mozambique. Thus, if higher education sector applies the recommended approaches derived from the results of this and similar studies, educators will be able to better monitor and control the trends of gender equity. Hence, higher education administrators, planners and managers will be informed on what should be emphasized by decision makers to reduce the gaps of gender equity in the dimensions of admission and graduation. For the researcher, this study will help to uncover critical areas in the dimensions of admission and graduation that other researchers were not able to explore.

METHODS

In this study, a three-stage process was employed: (1) creating a data collection frame (based on the combination between the literature review, legislation, and statistical data), (2) collecting the data, and (3) analyzing the data. I adopted a basic research design with three characteristics: quantitative, descriptive, and correlational. While "quantitative data may be sufficient to allow quantitative estimates of program effectiveness" (Wholey, 2010, p. 93), descriptive character enables me to describe and summarize data, by reporting descriptive statistics through graphs. Correlational approach is adopted to assess possible relationships between admission and graduation (Lodico et al., 2006). Another important characteristic is the "evaluation research design". Evaluation is a procedure used to determine whether the subject meets what it is intended to achieve, using assessment to decide on qualification following a predetermined criterion (Chan, 2014). In this study, I adopted secondary analysis to collect and analyze useful information (literature, legislation, and statistical data) about admission and graduation in order to examine the trends of gender equity in these dimensions.

At the first stage, current literature about higher education strategic planning and gender equity issues in different contexts, including Mozambique was explored. By reviewing relevant literature, I "understand the breadth and depth of the existing body of work and identify gaps to explore" (Xiao & Watson, 2019, p. 93).

One of the data sources is the higher education legislation addressing gender equity issues in the organization, regulation, and operation of higher education institutes in Mozambique during the period under study. These materials are available in printed versions at the National Library of Mozambique, in Maputo, as well as online, on the website of the Ministry of Higher Education

(https://www.mctes.gov.mz/). In "The order of discourse", Foucault focuses on the procedures that regulate, control, select, organize, and distribute what can and cannot be said, establishing, by so doing, the "regimes of truth" (Marttila, 2016). In this study, I adopted higher education legislation because it provides general ideas on what policy and decision-makers want Mozambican higher education to be.

Another major source of data is the public and private higher education statistical data, regarding admission and graduation, from 2000 to 2020, available on the website of the National Institute of Statistics [NIS] (http://www.ine.gov.mz/estatisticas/publicacoes). According to Davis-Kean and Jager (2017), "since the goal of most educational research is to be able to generalize findings to the population of focus, losing the ability to generalize is a large cost of the primary data collection" (p. 507). Many of the issues, however, can be solved by using secondary sources of data, explain Davis-Kean and Jager (2017).

FINDINGS

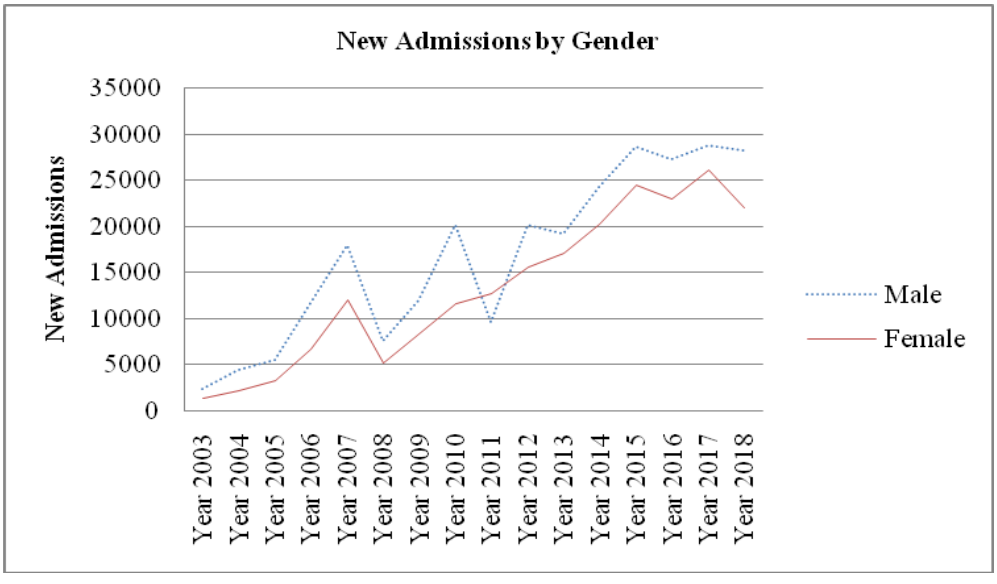
i. Gender equity in the dimension of admission to higher education

According to Langa (2018), higher education in Mozambique is facing an incipient stage, becoming a growing and more complex social institution. During the period from 2000 to 2005, there was also an increase in the participation of women in higher education, from 28% to 33% of enrolments (MoE, 2006). This "growth in gender equity was mainly due to a high participation rate of women in the field of social sciences at higher education institutes" (p. 51). Due to the expansion and the need for harmonization of higher education to meet regional and international standards, the Council of Ministers [CoM] (2007) considered it urgent to establish mechanisms aimed at improving quality and relevance. Thus, the National System for Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education was created, through the Decree n. 63/2007 of December 31 (CoM, 2007).

Subsequently, the PoM (2009) approved the Act n. 27/2009 of September 29, based on the assumption that the emergence of the new phase of higher education demands additional and recent legal efforts. Not surprisingly, in 2010, the CoM (2010b) found the need to establish principles, rules, and procedures for implementation of the National Qualifications Framework of Higher Education, through the Decree n. 30/2010 of August 13.

Figure 1 displays new admissions by gender. This exercise allows assessing the trends of gender equity in the dimension of access to higher education.

Figure 1: New admissions by gender.
Source: The Ministry of Higher Education [MHE] (2003 – 2018) and NIS (2003 – 2018).



According to Figure 1, during the period under study, male students outnumbered female ones, except in 2011, in which female students outnumbered male ones. This was because of the scope of regional efforts to increase women's access to higher education in the Southern Africa region, of which Mozambique is part (Southern Africa Development Community [SADC], 2010).

It may be those socio-cultural barriers in Mozambique that are responsible for women under-representation similar to those identified by Hadjar et al (2014) in Tanzania, and by İdin and Dönmez (2016) in Turkey even though legal framework, since 1975, respects the need to equalize opportunities between men and women, in all areas. From 2000 to 2020, higher education institutes in Mozambique had to formulate new policies and regulations, given that Act n. 5/2003 on higher education was approved at the end of 2002. As explained by Beverwijk et al. (2008, p. 370), "the institutions in practice could not disregard Ministry of Higher Education as Law no. 14/2000 broadly defined the mandate of the Ministry".

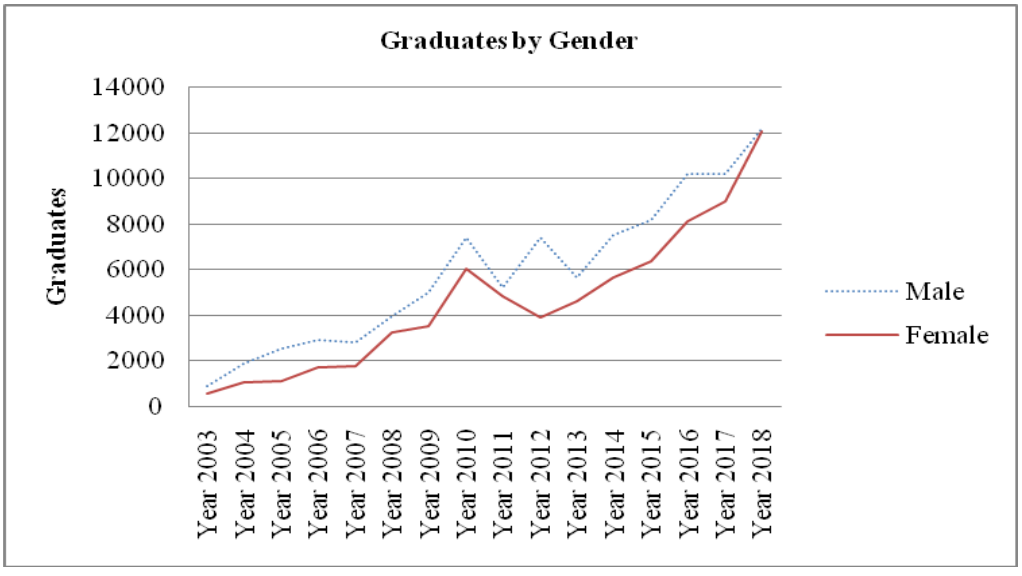
ii. Gender equity in the dimension of graduations

According to Carron (2010), strategic planning is different since it considers compliance monitoring as not good enough and prefers to concentrate on whether the expected results have been obtained. Indeed, to be able to measure properly the different types of results, the overall broad policy goals will have to be translated into more precise objectives (expected results) that must be reached during the mid-term plan.

Thus, for each indicator, precise targets must be fixed, namely the expected level of result (or indicator value) to be achieved by a specific date (Carron, 2010). Among the objectives of higher education strategic planning 2012-2020, one of the priorities is the "increase of graduation rates" (p.27). The indicator is the proportion of graduates divided by enrollments where an "evolution

from 10.6% in 2009 to 15% in 2020 (average of all higher education institutes)" is expected (MoE, 2012b, p. 29). Within this scope, the number of graduations is shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Graduations by gender
Source: The MHE (2003 – 2018) and NIS (2003 – 2018).



According to Figure 2, the number of male students is always higher than that of female ones, except in 2018. However, this instance does not necessarily suggest that there is a planned trend toward equity since the figures refer to isolated unexplained 2018 data, like 2011 (see Figure 1).

It is argued that there might be social and cultural barriers (associated with the nature of curricula) responsible for gender inequity. Although legally, there was already an instrument to regulate national qualifications, there was also an additional need to establish principles, rules, and procedures for regulating the National Academic Credit Accumulation and Transfer System. It was because there was a need to structure the curricula, to allow the mobility of students between higher education programs and institutions and promoting also the equality of opportunities between male and female students under the Decree n. 32/2010 of August 30 (CoM, 2010c). During this year (2010) two additional instruments were approved, by the CoM, namely the Decree n. 48/2010 of November 11, and the Decree n. 29/2010 of August 13. The first, according to the CoM (2010d), consists of Regulation for Licensing and Operation of Higher Education Institutes in Mozambique, whereas the second establishes the National Council of Higher Education in Mozambique, an advisory body for the CoM responsible for articulating and integrate the planning processes of higher education (CoM, 2010a).

Following the establishment of norms and regulations for higher education institutes, the CoM (2011) found (under Decree n. 27/2011 of July 25) the need to inspect higher education to assure quality and compliance with the gender equity policy defined by the government. Concerns about efficiency continue and, recently, by Decree n. 46/2018 of August 1, the CoM (2018) approved an amendment of the Decree n. 48/2010 of November 11, regarding the Regulation of Licensing and

Operation of Higher Education Institutes to adapt to the current dynamics of higher education, under the purpose of "regulating the constitution, operation and inspection of higher education institutes" (CoM, 2018).

