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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SYNERGETIC BLUNT SIDE OF NON-TRANSFORMATIVE FUNCTIONALITY IN THE EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE: A PRECURSOR TO THE DETERIORATING PERSPECTIVE IN THE PEDAGOGICAL DISCOURSE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The radical education qualifies the functionality that establish and develop human potential towards anticipations, and preparations for the country's generational empowerment. The education sector stands as a barometer and a foundation to various sectors of the country both in public and private, through which the success of the country can be predicted. The purpose-driven and functional education can be interpreted into establishment and improvement of infrastructure and increase in socio-economic growth. Functional education is characterized by a total process of bringing up the country's individuals to develop their potentials to the fullest, whether in cognitive, affective or psychomotor domains, and consequently, be able to contribute maximally to the development of the society. The aforementioned values contradict with what can be mirrored as a dysfunctional education system. The South African education system less perform adequately as expected and show inadequate results in terms of learning ability and teaching ability, and of which, most of the schools on the tipping end, are public rural schools that are in a state of chaos. The paper looks at education as a sentient and a premeditated effort to create a learning atmosphere for learners so that they can be actively developed for their maximal potential for personality, intelligence, service, noble character and skills required in their cohesive societies. This cannot be achieved if the education system is dysfunctional, and South Africa is one of the countries experiencing the crisis of dysfunctional education system. The paper delved within the parameters of the transformational paradigm where transformative learning theory has been used as a theoretical lens in a participatory action research as an approach for data collection. The collected data through a purposive sampling was analysed using a critical discourse analysis. In conclusion, the paper argues that dysfunctionality in education does not reside in solitary aspect, but in a syndrome of related climate issues.

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INTRODUCTION

The education system of South Africa is viewed through the parameters of both the White Paper 6 (DOE 2001), and the ever-changing educational policy that does not tarry well with the fundamental constitution of the country. White paper 6 is a framework policy document from the Department of Education responding to the post-apartheid state of special needs and support in education and training (DoE 2001). It explores common errors in the field of fair and equal access to relevant educative information despite indenting differences in socio-economic backgrounds.

The reinforced evidence from the White Paper 6 assumed insufficient learning provision, on the side of teaching, as an extension of non-support structure resulting to the deteriorating functionality in the pedagogical discourse. The dysfunctional education exposed a dire failure for the support of public inclusive education to ensure that all children, regardless of socio-economic background and ability, access the education and training they need, deserve to be prepared for global marketability. The dysfunctionality of the education system in the country has created a huge pool of unemployment among the youth of the country, of which among them, is a high rate of unemployed diplomats, graduates and post-graduates. This contradicts the South African Schools Act 84 (6) of 1996,

whose objective for a functional learning environment is where societal members are expected to be equipped with acceptable skills, knowledge, attitude, moral, beliefs and values. Dysfunctionality in education proves a failure and as an abnormality or impairment, or a deviation from accepted social behaviour as expected by parents who have a trust in the government for the education of their children. I view the deteriorating educational condition through what McManus (2002), assumed as a lack of responsibility and inadequate commitment among service providers (department of education), which, in this space, developed a “regressive atmosphere in teaching and learning”. Such conditions, is concurred by Biesta (2010), linking participants from where they come from and the existence of reality of what delved in their minds as they look forward to what best be achieved in their learning environment. It is upon such inadequacies, as probed by Ellett, Hill, Liu, Loup, and Lakshmanan (1997), from which the paper aims to investigate climate issues that have been linked to school dysfunctionality that correlates teacher ineffectiveness and their perceptions of the dysfunctional education system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education can be seen as a catalyst for socio- economic and political development of every nation. The success of many nations in undertaking major development problems can be traced to their educational system. Despite the plethora of educational policies and strategies of the government, and other stakeholders in alleviating the dissatisfaction educational condition, slightly has been achieved, as the socioeconomic discrepancy rate in various sectors continue to ascend. Therefore, various literatures have examined the linkages between functional education and dysfunctional education. The literature posits that effective and functional education in some countries, including South Africa, remains the most fundamental vehicle for the reduction of inequality, therefore recommends among others, a serious overhaul of the educational system and sector to produce a holistic person with the requisite skill, knowledge and value relevant to the dynamic nature in the industrial revolution. Dysfunctional education is characterized by schools mostly that do not achieve acceptable outcomes, reinforced by confusion over education system, badly managed and supported. Dysfunctionality further manifested on non-addressed fundamental educational issues of reading and numeracy at primary and foundation level, where it counts most of the entire exit phases at school. According to Green and O’Sullivan (2009), the term dysfunctionality in education can be referred to learning institutions where a professionally qualified, self-motivated, and effective educator in professional performance, is unable to work to his/her full professional capacity because of one or more conditions present in the institution. The determining quality of a dysfunctionality in those institutions resulted on educators choosing to leave or desperately wanting to leave because they found aspects of the system intolerable. Uline, Miller, and Tschannen-Moran (1998) have an opinion of instrumental functioning and expressive functioning where instrumental functioning have to do with student achievement, while the expressive functioning relates to teacher and administrator trust and to overall institutional health. They further probe that achievement within the schooling system is more related to school climate where climate issues include trust, high morale, continuous growth, cohesiveness, and opportunity for input as being important to a

