

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Volume 18, Combined Numbers 1 & 2 of Mosenodi. This extended volume contains six articles covering empirical, theoretical and policy topics that are accessible to a broad readership. Norbert Musekiwa's paper is a political economic analysis of teaching in Zimbabwe during the 2000-2008 socio-economic crises, highlighting the catastrophic consequences of wanton neoliberalism on basic education provision, teacher welfare, morale, and professionalism in the classroom. It describes and explains how relative privation and the resultant anomie (means-end discrepancies) during the crisis drove Zimbabwean public school teachers' to invent offensive and defensive survival tactics, including emigration, illicit trading, rationalized presenteeism and absenteeism, moonlighting, sham agribusiness, palm greasing, alliance formation and patronage. The teachers' agency in the face of meager pedagogical resources is duly acknowledged in the paper. Findings of this research are a stark reminder, lest we forget, that atrocious pauperization of teachers is antithetical to the neoliberal goal of economic growth through human capital development.

Mafela and Ramarogo's paper offers a remarkable perspective on the intersections of gender, equity, choice and non-formal education (night schooling), situating them within global and local policy cues on education for all. The authors use data from interviews, questionnaire survey and a case study to illuminate the textured and gendered experiences of past and current students regarding night school ethos, processes and outcomes; influences on enrolment and achievement; and the need for quality assurance and continuous quality improvement of non-formal education sector in Botswana. The central argument of the paper is the need to problematize and address impediments to educational equity, access and participation for non-formal learners, given that educational status is highly correlated with labour market participation and improvement of life chances.

A host of variables may directly or indirectly influence academic outcome. To determine which variables are possible predictors of, or highly correlated with, academic performance, it is important to employ a powerful statistical model that allows for the control of potentially confounding or mediating variables while holding others constant. This is the method adopted by Maule-Sethora, Mogapi and Mudongo in their paper. In this empirical paper, the authors used the 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) data to isolate school-related variables that are highly correlated with student reading achievement at Standard 6 across private and public schools in Botswana. Their findings show that bullying frequency, inadequate home amenities, and lack of parental support significantly affect public school students' reading achievement more than their private school counterparts. An exploration of the relations between background variables and academic outcome as reported in this paper is useful for learner needs assessment, teaching adaptation, as well as linguistic modification of assessments.

Certain skills are needed for life, work, love and learning. They are the bedrocks and building blocks of other skills needed to thrive vocationally, socially, and personally. These skills go by different names: soft skills, interpersonal skills, life skill, etc. Supporting the acquisition and improvement of these skills can significantly improve job opportunity, productivity and quality, with implications for personal and societal well-being. Nenty and Phuti's paper discusses in detail how to operationalize, optimize and assess soft skills across educational levels.

Due to rampant prejudice, classism, deficit theory and hegemonic claims about "culture of poverty", issues of environmental constraints, inequities, and relative isolation are rarely taken into account when describing and explaining the academic performance of children living in remote communities. Absenteeism and poor student outcomes in such places are perversely viewed as culturally transmitted and therefore, normal and expected. Kebalepile's paper, drawn from a progressive action research, is demonstrably counter-hegemonic. It illustrates ways to improve school attendance and academic

performance of pupils in remote areas, focusing on educational inputs and processes, including school ethos and leadership. Her papers shows that the challenges associated with pupil retention, progression and achievement in remote areas are both managerial and pedagogical. Confronting them requires a complex mix of community engagement, ethical interactions, needs assessment, focused efforts, regular reflection, instructional imagination, accountability and dissemination of good practice.

Mokgoare and Nleya's paper prods teachers to keep abreast of advances in educational technologies and to incorporate a wide range of personal digital resources such as mobile phone into learning and teaching designs. The paper reviews pertinent literature on effective learning and teaching in a digital age. Ways in which mobile phone technologies are being creatively deployed to support and enrich student learning, research and collaboration in schools are explicated in the paper. The main takeaway of the paper is that effective use mobile phone technology in secondary schools requires teachers, curriculum developers and school leaders to think creatively, programmatically and contextually.

This volume also features a book review. Judy Seligmann's *Academic Literacy for Education Students* is reviewed by Daniel Kasule. The review is lively, accessible, valuable and highly recommended to students and teachers of academic literacy.

The editorial team hopes you enjoy this issue, and looks forwards to receiving your submission. Submissions are welcome at any time and can be forwarded by email to (BERA@mopipi.ub.bw).

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