It is important to highlight that the trend shown in figure 2 reveals that the performance of higher education institutes, under the strategic planning process and regulated by the legal framework established in the last 20 years, did not achieve the priority of gender equity in graduation rates.

i. On the possible relationship between enrolments and graduations by gender

To model a possible relationship between admissions (independent variable) and graduations (dependent variable), and making predictions, I performed a simple linear regression. Based on a presumable relationship between the two variables, I sought to predict graduation rates, based on the admissions. The results are shown in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1: Results of R square

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.995
R Square	0.990
Adjusted R Square	0.988
Standard Error	691.95
Observations	16

According to Table 1, the R square is 0.99 (closer to 1). It means that the better the regression line fits the data. It also means that about 99% of the variation in graduations (dependent variable) is explained by admissions (independent variable). Tables 2 and 3 display significance F and P-values, allowing us to check if the results are reliable (i.e., statistically significant). According to Creswell (2012), the determination of the significance levels corresponds to construct validity assessment, defining the meaning, purpose, and use of scores from an instrument.

In Table 2, the significance value (F) is less than 0.05 (0.000), meaning that I can surely use the independent variable (graduations). Thus, the null hypothesis can be rejected and, therefore, accepted the hypothesis that a relationship exists between the dependent and independent variables.

Table 2: Results of simple linear regression

	Df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	2	603096372	301548186	629.725	0.000
Residual	13	6225135.798	478856.600		
Total	15	609321507.8			

To find the significant unique contribution of admissions on graduations, the observed levels of significance (p-values) were examined (Table 3). It is expected that they are below 0.05, corresponding to the "probability level that reflects the maximum risk" I am "willing to take that any observed differences are due to chance" (Creswell, 2012, p. 628).

Table 3: Results of coefficients and p-values

	Coefficients	Std Error	t Stat	P-values	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	1216.114	333.161	3.650	0.003	496.363	1935.865
Female (Adm.)	0.092	0.041	2.254	0.042	0.004	0.181
Female (Grad.)	1.763	0.106	16.662	0.000	1.534	1.992

The regression line is y (Female graduation rate) = 1216.114 + 0.092 * Female admission rate + 1.763. In other words, for each unit increase in admission rate, graduation rate also increases by 0.092 units. It means that there is a proportional trend between admissions and graduations.

To examine how strongly admissions and graduation, by gender, are related to each other, correlation coefficients between the variables were calculated.

Table 4: Correlation between admissions and graduations by gender

	Male (Adm.)	Female (Adm.)	Total (Adm.)	Male (Grad.)	Female (Grad.)	Total (Grad.)
Male (Adm.)	1					
Female (Adm.)	0.96	1				
Total (Adm.)	0.99	0.99	1			
Male (Grad.)	0.90	0.90	0.91	1		
Female (Grad.)	0.84	0.85	0.86	0.97	1	
Total (Grad.)	0.88	0.88	0.89	0.99	0.99	1

Recently, Al-Haddad et al. (2018) found that "the increase in the number of applications received significantly increases graduation rate" (p. 21). According to Table 4, correlations between female admissions x female graduations, female admissions x total graduations, and total admissions x female graduations are, respectively 0.85, 0.88 and 0.86, meaning that the correlation between these variables varies from 85 to 88%.

Table 4 also reveals that male admissions x male graduations, male admissions x total graduations, and total admissions x male graduations are, respectively 0.90, 0.88 and 0.91 meaning that the correlation between these variables varies from 88 to 91%. The general explanation of these trends, in admissions and graduations, is that female students, compared to their counterparts, tend to be less likely to complete the courses.

DISCUSSION

Figure 1 reveals that male admissions outnumbered females in 2007, 2010, and 2018. On the other hand, incidentally, in 2011 female admissions outnumbered males. According to Fonteyne and Jongbloed (2018), "only one-third of students in the priority areas are women" (p.98). Changing this scenario demands strategic and articulated actions, to attain the global goal of assuring gender equity in all areas, including higher education. This might be one of the reasons why Albon et al. (2016) suggest newer models of strategic planning, emphasizing the interactive nature of planning, inclusive processes that involve multiple stakeholders, and coherence between planning and implementation.

In this regard, specialists argue that "long-term commitment to strategic planning, clearly defined in its broad parameters but flexible and adaptive in its details, can be productive" (Dooris, 2003, p. 26). However, "Strategic planning is not uniformly applauded. Some have questioned whether it is a vital process, a core function, or the latest fashion in the technique boutique" (Dooris et al., 2002, p. 8).

Much of the criticism of strategic planning "revolves around the differences between higher education and business from which strategic planning was imported" (Bacig, 2000, p. 3). Planning strategically in higher education attempts to merge the best features of comprehensive long-range planning with the aggressively competitive, entrepreneurial flavor of corporate planning.

The results displayed in Figure 2 are similar to those of Figure 1, considering that 2011 was the only year in which female student admissions outnumbered male ones. Whenever strategic objectives are defined, they will have to be made measurable – or Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART). According to Carron (2010), to make objectives SMART, a specific indicator (or several indicators) will have to be identified, for each objective, indicating exactly what is to be measured and, therefore, specific actions must take place to achieve what is to be measured. Figures 1 and 2 reveal that, in general, the admissions and graduations both display trends of male students outnumbering female ones.

If there was a significant growth trend in the number of female students, the gap between male and female students would show a general downward trend. Since this trend only occurs by 2011 and 2018, it means that efforts to achieve gender equity in both dimensions have not yet achieved the needed effects, although the diminished gap by 2011 and 2018 (see Figure 2).

Since the inception of strategic planning by higher education instutites in the 1970s, says Hinton (2012), it was considered an instrument to articulate a compelling mission and vision and to prioritize resources. In the 1990s, with increased demands for accountability, higher education institutes "were required to develop strategic plans to fulfill accreditation requirements and continued to be expected to demonstrate the extent to which they are fulfilling their intended mission" (Guerra et al., 2017, p.2). The trends displayed in Table 1 suggest that no matter how many male students are admitted to higher education institutes, they tend to influence positively the graduation rates.

Unlike the study of Hunsaker and Thomas (2013), in which they found that selection criterion plays an important role in graduations, this study suggests the need for future research to unveil factors underlying the graduation trends.

At the same time, higher education instutites are "challenged to continue to meet demands for increased productivity and efficiency without sacrificing quality" (Letizia, 2017, p.155), they are operating in an increasingly hostile climate. As Vestritch (2008) has argued, up to this point, most institutional strategic planning has been driven solely by neoliberalism and a corresponding market ethos. Table 3 displays p-values of 0.003, 0.042, and 0.000 where the only variable (admission rate) significantly relates to the dependent variable (graduation rate). Current strategic planning initiatives in colleges and universities attempt to address the challenges related to the purpose, adaptation, and efficiency of higher education institutes.

Tables 2 and 3 display significance F and P-values, allowing me to check whether the results are reliable (i.e., statistically significant). As such, in Table 2, the significance value (F) is less than 0.05 (0.000), assuring me to use the independent variable (graduations).

In practice, strategic planning in higher education institutes is non-linear, implying that although aspects of it may be common to all types of institutions, its application needs to be carefully adjusted to suit the institutional environment and circumstances.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FIELD PRACTICES

The initiatives toward gender equity are at the risk to fail since the rules and regulations do not specify the goals Mozambican higher education strategic planners and policy and decision-makers would like the country to achieve. Thus, there is a need to establish, legally, mandatory implementation of SMART actions aimed at gender equity. These actions must be rigorously monitored and evaluated. The existing gaps between male and female student admission and graduation suggest that additional efforts must be considered by decision-makers from public and private higher education institutes if they are committed to change the prevailing situation.

The positive and strong correlation between admissions and graduations implies that a possible increase in one variable does not have any adverse effect on another. Therefore, there is a need to control statistically the admissions and graduations by gender to minimize gender disparities. It is a challenge to higher education planners, policy, and decision-makers to come up with a possible revision of the admission policy to make it more sensitive to gender equity. Objectively, planners, policy, and decision-makers should establish specific goals, rules, and regulations aimed at ensuring gender equity, not only in the dimension of admissions but also to monitor the graduation rates.

In Mozambique, I did not find any systematic and specific follow-up of higher education strategic planning achievements. This is an institutional gap to be filled through practical interventions aimed at ensuring that these strategic goals are being SMART. Additionally, the legal framework on higher education in Mozambique lacks specific rules and regulations aimed at strengthening institutional efforts toward gender equity. Thus, the strategic planning agenda suffers from several weaknesses that undermine its potential impact in the academic literature as well as its ultimate value in the world of practice. In my opinion, there is a lack of theory that typifies and encompasses this body of work.

According to Wolf and Floyd (2013), while there are notable exceptions, majority of the studies, especially early research, adopts a rational-analytic model of strategic planning and conceptualize contingencies, like uncertainty in the external environment, are developed from this model. If such a model is adopted through the strategic planning process and the consequent pursuit of its goals, theoretical assumptions can mislead the efforts toward strategic goals accomplishment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

I would argue that contemporary institutional theory (David et al., 2019) offers a powerful analytical lens for exploring the gap in terms of both providing theoretical mechanisms and identifying priority areas to explore the implementation of strategic planning in Mozambique. Research suggests that strategic planning has been legitimized as a professional practice among both for-profit and nonprofit organizations, including higher education institutes, and that it involves professionals as those who do the work of making, shaping, and executing strategies (Rana et al., 2017).

The institutional theory calls attention to the previously under-researched observation that strategic planning is a practice embedded in the broader society that guides and enables human activity (Bryson et al., 2009). Isolated data, from ministerial reports or diagnostics of strategic plans, do

not provide any systematic view of the trends on higher education admissions and graduations by gender, although prior research has explored the context of strategic planning and confirmed the relevance of national culture to planning processes (Ali et al., 2008). So far, studies have done little to trace relationships between social context and strategic planning. While some developing countries, according to the literature, are achieving their goals through strategic planning, Mozambique is still facing an incipient stage of research about strategic planning.

While traditional approaches look at the sequential steps involved in the process of deliberate strategy formulation (e.g., goal formulation, alternative generation, choice), more recently, scholars have focused on the actual activities of participants and how they engage with these activities (Wolf & Floyd, 2013). This focus addresses questions about the role that formal planning plays in different types of organizations: Which tools are used in planning processes? How are they applied? How are specific planning episodes, such as strategy workshops, are orchestrated? How do participants interact in these episodes? How strategic plans are generated? What is specified in the content of these higher education strategic plans?

According to Wolf and Floyd (2013), the role of planning for specific organizations focuses on recent studies referring to the practice of strategic planning and describing the actual activities in planning processes. Since contexts are rapidly changing and modern organizations, including higher education institutes, are faced with new challenges. Descriptive studies play an important role by exploring how specific types of contemporary organizational plans to achieve their goals. Typically, such research examines either one specific organization or a category of organizations representing national contexts.

CONCLUSION

Despite the remarkable importance in the legal framework for higher education in Mozambique, within the scope of the legislation implemented from 2000 to 2020, I could not find any specific legislation that regulates actions aimed at achieving gender equity. This legal omission can undermine efforts for gender equity in the development of higher education.

The fact that in the dimensions of new admissions as well as graduations, during the period under study, male students outnumbered female ones. This denotes that the higher education strategic plans fail to achieve gender equity in these dimensions, although in 2011 and 2018 the number of new admissions and graduations for female students surpassed that of male ones.

In terms of the association between admissions and graduations, the data analysis reveals a statistically significant (at $\alpha \leq 0.05$) and strong relationship between the two variables. This means that unless there is an increase in graduations (both of male and female students) the normal flow of students is under the risk of system congestion since graduation rates are about 63.7% of the admissions.

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IDENTITY, INDUSTRY AND CITIZENSHIP: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON BASIC EDUCATION REFORM IN THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The postcolonial states of the English-speaking Caribbean inherited unequal political, social, and economic institutions from British rule. Although the region's forefathers made decided strides towards rebuilding new nations, independence and equality still elude modern Caribbean societies. The systemic challenges that the region faces, situated within the threats and opportunities of globalization, have implications for education and other social services. This paper explores the challenge of education reform by asking the question: What do students' perspectives contribute to the agenda-setting of basic education in the Caribbean Community? Using a grounded theory lens to analyse the site of Kingston, Jamaica, through focus groups and thematic analysis, the paper investigates students' perspectives on basic education reform. The research finds that students view identity, industry, and citizenship as fundamental aims of Caribbean education, but consider standardized testing as an impediment to achieving these objectives. The study recommends the incorporation of identity, industry and citizenship through progressivist curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment into the reform of basic education in the region.

BACKGROUND

In 1973, newly independent Commonwealth Caribbean (CC) countries organized themselves into the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), an organisation which seeks to strengthen the socio-political and economic capacity for its member-states through functional cooperation and regional integration (Integrationist Caribbean, 2020, Economic Integration: An Introduction, para. 2). Despite these objectives, socioeconomic inequalities persist, evidenced by the region's high rates of youth crime, violence, and unemployment. The CARICOM Secretary-General reported that in 2017, 80% of the region's prosecuted crimes was committed by youth aged 19-29, attributed to the high youth unemployment rate of 25% (LaRocque, 2019). That CARICOM registered 63% of the region's population as under age 30 (CARICOM 2012, Draft CARICOM Youth Action Plan 2012-2017), underscores the stymied capacity of member-states to develop their social services, leading to a vicious cycle of underdeveloped human capital, reduced social cohesion and brain drain (Almendarez, 2013).

The region's colonial legacy of socioeconomic and political inequalities, which pose challenges to youth development, has direct implications for Caribbean education policy. CC countries inherited the British grammar school model, based heavily on examinations and cognitive pedagogy (Bacchus, 2005). Scholars have argued that socioeconomic inequalities, manifested noticeably through first language differences amongst students, have had disparate effects on their achievement in standardized tests (Smith et al., 2020), whilst emphasis on behaviourist pedagogy has stunted constructivist teaching and learning (Cummings & James, 2014). The CARICOM Human Resource Development (HRD) 2030 Strategy seeks to improve access, participation, and quality in education, promote personal development and foster Caribbean citizenship, whilst at the same time remain

sensitive to global market demands (CARICOM, 2017). However, the Strategy's emphasis on labor market preparedness (LMP) may conflict with its objectives for quality in Caribbean education and citizenship.

In this context, postcolonial Caribbean education scholars have recognized the importance of adopting a region-centric approach to education policy in an increasingly globalized environment by incorporating native curriculum, progressivist pedagogy and assessment into Caribbean education systems. Though students' perspectives have been sought to address specific elements of schooling, existing Caribbean education research and policy has not yet taken a comprehensive, participatory approach to including student voices in the agenda-setting of education reform.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

This study problematizes Caribbean education within the Jamaican context and submits that students, as the primary beneficiaries of education services, should have a significant stake in the agenda-setting of education reform. It contends that the marginalization of Caribbean students' input into their curriculum, pedagogy and assessment is in part the cause of the crisis of youth identity, unemployment and socio-political disengagement faced by Caribbean education and social policymakers. The research seeks to i) broaden comparative education scholarship to the Caribbean context and ii) offer Caribbean policymakers a practical framework for the design of curricular reform. The study is therefore developed to explore the following question:

What do students' perspectives contribute to the agenda-setting of basic education in the CARICOM?

More specifically, the following sub-questions are developed:

a. What do Upper-Sixth Form students perceive as the major challenges with their schooling?
b. What are the recommendations of the Upper-Sixth Form students for education reform?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The title of Louisy's 2004 paper "Whose context for what quality? Informing education strategies for the Caribbean" aptly illustrates the quandary that Caribbean nation-states face in reforming their education systems that, whilst being sensitive to global economic trends, must remain relative to local circumstances. Trowler (2003) explains Britain's historical trajectory through four political and corresponding educational ideologies: neoconservative/traditionalist; neoliberal/enterprise; social democratic/progressivist and social reconstructionist, which are used as the theoretical framework for this research.

The neoconservative ideology places importance on maintenance of the socioeconomic status quo and views state control as essential to the socialisation of its subjects. It upholds this existing societal order through traditionalist schooling, where students are streamed according to academic ability, with priority given to conventional academic disciplines.

The neoliberal orientation looks pessimistically at centralised education planning, maintaining that state-administered education should be minimized to facilitate freedom of educational provision and choice. The enterprise facet contends that education should equip students with skill sets needed in an increasingly technology-oriented and global knowledge economy.

The social democratic approach views universal access to social services and state-administered education as essential to addressing socioeconomic inequalities and enhancing citizens' life chances. The progressivist adopts student-centred pedagogy, regarding learners alongside educators as co-creators of knowledge, integrating information across what would be viewed by the traditionalist as distinct subject areas.

The social reconstructionist perspective considers education as instrumental to positive societal change. It contends that dialogue and development of critical thinking faculties in the classroom are crucial for challenging traditionalist norms and for social transformation.

This typology is used to frame the literature on the course of education and social policy in the Caribbean, as well as to discuss the research findings, policy recommendations and conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education in British Caribbean Colonial and Postcolonial Society

Socioeconomic and political systems in British Caribbean colonial society were reminiscent of neoconservative, traditionalist and enterprise aims. Education was originally reserved for owners of sugar plantations (Turner, 1997), who reckoned that expanding this service would 'unfit [enslaved people] for that role in life that must necessarily be theirs' (Jules, 2008, p. 205). Though humanitarians successfully advocated for the abolition of slavery and expansion of basic education to enslaved people (Miller, 1988), education still served the planters' interests, providing peasants with the requisite skills to farm their estates for as much profit as could be derived (Oestreich, 2002).

The massification of education occurred with the attainment of universal adult suffrage (Buddan, 2004). Soon, the electorate started the engines that turned towards independent societies. Postcolonial Caribbean states adopted social democratic objectives. Through social services, they sought to equalise opportunities for investment in individual autonomy and Caribbean society (Miller, 2008). Though Caribbean policymakers sought to transmit nationhood and cultural heritage through schooling (Nettleford, 2007), education, like other domains of life within postcolonial Caribbean societies, remained anchored on the skeleton grafted from its colonizers, reinforcing systemic inequalities (Bacchus, 2005).

Postcolonial Caribbean States and Globalized Education

Towards the 21st century, national governance of education became increasingly challenged by transnational stakeholders, reflecting enterprise impetus to develop human resources for the labour market (Sen, 1999). Youth unemployment resulting from the 1970s oil crisis drew greater international policy focus to appraising how schooling equipped young people for the labour market, revealing that governments knew little about in-school processes (U.S. Department of Education, 1983, *A Nation at Risk*). Consequently, the market share of multilateral organizations in education financing increased, with growing focus on standardized testing and monitoring and evaluation of education programs (Lingard & Sellar, 2013). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development became an important player within this movement by administering the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which, in providing a transnational evidence-base of scholastic performance, held governments accountable to improving educational outcomes (Alasuutari et al, 2018). Though the region has established its own standardized assessments through the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), CARICOM and other developing states are

incentivised to participate in international tests like PISA to remain competitive in negotiations, project funding and qualifications at the international level (Miller, 1998).

Scholars refer to this policy shift as the 'global education reform movement', under which falls Education for All (EFA), an international initiative seeking to provide universal primary education through multilaterally financed development projects (Mundy et al., 2016). Though the EFA adopts social democratic principles in seeking to widen education access and devolve power to local authorities, in reality the ability of recipient small states to determine their educational priorities comes second to the economic conditionalities of project financing (George & Lewis, 2011). Many CC countries had exceeded the EFA goal of primary education through public provision of secondary education, which encroached on the region's ability to obtain international financing in support of its own education policy direction (Jules, 2008).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)'s *Education 2030 Framework for Action* establishes benchmarks for countries to devote 15-20% of public expenditure on education (UNESCO, 2015). However, this quantitative benchmark may not necessarily lead to improved educational quality. Though many multilaterally funded projects in the Caribbean have focused on developing tangible educational infrastructure such as classrooms, textbooks, and technology (World Bank, 2014), 13 Caribbean countries saw emigration of over 60% of their tertiary graduates in 2000 (ECLAC, 2014). It casts doubt on whether public investment in examination-centric, globally oriented schooling will foster the region-hood amongst youth necessary for the region's sustainability.

Caribbean Education Quality Research: Pointers for Reform

Education quality research suggests that decisionmakers engage more substantively with classroom processes and less with tangible elements of schooling for education policy and planning. Jacob (2002) contends that emphasis on high-stakes testing pressures educators to 'teach to the test' and confines students to narrow curriculum objectives, subject-disciplines, pedagogies, and assessment. Tyson (2003) underscores this view, positing that the replacement of the Cambridge Assessment International Education with the CXC in 1972 presented a dilemma to educators to reify Caribbean identity amongst students within the parameters of test-based learning objectives. Nevertheless, the traditionalist school system remains, where overtraining student-teachers leaves little space for honing innovative pedagogies. Faced with crammed CXC syllabi, teachers frequently resort to 'chalk and talk' instruction, marginalizing learning activities conducive to developing students' critical thinking faculties (Heap, 2011).

Some research has concluded that educators' training and beliefs affect their teaching methods and have implications for disparate learning outcomes amongst Caribbean students. J. Jules (2019) finds a correlation between lecturers' beliefs and values regarding English language and their pedagogical approaches to the subject. Given that most CC citizens speak a Caribbean Creole as their native language rather than the language of instruction, Standard Caribbean English (Roberts, 2007), the minority of native English-speaking students dominate teacher-student dialogue and perform better in formal tests than their Creole-speaking peers (Craig & Carter, 1976; Smith et al., 2020). These differences underscore the conflict between postcolonial inequalities amongst students and social democratic aims of equalizing opportunities. Further, the differential ability to finance private tuition and examination fees has implications for equity (Hickling-Hudson, 2004).

Given the multiplicity of interest groups in education policy, views about its goals are subjective and therefore require comprehensive stakeholder engagement. Although market research has engaged Caribbean students' views on various aspects of their education (Griffith & St. Hill, 2008; Davis-Morrison, 2018), existing studies have not engaged students holistically in both retrospective and prospective discussion on education reform. Although Trowler's 2003 typology explains conflicting political objectives faced by Caribbean decisionmakers, it offers little practical insight into how policymakers may conceptualize these challenges to design a strategy for education reform. 'Identity, industry, citizenship (IIC)', a conceptual framework synthesising key challenges and opportunities for reform, is articulated by Caribbean education scholars.

IIC: A Three-Pronged Conceptual Framework

Identity

Nettleford (2007) contends that civic empowerment through native culture is essential to nation-building in postcolonial CARICOM countries and to remedy crime, violence, and poor educational outcomes. George and Lewis (2011) support this argument, maintaining that the integration of popular language and performative methods, arising from students' real-life experiences, validates their contributions and enables them to engage confidently in learning. Action research incorporating Caribbean poetry (Conrad et al., 2013), indigenous music (Tucker & Osborne, 2007) and traditional ecological knowledge (Kalloo, 2014) has found to enhance joy and competence in teaching and learning, fostered sustainable engagement with the wider environment and renewed in students an authentic sense of identity.

Industry

The creative industries contribute significantly to the sustainability of Caribbean livelihoods and the CARICOM single market. This significance has been officially acknowledged by the UNESCO which designated Nassau, Bahamas as a Creative City of Craft in 2014, as well as Kingston, Jamaica and Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and Tobago as Creative Cities of Music in 2015 and 2019 respectively (UNESCO, n.d., *Creative Cities Network*). Situating the region in geopolitical proximity to major global actors in the cultural political economy, Louisy (2001) underscores Nettleford's 2007 imperative for identity-building in Caribbean education, positing that education should inculcate regionhood "…in a frontierless land of cultural globalization, a battle for the heart and soul of people" (P.A.B. Anthony, 2000 as cited in Louisy, 2001, p. 432). Through comparative education, Caribbean citizens may understand and exploit their cultural differences as competitive advantage in the global marketplace (Louisy, 2004). In light of the region's fiscal limitations, education policymakers may consider how to engender authentic national and regional consciousness in order to usher youth into creative entrepreneurial endeavor.

Citizenship

Hickling-Hudson (2004) contends that "[t]he 'Ideal' Caribbean person is not only highly educated but an ethicist; not just an entrepreneur but a civic activist; not just a citizen-worker with 'multiple literacies', but one with critical and highly-developed intellectual competencies" (p. 295). From the social reconstructionist standpoint, she argues that quality in Caribbean education implies equipping students with the skills necessary for active socio-political citizenship, understanding injustice and empowering them to tackle challenges on national and international levels. Caribbean education research has essayed innovative pedagogical methods to combat 'prescriptive teaching' by developing students' critical thinking skills, such as improved competence in and attitude towards

creative writing (Manning-Lewis, 2019). Nurture of these reflexive practices may cultivate citizens who can be critical of their postcolonial realities, engaging within social and political systems to contribute to Caribbean advancement (Davis-Morrison, 2018).

Neoconservative intent and traditionalist pedagogy in colonial education have endured in Caribbean nation-states, which rely on socioeconomically equitable decision-making for their sustainable development. This is increasingly imperative in the face of globalization, which requires Caribbean policymakers to strike a balance between local, regional aims and demands of the global economy. The challenge of curriculum reform to postcolonial Caribbean states is multi-fold and suggests inquiry using the IIC framework.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Choice of qualitative approach

This investigation is a grounded theory (GT) study, as it is designed using the essential GT elements, namely memoing, iterative coding, constant comparative analysis and theoretical sensitivity (Chun Tie et al, 2019).

Choice of Site

Kingston, Jamaica, is a representative location for problematising the local-global nexus in Caribbean education reform. Jamaica is the largest country in the CC, whilst its capital, Kingston, is host to the largest campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI), making it an important locus of education dialogue and decision-making in the CARICOM (Drew, 2016).

Sample

Schools and students were sampled using convenience and snowball approaches respectively. I selected four public secondary schools in Kingston (which I could access through my social networks), three traditional and one non-traditional, engaging students I knew to enlist their peers as participants. This sampling method facilitated participant recruitment, whilst the selection of familiar peers enabled authentic interaction amongst students. However, this convenience sampling, a result of inaccessibility to rural and non-traditional urban schools stemming from Coronavirus travel restrictions, served to exclude these schools.

In this study, Upper-Sixth Form students are of particular interest for their retrospective insight, being in the last of the final two years of secondary education. Sampling of this single cohort facilitated consistency in data units across the focus groups but excluded the perspectives of other upper-secondary cohorts, thus reducing the population of students from which to sample. As the limited scope for discussion of findings does not allow for in-depth analysis of many focus groups, the representativeness of the sample of schools and of students is limited. I address this by maintaining a degree of symmetry within the sample, selecting two coeducational and two same-sex (one all-boys and one all-girls) secondary schools. Therefore, though the findings are not generalizable to the entire Upper-Sixth Form population of Jamaica, they respond to challenges and recommendations in existing Caribbean education scholarship, offering rich qualitative evidence which can inform education policy in Jamaica and the wider CARICOM.

Data Collection and Analysis Rationale

The focus group method was chosen for its amenability to engaging disenfranchised groups

and novel, complex topics (Liamputtong, 2011). Despite Caribbean students' stakes as primary beneficiaries of education reform, they are considered neither specialists in policy, nor in curricular reform and consequently, their perspectives on this topic have been marginalized in education policy and planning. Given the popularity of focus groups in market research for feedback from existing or potential clients on products and services (Magill, 1993), focus groups have been adapted to policy design and evaluation, including curricular reform. The focus groups in this research test Drew's 2016 recommendation of meta-pedagogical dialogue by engaging students on their views about their curriculum. The informal setting of the groups imitated students' natural interactions (Liamputtong, 2011), in which response convergence and divergence are insightful for analysis (Kitzinger 1994). However, though focus group discussion enabled students to develop ideas together, depth is sacrificed. While interviews would have allowed for more detailed responses from individual, possibly shyer students, focus groups had to be moderated to ensure that diverse perspectives were heard, which, given time constraints, came at the cost of limiting the extent of what students shared.

Thematic analysis offers a degree of theoretical independence in that a theoretical framework is not embedded in its method, as in other methods such as discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This facilitated freedom to select Trowler's typology (2003) as the basis of the analytical framework. Moreover, the lack of necessity of a theoretical framework in thematic analysis allows for flexibility in coding, making the method amenable to open-ended conclusions and therefore to the exploratory research question. Though this allows for a broad range of possible interpretations from findings, it presents a challenge to determine which aspects and in which ways to present data for analysis. This is mitigated through the use of both theoretical and conceptual frameworks to discuss the research findings, as well as Attride-Stirling's 2001 methodological guidelines to ensure rigour in the analytic process. Finally, the presentation of prevalent themes is easily digestible for policymakers, who may not be familiar with text analytic methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data collection processes

Four semi-structured focus groups were conducted via Zoom with Upper-Sixth Form students, each group representing a different high school in Kingston, Jamaica. The focus group schedule comprised nine questions, corresponding to the IIC concepts by referencing a variety of local and regional debates, online articles, and videos as prompts to guide conversation (Figure 1). Students were placed in breakout rooms to discuss one of three questions per concept, and then returned to the plenary group for discussion, including recommendations for curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Participants' utterances in the plenary discussions were recorded via Zoom video and Zoom transcripts, which were re-played and memoed. These memos were interpreted by thematic analysis, using both theoretical and conceptual frameworks to discuss prevalent themes and to incorporate them into existing academic and policy discussion on Caribbean education reform.

Ethics

As with all data collection but particularly with that done online, specific ethical checks were necessary. All participants received an email to which they had to reply explicitly indicating consent, inviting them to participate in the research, and containing information about its objectives, recipients, data anonymization and confidentiality, recording and storage. At the beginning of each focus group, I reiterated this information and obtained consent once more (recorded on Zoom) from all participants. There is, however, a risk that individual participants may have broken this confidentiality, especially given familiarity within each group. Such risk is nevertheless minimized by the low level of sensitivity of the topic discussed. In order to maintain participants' anonymity

whilst differentiating between their responses in the findings, focus groups were coded by letter, while participants were coded by number.

Coronavirus adjustments

The shift from in-person to online data collection due to the Coronavirus outbreak induced various changes to the research. Online focus groups were convenient for following physical distancing protocol during the pandemic. The collection of data via the Internet, versus on school grounds, removed the need for school administrators to intercede with respect to students' participation in the research. Online discussion also eliminated transportation costs and facilitated flexible scheduling of focus groups, making the endeavour more feasible for both researcher and participants. However, the requirement for access to the internet and electronic devices meant that more economically disadvantaged participants were excluded from the sample.

FINDINGS

Student's Views on Education Reform: Challenges

Figure 2 encapsulates students' views on education reform by a thematic network comprising three Organizing Themes, each addressing one concept in the IIC framework and twelve Basic Themes which further analyse each IIC concept.

Identity. Identity cultivation was perceived as an essential curriculum objective with the Jamaican Creole (JC) language, indigenous knowledge, and Jamaican/Caribbean-ness considered as facets worth cultivating for identity-building.

Language legitimacy and standardization. Though students recognized JC as the native tongue of the majority and an essential part of Jamaican identity, they considered Jamaican Standard English (JSE) as the language of mainstream society. Despite mass enrolment in education, they perceived JSE fluency as lacking in most Jamaicans, and native JSE speakers as having a learning advantage in the classroom. Despite JC's cultural significance, they viewed JSE fluency as necessary for integration into society. "D1" posited that "[p]ersons who speak English at home have a learning advantage… they will learn more quickly at school, respond to questions more effectively."

In the context of the Communication Studies (COS) curriculum, which introduces Lower-Sixth form students to the linguistics of Caribbean creole languages, students discussed their views on the potential standardization of JC and its mainstreaming into education. On the one hand, students attributed their scepticism towards JC legitimacy to a crammed COS curriculum. On the other hand, students viewed COS as insightful to understanding the criteria of a language and to persuasively presenting JC as meeting these qualifiers. This empowered students to embrace JC as validating postcolonial identity in a global context. "C9" suggested that "[i]t represents embracing our culture, saying we don't have to adapt to colonial powers."

Indigenous knowledge (IK). Students discussed the uses of natural resources but were unable to provide examples of natural medicines. They attributed this indifference to broader Jamaican ignorance of indigenous identity: citizens aspiring to foreign rather than national selfhood. "W7" remarked that "[e]ver since independence, Jamaicans have wanted to feel a part of the world, so we try to understand everyone else's culture and leave ours behind." Students viewed local knowledge as a necessary curricular element to protect Jamaican identity and promote sustainable development within a global environment. Given this perceived imperative, students reasoned that

basic education should offer a foundation in IK, preceding subject specialization. "W7" proposed that "[c]ultural retention is important and only way to do it is through education. If not, this leads to cultural eradication and adopting others' cultures and we lose our identity." Though students perceived IK as important for national identity and economic growth, its inclusion in CXC curricula was considered unfeasible due to the crammed and repetitive nature of existing curricular content.

Jamaican identity. Participants discussed reasons for their stated (non)identification with Jamaica, relating this to citizens' character and national versus international achievement. Whilst students were proud of the international reputation of Jamaica's icons, this sense of identity was regarded as superficial, due to its implication of other Jamaicans rather than oneself, as well as its globally, rather than locally derived validation. "W8" thought that "[w]hen people talk about Jamaican pride they talk about … what other Jamaicans have accomplished for Jamaica internationally, not about what makes Jamaica, Jamaica. We don't know enough about ourselves."

Caribbean identity. Though students acknowledged social media and CXC History education as contributing to their understanding of the Caribbean, they did not wholeheartedly identify with Caribbean identity, which they felt their education should cultivate. "C5" thought that "Caribbean identity is a 'strong word' to describe the Caribbean because we are very disjointed.", whilst "C9" reasoned that "That should be the purpose of Carib Studies - to foster an understanding of us as West Indians."

Experiential knowledge. Ownership of Jamaican and Caribbean identity varied amongst participants according to the extent of their involvement in civic and sociocultural fora. Students who identified strongly as Jamaican attributed this to their extracurricular involvements; whereas most participants had little exposure to other Caribbean students, some identified as Caribbean due to sustained extra-curricular exchange with other Caribbean youth. "D3" expressed that they got "a sense of Caribbean identity from my fellow Caribbean Youth Parliament members. You know you can look at Caribbean people and say yeah, man... that's us."

Industry

Students discussed education and careers in the creative industries with reference to the Alpha Boys Institute (ABI), a private, faith-based secondary school focused on music and vocational skills training, as well as to the tertiary education offered at the Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts (EMCVPA), both based in Kingston, Jamaica.

Secondary creative education. In a discussion about music and arts education in Jamaica, students struggled to name and chronologize Jamaica's indigenous musical genres and saw this as evidence of the endangerment of Jamaica's musical heritage. After reflecting on ABI's secondary school model, participants considered their own arts education as narrow and insufficient for pursuit of a creative career. "C4" opined that if "[they] did a survey now and asked if people know about Mento and Niabinghi, most people wouldn't know about them or how to identify how they sound." Given that in Jamaica, creative education is not compulsory after Third Form, students saw the importance of its quality being improved in order to provide sufficient exposure to those considering this educational path. Students thought that vocational training, particularly music education, should be available at all levels of schooling and expressed the desire for more equitable mainstreaming of the arts in curriculum and pedagogy. "A2" considered that "the Alpha style of education is good... they have skills education and not just books because that is more easily monetised."

Creative careers. Students identified Kingston and the wider Jamaica as rich in creativity, another defining component of Jamaica's global identity. In this context, they viewed the creative industries as a dynamic and progressive sector, with prospects for their own entrepreneurial endeavours. Nevertheless, the creative economy was deemed as stigmatised and unsupported by society, which they attributed to the sector's economic instability:

> C4: "There isn't high demand for tertiary creative education in Jamaica because the common motivation is to go to college to get a good job and the perception is that a creative career doesn't provide a good, stable job. People are afraid of not having a good job."

Thus, though students perceived the local creative sector as emerging and important to Jamaica's economy, given the economic instability associated with the domain and their conviction that higher education is intended for labour market preparation, they were hesitant to pursue creative education at the tertiary level.

Tertiary creative education. Students regarded the EMCVPA positively as an engaging environment in which to explore arts education. Nonetheless, they perceived that their experiences of the arts as marginalized in their educational institutions, exacerbated the ignorance of creative careers, thus reinforcing a cycle of stigma and non-pursuit of tertiary creative education. As "D4" stated, "People do not visit the EMCVPA booth on College Day, because they are not familiar with career opportunities in music."

Citizenship

Prescriptive teaching. Participants' views on prescriptive teaching and its impact on critical thinking and creative writing skills were sought. Students associated the prevalence of JC as a first language as a contributor to the problem of JSE written expression. They thought that this challenge was exacerbated by teachers' nonchalant pedagogical approaches. Students viewed adherence to JSE and other examination standards as inhibiting authentic expression:

> D2: "We think of English as something we can't achieve as Patois speakers."

> C2: "Lack of interest from the teachers compounds the problem for students who already struggle with English."

> W3: "Teacher always say you know what you want to write but don't know how to write it. If you write in English, it may not bring across the same message you want, so you want to include [JC] in your essay … but exam stipulations limit that."

> A7: "Exams ask 'what is your opinion on...' but they will still mark it wrong because there is a specific opinion you're supposed to have."

Though students partially attributed teachers' indifference to top-down imposition of the CXC curriculum, they viewed teachers as ultimately responsible for achieving the balance between standardised curriculum objectives and innovative classroom pedagogy.

Civics education. Given the thrust for civics education on nationally appointed heroes in postcolonial Caribbean societies, students reflected on education about National Heroes, particularly

Marcus Garvey, and how it impacted their perception of the significance of these historical figures to national development. They maintained that course content on the Heroes was sometimes inconsistent and contradictory, leading to scepticism about their existence and the legitimacy of their national recognition. This was underscored by the differential knowledge gained based on subject choice, as students who pursued Sociology at the Sixth-Form level acquired more critical awareness of National Heroes due to experiential learning activities:

> D4: "To this day, I don't believe that the heroes are real ... When you reach a higher level, you hear a totally different story about the same heroes… the knowledge that people are getting now compared to knowledge in primary school is two contrasting stories."

> W3: "I went to Liberty Hall for a Sixth-form History trip, where they presented different African movements and Pan-African leaders. I didn't know that Marcus Garvey influenced a lot of Pan-African and Black leaders and movements."

Students therefore considered it important to develop the quality of compulsory civics education on National Heroes in order to promote deeper understanding for all students, regardless of subsequent subject choices.

Ethics and activism. Students were engaged in discussion about the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC) campaign for Native Genocide and Slavery and its Ten-Point Reparation Plan (TRP) (CARICOM Reparations Commission, n.d., 10-Point Reparation Plan). Most students were unfamiliar with the CRC's agenda, regarding it as mostly an economic campaign, without knowing its treatment of literacy, health, and psychosocial issues. Participants were doubtful of the legitimacy of other components of the TRP and how to achieve them:

> W4: "How strong is the link between colonialism and today's illiteracy rates in the Caribbean?"

> C2: "Look at Haiti's example – they only recently paid off debt to France from independence. Though they have poor governance, carrying this debt has had a huge impact on their economy and society."

Nonetheless, students perceived CRC objectives such as psychological and cultural rehabilitation as warranting pursuit; in particular, debt cancellation was viewed as essential to equitable economic development for previously colonised territories. Students viewed activism more broadly as a neglected yet important component of their schooling, perceiving the lack of critical thinking and civic engagement in basic education as contributing to socio- political disaffection amongst youth; moreover, they considered the inculcation of ethics, morals, and civic agency to be important in developing citizenship education:

> C6: "Many Jamaican youth are indifferent to Jamaican politics… we should be voting but we are not taught about politics, how it works."

> D2: "Reintroduce civics into the curriculum from first form. We don't have knowledge of persons who are serving us such as MPs, counsellors, the roles they play."

> C4: "Teaching morals from a young age could help inculcate activism."

Overall, students perceived identity, industry, and citizenship (IIC) as crucial components of Caribbean education to foster authentic selfhood, domestic economic outlook, and socio-political participation. Given the prevailing view that higher education should train students for employability, basic education was seen as essential for setting a universal and equitable IIC foundation. Nevertheless, the globalized model of standardized testing was perceived as inhibiting local imperatives of IIC cultivation through the CXC curriculum. That authentic IIC learning was attributed to mostly extracurricular activity suggests intervention in Caribbean curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.

Students Views on Education Reform: Recommendations

The discussion below presents students' recommendations for the reform of Caribbean curricula, pedagogy and assessment and contributes to research on the implications for education policy and planning of the region.

Identity

Language. In order to mainstream Creole languages in basic education, students considered incorporating JC systematically through bilingual education, gradually transitioning emphasis on education in JC to JSE progressively in schooling. This was thought of as equitable for the JC native-speaking majority, affirming the worth of both JC and JSE in society.

Indigenous knowledge. Students recommended increased IK integration throughout basic education with greater focus on interactive pedagogy and assessment. Recommendations particularly concerned education on natural resources to develop local agro-processing industries. To this end, students suggested the use of tropical plants in Chemistry laboratory activities.

Jamaican and Caribbean identity. Students suggested early induction and progressive formation on knowledge about CARICOM and Jamaica contemporaneously, with a focus on Jamaican and Caribbean IK.

Industry

Creative education. Students recommended more equitable timetabling of vocational subjects as against traditional subjects, with an increased focus on experiential, rather than theoretical learning activities. They also suggested increased expenditure on arts education infrastructure, such as creative schools, training, instruments, and equipment, as well as workshop and showcasing venues at both basic and higher education levels.

Citizenship

Civics and activism. Students recommended fewer lessons each day to facilitate progressivist and social reconstructionist teaching through the incorporation of JC and IK in order to develop their critical thinking competencies. They suggested the reintroduction of the civics curriculum with increasingly advanced citizenship education, both nationally on National Heroes, as well as through current regional campaigns such as Reparations. They envisioned a deepening of their critical thinking competencies through experiential knowledge, engaging citizenship critically through artistic productions and cultural exhibitions, or through employing social media for activism.

DISCUSSION

Caribbean education scholars have demonstrated the importance of fostering identity through indigenous knowledge and language (Craig & Carter, 1976; George & Lewis, 2011; Conrad et

al., 2013; Kalloo, 2014; Manning-Lewis, 2019; Nettleford, 2007; Smith et al., 2020), as well as industry (Louisy, 2001; Louisy, 2004) and citizenship (Davis-Morrison, 2018; Griffith & St. Hill, 2008; Hickling-Hudson, 2004) in basic Caribbean education. Students viewed standardized CXC examinations as impediments to the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment necessary for fostering IIC formation. This was reflected in the tension between national and regional priorities on one hand and global agendas on the other. Underpinning this tension is the negotiation between the concept of quality in education as relative to local contexts, and the universalist, standardised approach to education quality, imposed top-down from global actors. In the post-independent CARICOM, social democratic aims of improving life chances through education, as well as nation-building and regional integration are threatened by the global education reform movement and its focus on LMP. Although the HRD 2030 Strategy intends to reconcile local and global mandates by delivering standardised yet relative education, the examination focus of CXC curricula presents a conflict between the objectives of regional integration and global assimilation.

Despite CXC's transmission of native knowledge, IIC awareness was viewed as superficial and measured consistently against international standards. Jamaican identity was seen as propagated not through local education but through international recognition of Jamaicans' achievements, whilst Caribbean awareness was perceived through cultural representations on Western social media platforms rather than through CXC curricula. Similarly, though indigenous resources were recognised for their domestic uses, they were nonetheless identified with their global, enterprise purposes.

As such, mainstreaming of IK in education was viewed as important for fostering nationhood and region-hood, renewing joy in learning, affirming students' perspectives and their contribution to their own learning, and improving academic attitudes and performance. IK was also seen as important for sustainable development of domestic industries, with students seeing profound IK as necessary for building national and regional resistance against neoliberal agendas. In support of this, students perceived the mainstreaming of creative IK in education as critical to exploiting the cultural and creative industries as CARICOM's competitive advantage in the global economy.

Despite the limitations within its standardization, students recognized the Communication Studies curriculum as contributing positively to their understanding of JC as a language. Notwithstanding, students acknowledged that this understanding was in part externally derived from the language's international reputation. Equally, JC was stigmatized by its speakers due to the perceived requirement for JSE competency in the global economy. The elevated status of JSE was reinforced by the traditionalist pedagogies and beliefs of teachers as the custodians of the English language. The dissonance between JC as students' native language and its marginalisation in the classroom in turn undermined students' confidence towards critical reading and writing in JSE and their standardized test performance. However, progressivist and social reconstructionist pedagogical methods essaying equity for JC speakers through bilingual education, multimodal tools and inter-student dialogue have seen improvements in JSE fluency, as well as critical thinking and creative writing skills. The development of these reflexive competencies may facilitate more holistic perceptions of heroes and civic values necessary for youth agency in society and polity.

Overall, whereas higher education was seen as intended for labor market preparedness, basic education was considered fundamental to building students' identity, industry, and citizenship. This suggests the need for basic education quality research and development with a view to providing equitable IIC education to students preceding higher education specialisation. Whereas students

viewed standardized testing as inhibiting this formation, they considered progressivist pedagogy and assessment as facilitating it. Altogether, this points to the imperative for basic education reform in the CARICOM.

CONCLUSIONS

Students perceived standardized testing as inhibiting IIC formation needed to promote locally originated identity, economic and socio-political agency amongst CARICOM youth. They attributed this to the legacies of colonial attitudes towards indigenous knowledge, reinforced by traditionalist pedagogy and narrow objectives of test-based curricula. Students therefore recommended inclusion of progressivist pedagogy through experiential learning activities, which was seen as conducive to authentic IIC formation.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Methodologically, the population of schools from which the focus groups were derived was not representative of Jamaica, and far less, of the CARICOM. Further inquiry should widen the research population to other CARICOM countries, as well as triangulate focus group data with online surveys, the latter of which would widen accessibility and aid in representativeness of the findings.

Conceptually, although Caribbean scholarship and policy on basic education have identified gender as a cross-cutting issue (Smith et al, 2020), in-depth exploration of this topic was beyond the scope of this research. Moreover, the research problem could be considered from single concepts suggested from the findings, such as bilingual education, skills mismatch, and citizenship education, which implies the use of these concepts and related literature to interpret further research into this topic. Finally, although the research focuses on basic education reform through the curriculum, a sector-wide approach is needed for capacity-building in education. In light of the CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy's identification of teacher training as important to educational outcomes, future enquiry could problematise this aspect of education reform.

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Figure 1

Sample of Focus Group Questions

BREAKOUT SESSION 1: IDENTITY

Group 3

From primary school to third form, your curriculum has a national focus, learning about Jamaican places, people, national symbols etc. Upon reaching 4th form, you officially begin the CXC-CSEC syllabi, moving from a local to a regional system of education.

1. Are you proud to be Jamaican? Why/why not? Do you have the same feeling towards Caribbean identity? In other words, do you strongly identify with Caribbean identity or not really? Why/why not?
2. Do you feel as though you are familiar with the contexts of other Caribbean countries? If so, through what means (is it through the CXC syllabus or through other ways? Please specify)? Has being a student of Caribbean Studies changed your perspective of Caribbean identity or knowledge of the Caribbean? If so, how? If not, how not?
3. What, or who, would you like to see reflected in your Caribbean learning, content-wise and experience wise? Design a proposal (pick a subject, grade level, mode, etc) and tell us what the learning objectives/outcomes of your proposal would be.

BREAKOUT SESSION 2: INDUSTRY

Group 2

The Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts (EMCVPA) is the first institution of its type in the Caribbean region, offering education at the tertiary level in arts management, drama, dance, fashion, visual communication and art. Peek at a promotional video for the College here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fB0eh2DbjTc

Now, watch the snippets from the EMCVPA Visual Arts final year exhibition 2017, where students showcase the project they have been working on throughout their last year. Take a quick skim through the video here: https://youtu.be/zkflaMYYyC0

1. Is anyone in your breakout group considering a career in the creative field? If so, in what, to be specific? If not actually, then in an ideal world, would you pursue a career in the creative field? If so, which field? Would you consider attending the EMCVPA? Have these videos changed your opinions on the EMCVPA or a career in the arts? If you would not pursue a career in the arts, why not?
2. How does the current high school system prepare/not prepare students for creative careers? How would you change things to facilitate this? (Once again, tell us the mode, grade level, subject you have in mind, as well as intended learning outcomes). Think out of the box too - would you have career fairs? Tertiary programme fairs? Interviews or talks by Jamaicans leading in their respective creative fields? Be specific about what you envision and of course... be creative!

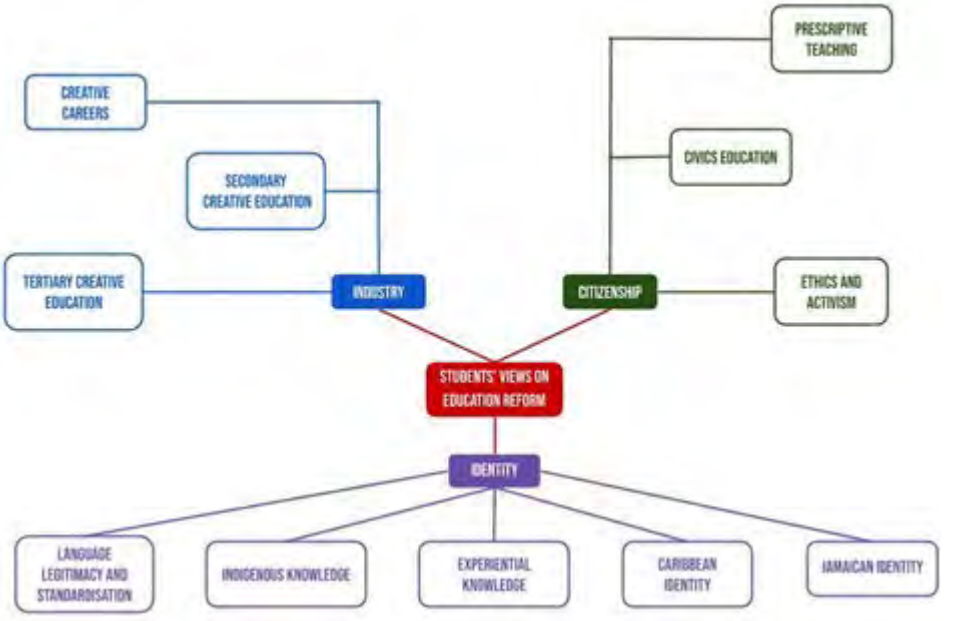
BREAKOUT SESSION 3: CITIZENSHIP

Group 1

Tanya Manning-Lewis, former English teacher and principal examiner and marker for CXC, notes that in her experience, she "...has marked thousands of transcripts and see[n] firsthand the devastating effect of prescriptive teaching on students' creative writing as many of their stories lack creativity and originality." (Manning-Lewis 2019, 394). As a solution, she argues that Caribbean educators should find innovative ways to engage 21st century learners that are digitally literate to enhance their ability to engage in the classroom.

1. What do you think she means by 'prescriptive teaching'?
2. Recall your topic for the Communication Studies IA last year and the process of writing your reflective piece. Do you think you could have engaged more with critical thinking? How could your teachers better facilitate this?
3. Would you recommend a completely different approach to writing a reflective piece being assessed in the Communication Studies IA? Given some of the digital creative tools and other software available nowadays, what are some of the ways you would recommend? Alternatively, do you have a completely different assessment proposal in mind? Make your proposal, specifying grade level, learning outcomes and assessment/activity, tools to be used... be as detailed and as imaginative as possible.

Figure 2
Thematic Network: Students' Views on Education Reform



LET THE LEARNERS LEAD: THE WORLDWIDE TRANSITION INTO POST-DIGITAL AGE, POST-PANDEMIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Research into the consequences of and planned responses to COVID-19 across education sectors globally indicates that the considerable disruption that has occurred has significantly exacerbated existing inequalities. Although many believe that substantial investment in educational technology is the essential strategy, very few of the 200 or so documents studied embody 'radical creativity'. There is a general reluctance to seize the opportunity for fundamental change, many preferring the safety of familiar arrangements, embracing a shared desire to 'get back to normal' and to 'catch up on what has been missed'. Drawing upon that investigation, while recognising also that education was already undergoing its elemental transformation prior to the pandemic, the paramount recommendation is that the learner should lead. This involves:

- *Primary education concentrating upon the enjoyable acquisition of basic skills and third millennium learning strategies leading to a confident readiness for learning responsibility.*
- *Emphasis being placed upon schools' and systems' role in strengthening the socialisation process by facilitating a range of artistic and recreational activities, extending to play and informal wandering.*
- *Self-directed and self-regulated learning, encompassing learner-determined curricula, becoming the prevalent educational mode, from early secondary onwards throughout life.*
- *Whether in class or online, face-to-face or at a distance, teachers being enabled to come into their own in advising, supporting, coaching and encouraging (but never directing) learners.*
- *Optimum advantage being derived from universal connectivity, in the context of the duality (tangible and virtual) of contemporary consciousness.*
- *Assessment taking the form of helpful personalised feedback, confidentially to the individual learner, embodying informal testing as and when elected by that learner, as opposed to selection based upon the results of formal examinations.*

Let the Learners Lead should characterise education's forthcoming, fundamental (and COVID-19 hastened) transformation.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is based upon desk research into the consequences of and planned responses to COVID-19 across the education sectors of some sixty countries worldwide, extending to the findings of recent empirical studies, together with a review of the analyses and prescriptions of leading international organisations and the observations of some educational thinkers. In all, some two hundred documents and presentations have been accessed and analysed.

After reporting some key findings regarding the educational consequences of and responses to the pandemic, attention is given to the social features: frequently acknowledged but seldom responded to in the documents. Issues of equity and equality are then addressed, exploring the perceived centrality of examinations. Attention then turns to how EdTech may best enable apposite post-Digital Age

education for all, worldwide, taking full account of inequalities, climate change, political instability, forced migration and other challenges, as the world emerges from the current pandemic.

This leads on to a consideration of education's forthcoming fundamental transformation – within a transformed world – acknowledging how COVID-19 has focussed attention upon the significance and current state of education. The discussion culminates in a consideration of how education will be both characterised and enabled by the learner, supported by technology and the teacher, taking the lead – into that transformed situation, made essential and possible by contemporary technology.

COVID CONSEQUENCES AND RESPONSES

Varying COVID-19 school closure data are reported. Bringing these together, it is apparent that somewhere between 1.5 and 1.7 billion students globally have been 'out-of-school' for anywhere between 3 and 16 months (as in mid-2021). Around 20-30% of registered primary learners and around 35-45% of registered secondary learners participated in 'some form of online learning' for some of the time when their schools were closed. However, some 250 million school-age children were out-of-school before the pandemic appeared while somewhere between a third and a half of all primary and secondary students have no internet access. Precise claims such as "at least 20 million girls are at risk of never returning to school" and "the pandemic will cause an additional 2.5 million child marriages worldwide" (Save the Children, 2020) are sometimes contested, just as the numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths are, in some countries, significantly under-reported. The Global Education Recovery Tracker (Johns Hopkins University *et al*, 2021) will enable more accurate measuring of the pandemic's impact on education worldwide. Let these vast numbers, while undoubtedly underlining the magnitude of the disruption, be treated with care – each individual learner is a special case and 'schooling' means vastly different things from context to context. Clearly, the consequences of COVID-19 have caused – and continue to cause – considerable disruption, exacerbating existing inequalities (within and between nations) related to wealth, gender, disability, ethnicity, geography, displacement and insecurity. The particular challenges that COVID-19 poses to girls' education is frequently highlighted, intensifying existing barriers such as gender-based violence, unintended pregnancy, the gendered burden of care work, and with boys being prioritised when it comes to access to laptops, computers and smartphones.

Few education systems worldwide had any kind of plan for dealing with a pandemic, in almost all cases failing to set standards for remote learning during lockdown, thereby allowing unequal (and typically poor quality) experiences for learners. Such plans as are now being developed and implemented are, in the majority of cases, responsive to medium-term requirements rather than long-term aspirations. In many countries, the central objective seems to be 'getting back to normal' although, as some acknowledge, that 'normal' was already becoming obsolete in early-2020. This widespread priority focusses on 'completing the curriculum' and on 'catching up on what has been missed'. Related to that, there is much concern regarding examinations, with many schools and education systems seeing themselves largely as selection mechanisms: to a varying extent, calendars, content and modes of examinations and assessments were modified, often with much controversy.

As the World Bank's Global Director for Education reminds us, we were "facing a learning crisis before COVID-19. The 'learning poverty rate' – the proportion of 10-year-olds unable to read a short, age-appropriate text – was 53% in low- and middle-income countries prior to COVID-19, compared to only 9% for high-income countries… school closures are likely to increase learning

poverty to as much as 63%" (Saavedra, 2020). This underlines the folly of focussing exclusively upon the consequences of COVID-19, given that a deeper and more longstanding challenge exists – and that more fundamental solutions are now feasible.

Christopher Thomas rises to this challenge in noting that "throughout history, periods of deep trauma have often been followed by periods of exuberant renewal… as we emerge out of lockdowns around the world to enter a watershed moment in global education" (Thomas, 2021). His recognition that "while the global agencies have spent huge amounts of money, much of the resource allocation has been driven by people in the developed world who have limited experience of living in the areas where resources are deployed" (*ibid*) is echoed (and taken further in the consideration of educational technology, below).

SCHOOLING AS SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

What has been lost by both learners and teachers during the school closures and disruptions of 2020-21 is reflected in a lack of social as well as learning experience – a friendship shortfall and a self-discovery deficit. This loss is irretrievable and that missing time of school-based emotional growth cannot be restored. Conversely, while many have suffered seriously from being denied classroom experience, some have been conscientiously taught at home and online. Indeed, one of the most common complaints has not been lack of education but lack of socialisation. While it is apparent and admitted in many documents studied that the social consequences of school closures are at least as damaging as the effects on learning, this is given very limited focus in terms of remedial action.

UNESCO reports that "school closures have brought a major disruption in the lives of children and youth, affecting their socio-emotional development and well-being, as well as their social life and relationships" (UNESCO, 2021). The World Health Organisation reported poor nutrition, stress, increased exposure to violence and exploitation, rises in childhood pregnancies, and overall challenges in mental development of children due to reduced interaction as immediate impacts of school closures (WHO, 2020). Reference has already been made to the disproportionate limitations of current online provision for girls. According to Anya Kamenetz, "many families of students with disabilities have said that their children receive limited benefit from virtual learning (Kamenetz, 2021).

As Rafael de Hoyos emphasises, "closing down schools goes beyond losing core skills – there is mounting evidence of its effects on anxiety, depression, and considerable harm to children's mental health and well-being. School closures have also been associated with an increase in suicide rates among children and adolescents…. the importance of teachers, and the recognition of education as essentially a human interaction endeavour, is now even clearer" (Hoyos et al, 2021). To enable 'catch-up', some call for learners to repeat the entire academic year, others for a focus on so-called 'key' subjects [typically language, mathematics and science: pursuits that computers are very good at!], yet others for longer school days and weekend and holiday schooling, while focussing upon the most disadvantaged and "children who have had their education interrupted or never started due to conflict, poverty, and marginalization" (UNESCO, 2021). All of this is well-intentioned but, ultimately, very depressing: no-one is calling for a catch-up covering, for example drama, music, debating, all forms of art, environmental and service clubs or recreational sport, let alone play or informal wandering.

Fengchun Miao and colleagues recognise that "students' physical, psychological, and social-emotional well-being should be prioritized over academic obligations" (Miao, 2020). Schools should involve teachers, parents, the local community and the learners themselves in designing and providing an enriched school-based social experience which offers an ongoing participative opportunity for all. In what they call the 'post-COVID-19 era', Miao's team call for the "redesign of school learning to include the best practices of online learning… a transformative opportunity for integrating technology into education at scale… teachers will know how to utilize the national platforms, conduct synchronous online lessons, organize video-based flipped learning, and use TV and radio programmes for learning" (Miao, 2020). While this certainly makes sense, let their earlier recognition of the significance of the social not be ignored in their prescription.

A similar point made by Stephen Merrill is that how we address learning loss "should be commensurate with the size of the moment" (Merrill, 2021). The need to rebuild the frayed social fabric of our learning communities, which study after study indicates is foundational to true learning, should be the paramount concern. Focusing on the social and emotional needs of the child first – on their sense of safety, self-worth, and academic confidence – is not controversial and, as Merrill emphasises, saddling students with deficit-based labels has predictable outcomes. As Anne-Fleur Lurvink explains, "by investing in social interactions, whether it is through collaborations online, social activities at school or group challenges outdoors, we can try to facilitate an environment where they can work on their positive relationships with their peers and society. After months of online education, this is what they have missed" (Lurvink, 2021). But this is what very few 'recovery plans' focus upon.

EDTECH – THE POTENTIALLY INEXPENSIVE REVOLUTION

There has undoubtedly been a significant learning loss caused by school closures. That the many remote learning schemes implemented during the COVID-19 months failed, in the majority of instances, to prevent these huge learning losses (and achieved remarkably little along the socialisation dimension) is, to a large extent, the result of many years of insufficient investment in education and systems and, consequently, having limited resilience to disruptions. Remote learning has not been found wanting – there are some indications of its success – but the problem was, rather, the inability of many schools, families, and communities to handle it properly – with restricted connectivity being a major but not the only limiting factor.

Related to that, Mary Burns notes that "digital technology has been viewed as a private versus a public good, a nice-to-have versus a must-have, a luxury versus a right… digital infrastructure is something rich countries get but poor ones cannot afford and, by extension, should not expect" (Burns, 2020). Indeed, differences within as well as between countries manifest that inequity, reflected also in the pattern of the confident originality of responses. As Lucy Foulkes puts it, "the pandemic will bring an unprecedented wave of innovation in online learning to all grade levels through the COVID-19 Digital Response. Rather than exacerbate the current digital divide or create altogether new divides, let us make sure that all of the world's learners, especially those who suffer the greatest deprivations, can benefit from these advancements" (Foulkes, 2021). Here again, this intention – seldom focussed upon in the planning documents studied – is endorsed.

Florian Klapproth and her colleagues are amongst many highlighting teacher stress and calling for their digital skills to be developed and for schools to be "better equipped with the necessary computer hard- and software, and more research on psychological factors contributing to teachers'

willingness to use technologies for remote teaching in the pandemic and beyond" (Klapproth et al, 2020). Langthaler's recognition of the implicit risk of the corporate model of education including "over-standardisation in terms of teacher training, curricula and assessments… (replacing) costly professionals by low-skilled operators" (Langthaler, 2021) illustrates the wrong way forward. She quotes the Human Rights Council's warning regarding the "risks associated with accelerated privatisation and commercialisation (including) the capture of limited public resources, lack over control of data collection, harmful practices of advertising towards children and youth as well as the long-term effects of handing over control of education to commercial actors" (*ibid*).

A tendency towards 'technological determinism' is frequently apparent, along with the notion that EdTech – though feared by a minority – is some kind of panacea. Based upon the documents encountered, education seems all too likely, and its leadership all too willing, to succumb to the superficially attractive and ultimately devouring power of big tech. There is wide acceptance that a considerable investment in both hard- and soft-ware will automatically enable learners, teachers, and education systems to be escorted into a brave post-digital new world. Even the most thoughtful EdTech strategies, such as the European Union's Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027), go no further than supporting "the sustainable and effective adaptation of the education and training systems of Member States to the digital age" (European Union, 2020) as opposed to facilitating the fundamental transformation of education (leaving training out of it!) in response to and made possible by that very same digital technology. For as long as EdTech is seen as supplementary, as opposed to integral, as a flavour rather than a basic ingredient, such misapprehensions will persist.

Some commentators have comprehended this reality. Sarah Fuller looks at the impact and the disruption technology has had on education in the light of COVID-19 and concludes that "the pandemic has accelerated the redefinition of ICT not only as a practical tool to support learning, but also as a learning space" (Fuller 2021). As she highlights, insufficient thought has been given to how the context in which learning takes place is progressively mediated by technology along a continuum from fully in-class to fully digital, distance learning. In the classroom, resources play a key role in determining which technology is available to support student-teacher interactions. In the forthcoming learner-led situation, the issue becomes one of the students determining which technology and which teacher input will be selected by them to support their learning.

Different learners will, of course, differ in their ability and self-confidence in managing their own learning – including their choice of what to learn. As Margarita Langthaler observes, "the pandemic has brought to light the pitfalls of accelerated digitalization in terms of rising inequality and exclusion… the digital divide and the power asymmetries associated… are especially evident along North-South, rural/urban, affluent/poor, powerful/marginalised and gender lines" (Langthaler, 2021). Her call for "the acquisition of digital skills and the participation in digital education… to be viewed as a basic human right" (*ibid*) is echoed here. Simple hand-held devices and economies-of-scale tablets (containing, for instance, all primary school learning and self-testing materials) offer the potential, if planned creatively, for this to be the inexpensive educational revolution.

EQUITY, EQUALITY, EXAMINATION

Education systems worldwide – based upon weeding-out and winner-identification – are the enemies of equity and this discrimination has been intensified by the experiences of COVID-19. Disparities within and between countries may now be addressed and, in time, overcome within an inclusive, equity-driven and, eventually, universal educational framework. Inequality springs from educational

systems functioning as sieves – as selection mechanisms – as instruments of competitiveness and categorisation. Once that role is eradicated – once the objective becomes thoughtful encouragement rather than step-by-step disqualification – the inequalities of opportunity and of outcome disappear. It is no longer a race between rivals but an expedition amongst friends.

As Simon Jenkins has long emphasised, "The obsession that school is about rote learning, memory and passing exams remains. Education for life, for jobs, self-reliance, relationships, health, money and citizenship was all someone else's job – be it parents, partners, priests, or probably the police" (Jenkins, 2020). The worldwide and costly absurdity of parents spending staggering amounts annually (over eight billion dollars worldwide is estimated) on private tutors, constitutes what Jenkins recognises as a shadow industry created entirely by the tyranny of exams. It is noteworthy that China is escalating a crackdown on its online education sector, forcing once high-flying start-ups to mothball plans for multi-billion-dollar initial public offerings this year. Xi's being keen to curtail the growing influence of internet giants and concerned about hundreds of millions of parents ploughing their savings into online classes, while subjecting children to increasingly onerous workloads in the false cause of examination glory, is widely but not universally emulated.

Roberto Unger describes how the "national curriculum shackles (British) youth… by its intimate association with testing for the sake of ranking, by the value it places on the memorisation of facts and formulas to the detriment of reasoning and argument, and by its failure to prepare pupils to use information critically and to understand both natural and social phenomena by discovering how they change" (Unger, 2021). His advocacy of "a form of education that prefers the mastery of analysis and synthesis to the assemblage of dead information; that chooses selective depth over the shallowness of an encyclopaedic curriculum; that embraces cooperation among students, among teachers, and among schools and rejects the juxtaposition of individualism and authoritarianism in the classroom; and that teaches every subject matter at least twice, from clashing points of view" (*ibid*) is very much endorsed.

Which raises issues of assessment and feedback, of examinations and categorising. Informal testing with helpful personalised feedback should be the norm, geared to providing the learner with valuable guidance rather than determining 'pass' or 'fail' or involving any forms of grading. Wherever possible, selection should be self-selection. Education should be cooperative rather than competitive. And, in those relatively rare instances where many students are competing for a limited number of places, their particular enthusiasms together with their broad educational track record should determine the decision – rather than any kind of reliance upon one-off examination scores alone. As opposed to training, educational performance should be unlocked from future earnings, occupational status, and convivial working conditions: if necessary, during the transitional years, positive discrimination at selection points should be harnessed in the cause of equity (Douse, 2013).

The desire to administer diagnostic tests to identify the lag with which students are returning and to implement a learning recovery plan are understandable and, indeed, compassionate in responding to the learning needs of poor and vulnerable children. But, as Ron Berger puts it, "our obsessive need to measure academic progress and loss to the decimal point – an enterprise that feels at once comfortably scientific and hopelessly subjective – is also woefully out of tune with the moment… If there is a pressing need for measurement, it is in the reckoning of the social, emotional, and psychological toll of the last 12 months" (Berger, 2021). Similarly, it is not so much the three hundred or so untaught units of curriculum but those missing months of school-based socialisation

that cannot be restored and simply adding, say, three extra hours of traditional teaching every week for the coming academic year is no kind of answer.

Andreas Schleicher recommends that "countries need to use the momentum to reconfigure learning environments to educate learners for their future, not our past" (Schleicher, 2021). His call to build on the ongoing efforts to establish a future-oriented infrastructure for online and remote learning, and to continue to develop the capacity of students and teachers to learn and to teach in that way makes good sense. As he recognises, "effective learning out of school during the pandemic placed much greater demands on autonomy, capacity for independent learning, executive functioning and self- monitoring... there are benefits to students in expanding their learning time and learning opportunities beyond the walls of the school by being able to learn using a variety of modalities of distance learning" (*ibid*). But, to the OECD Director's recognition that "it is vital that teachers become active agents for change, not just in implementing technological and social innovations, but in designing them too" (*ibid*) we add 'and learners': even these wide words of his fail to reach beyond the pre-Digital Age of teacher-led education.

EDUCATION'S TRANSFORMATION

While many assume that schooling functions and is funded to prepare forthcoming generations for the world of work, and while some contend that it should be aimed at the wider purpose of preparation for life, there is (at least in the documents examined) limited recognition of how both work and life are changing dramatically, and how this should best be embodied in post-Digital Age education. Contemporary technology has changed – and will continue to re-shape – both employment specifically and human existence generally. The individual worker has agency and discretion previously undreamed of – and this could and should be reflected in educational systems and settings. The individual citizen is a fingertip away from a universe of information and within seeing and hearing (with instantaneous translation) distance of several billion fellow world citizens: a blossoming and potentially mutually supportive community of teachers and learners.

Yet, as the third millennium adventurously unfolds, we cling doggedly to second millennium securities. The school as we know it is a creation of the Industrial Revolution (IR). Rather than respond imaginatively to 4IR, the bulk of the Covid recovery prescriptions are still set in terms of herding learners into physical spaces to be 'taught at' in order thereafter to be 'examined at'. And, far from stressing the benefits of socialisation, the emphasis throughout the documents reviewed is on completing fairly arbitrary curricula and undergoing punishing and unreliable selection processes. Rather than seizing the opportunity offered by COVID-19 to grapple with the underlying challenges in creative and courageous ways, the preponderance of planners and decision-makers have opted for safety, seeking only the now outdated familiar, eschewing the opportunity that the pandemic presents for a thoroughgoing updating of learning and teaching in the context of post-Digital Age possibilities and imperatives.

Much has been thought, discussed, and published regarding the consequences of contemporary technology for work, for society generally and for human consciousness (see Douse and Uys, 2020). For example, the World Economic Forum's Klaus Schwab described the 'great reset' involving our 'collective imagination' and representing a "new equilibrium among political, economic, social and environmental systems toward common goals wherein this current revolution, which began with the digital revolution in the mid-1990s, is "characterized by a fusion of technologies" (Schwab, 2021).

The Brookings Institute calls for "rebuilding economic and social activity in a manner that protects public health, promotes societal healing and preserves the environment" (Brookings, 2021). Ida Auken imagined many of the crises of the early 21st century – "lifestyle diseases, climate change, the refugee crisis, environmental degradation, completely congested cities, water pollution, air pollution, social unrest and unemployment" – being resolved through new technologies (Auken, 2021).

In terms of a radical model for society, Paul Collier asserts that, "in forging common purposes, not only has everyone the right to participate, but they also have mutual obligations to contribute to those purposes. It is these obligations that generate the rights" (Collier, 2021). Contributing to common purposes provides the dignity of mutuality: everyone has an active role to play. But to contribute, people must be in a position to do so, and after decades of negligence and outdated educational provision, most are not. Rectifying that neglect, claims Collier, is the foremost practical post-Covid priority. "Equality of condition would involve parity of respect; a policy agenda that the many have set; parity of agency in contributing to it; and parity in the ability of places and occupations to make their contribution" (Collier, 2021). Within schools, within countries, and internationally, the educational visions, strategies, systems, and the allocation of human and financial resources should be geared to achieving, for all learners, that genuine equality of condition, that worldwide parity of participation. Universal connectivity, along with the elimination of education as enforced exam-driven inequality, now makes that possible, nay indispensable.

Suffice sadly to say, none of these lofty aspirations were apparent in the documented impacts, prognostications, and aspirations upon which this present paper is based. Moving towards a zero-carbon society low on consumption, high on well-being, confidently confronting the existential challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, seems less apparent in these COVID-19 related documents than it was in their visions and missions and five-year plans issued in pre-pandemic 2016-19. Across all of the papers and statements reviewed, although many fine things have been written, said, planned and, in some cases, begun, there is surprising little of what might be called radical creativity. Within schools, within countries, and internationally, the educational visions, strategies, systems, and the allocation of human and financial resources should be geared to achieving, for all learners, genuine equality of respect, opportunity, participation, outcome and, as identified by Paul Collier, condition. In only a very small minority of the 200+ documents studied was any deep consideration of how education should respond to – and make best use of – the evolving post-Digital world economy and ways of living encountered.

LEARNERS LEADING – TEACHERS SUPPORTING

For example, it is rather remarkable that a far-sighted analysis of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the futures of education notes that "developers need to move beyond developing tools that aim or claim to teach better than teachers, to develop instead AI tools that augment teacher capacity helping them to become the best teachers that they can be" (Miao *et al*, 2021) fails to mention learners. At least they add that "new education models are needed to put students at the centre, to move away from a focus on memorising content, to integrate the digital and the analogue, and to foster human cognitive, socio-emotional and critical skills, all of which might – with foresight and careful attention – be enabled by AI and other digital technologies" (*ibid*). Being 'at the centre' is possibly an improvement on 'at the periphery' but it is not actually 'in the vanguard.'

As Sam Mohsen recognises, "the new normal requires at least a hybrid teaching style in which online lessons and courses are held to the same standards as traditional ones. Adding that "with school lockdowns, parents had to take on the role of home schoolteachers and many of them were even less prepared than educators to keep their children on track from an academic perspective" (Mohsen, 2021). Talk of 'Personal Learning Plans,' tailored to each individual learner and monitored regularly by learner and teacher(s), are also well-intentioned. However, given that this arrangement inevitably places the main responsibility upon the learner, it necessitates an unacknowledged movement away from traditional teacher-driven and externally ordered learning, not just during 'catch-up' but more generally.

While Sarah Fuller appreciates the changing role of teachers from "recipients of training and materials to be translated into quality teaching… towards recognising that they are co-creators of education systems' responses to the pandemic and future crises" (Fuller, 2021), here again there is no recognition of this applying to learners: resilient education systems cannot be built without both adequately supported teachers and properly involved students. Related to the former, Ahmed Abdelhafez addresses the "technological fixes of teacher education and professional development during the COVID-19 pandemic" including (a) providing remote teaching support, (b) strategies for adapting to change, (c) alternative practicum experiences, and (d) supporting education for early childhood. As with other valuable contributions to the immediate challenges, his review does not extend to learner-led education let alone to the forthcoming fundamental transformation.

That worldwide dimension is vital. In the same way, contemporary technology enables the real-time partaking of educational experiences. No longer confined to specific spaces, the world has become every student's resource. All learners and all teachers may now visit, explore, share experiences, and learn and teach in creative harmony with all others. One example of how this might manifest itself is presented in an imagining of 'the global school':

> "There are about thirty teenagers in the room. Most are deeply involved with their handheld devices, type-tapping away, speaking, listening, photographing, manipulating graphics, researching, up- and down-loading, dispatching items for instant printing… Some are finalising assignments for submission; one group is building up a family history diagram on a wall screen; a teacher is attending face-to-face to another's question about genealogy. But this is not the entire class – some forty others, including mature students, are tied in from locations elsewhere, mostly far overseas, all having closely followed the teacher's introduction and, along with those physically present, proceeded in their selected direction at their own pace. This is a Caribbean History course, focussing today on indentured plantation workers. Interviews with some of their descendants are available, along with film, historical documents, virtual museum visits and other relevant materials. The learners are labouring in the fields, encountering the economics of sugar, perceiving it from the plantation owners' perspectives, and then from the workers' families', and each is reflecting upon the overall phenomenon" (Douse and Uys, 2018). Needless to say, all of these participating and self-motivated learners will have elected to take part in this particular programme – no-one made them do it and there is certainly no 'pass' or 'fail' examination at the end! Self-directed and self-regulated learning should, from early secondary at the latest, become the prevalent educational mode. This in turn, necessitates a transformation in the teacher's role, believing that "…a readily-achieved and confident familiarity

with simple devices and straightforward systems will enable teachers to focus on creative approaches, individual support and responsive coaching" (Douse and Uys, 2021). Whether in class or online, face-to-face or at a distance, teachers will come into their own in guiding, coaching and encouraging learners, with their pre-service training and continuous professional development equipping them for this evolving role.

CONCLUSIONS

As we emerge from COVID-19, those who plan, finance, manage, deliver and evaluate education should be responsibly adventurous and constructively creative to the point of incredulity. As communities collectively conceive a more radical way of living together on this fragile earth, we must facilitate the emergence of educational arrangements and processes that match those lofty aspirations. As already emphasised, many of these developments were already starting to happen before the pandemic struck and COVID-19's consequences should ideally have given great impetus to that ongoing educational transformation. Instead, there are many indications that the planned 'recovery' is less ambitious and rather more conventional that the intentions set out in documents, debated at conferences and identified as 'goals' and 'visions' and 'missions' a couple of years ago,

As the central feature of this transition, self-directed and self-regulated learning should, from early secondary at the latest, become the prevalent educational mode. Whether in class or online, face-to-face or at a distance, teachers should be enabled to come into their own in guiding, coaching and encouraging students. All learners and all teachers should take the online opportunities to visit, explore, share experiences and learn and support learning in creative harmony with all others. Resilience – particularly in relation to social support – should, from now onwards, be built into the transformed educational institutions and systems, at all levels from schools, through universities and professional associations, to national and international supervisory, support and funding agencies.

Undoubtedly, the learners should lead. Reflecting the nature of third millennium society, work, relationships and consciousness, the learners should determine what they wish to understand, become proficient at, experience and enjoy, along with how – supported by their teachers – they wish this to be achieved. The entirety of contemporary technology, with which they are increasingly familiar, is at their disposal. Moreover, as this paper's title emphasises, this self-directed and personally determined learning is not just about self-fulfilment and individual understanding. Certainly, the learners should lead. But in what direction should they lead? The learners should, it is contended, lead the transition into post-Digital Age, post-pandemic education worldwide.

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