healthy learning climate, of which, its insufficiency results in dysfunctionality. Ryan (2015) listed some concerns in what referred to as negative ethos while looking at conditions include the lack of a shared vision, intense competition, little opportunity to serve, lack of traditions, and unethical educational delivery system while looking at parental school involvement. Such climate issues, according to Sweetland and Hoy (2000), had been linked to negative correlation between teacher effectiveness and their perceptions of the learning environment within the education system. According to Friedman (1991), correlated high teacher burn-out can be related to several factors all relating to climate issues in some way where factors including a lack of trust, a confining environment, and isolation in the educational dysfunctionality turn to be the contributing factors from the poor governance and poor management by the department of education where the ministry in education is a contributory factor to malfunctions in schools because of its incompetence.

Hlatywayo (2008), is of the opinion that in the post-Apartheid South Africa, the pressure on schools to develop and to perform well has never been greater despite the introduction and the adoption of the EAZ intervention strategy by the then minister of education, Kader Asmal in 1999. The intervention strategy aimed to promote the purposes and practices of effectiveness in the so-called dysfunctional schools, where in this context, we see the deterioration in passing standards, lowering of qualifying criteria, and addition of marks where learners have not performed well, as well as ever-changing systems of education without sustainable productivity. The implementation of such an intervention strategy can, therefore, not be underestimated as contributing factors to dysfunctionality in education. The educational system was created to give everybody equal access to quality education and higher opportunities. Within the South African system, it seems as if these educational systems are only targeting a certain group of people where the minorities and destitute do not fit. Schools within the country should be equal for everybody despite geographical settings that is why this education system needs to undergo a change to serve the people of South Africa on equal bases. The education system that will actually make children feel like they are a part of the school’s atmosphere, which in turn will have children more invested in school which will lead them to being more successful and competent in the education system as a whole. Pretorius (2014) is of the opinion that what this government inherited from their fractured history is a collection of education so different in the quality of position, ethos, administration and management. The quality of education in South Africa is marked by severe inequalities of provisions coincided with ethically fragmented structures of control where the results, according to Futernick, (2010), turn to be an aftermath of poorly functioning systems rather than being placed on individual shortcomings.

The problem statement: The South African education system is hand-to-hand struggle with vast numbers of dysfunctional schools especially in rural areas. Rural schools, which were formerly based on homeland settings, on their own cannot be blamed for all educational ills of a country as they are the symptoms of the impaired functioning of the entire education system in which a great variation of societal structures is involved. According to Pretorius (2014), it became evident that the South African education system fails to build and sustain

the conditions for school and teacher effectiveness, and need to transform dysfunctional schools into places of dedicated teaching and learning. The education system in South Africa still shows a wide gap within public schools and those schools that were referred to as former model C schools during the apartheid where the education system was racially divided in South Africa.

The research question: The paper searches the state of affairs and issues on the dysfunctionality in the South African education system, as to how it fails to create the conditions for effective and balanced learning environment and acceptable learner achievement based on equal educational with meaningful outputs. The paper further investigates challenges as to how education system's perspective on educational can be created in sustaining the conditions for both school and teacher effectiveness.

Objectives and purpose of the research paper: The research study aims at looking at functional instructions in education that connect learning with specific needs and roles, towards which the learner's interest should be focused. The functional instruction that will assist learners to gain thinking habits and develop technical means needed for them, that would improve along facilitative processes and aid them in solving their practical problems. The purpose of the paper is to develop a consensus perspective that will examine the society in terms of how societal and educational issues are maintained for the common good, putting emphasis on positive aspects of educational institution such as socialisation, developing learning skills and promoting learning attitudes in school.

Theoretical framework: This paper aims at looking at the education system's perspective on dysfunctional education in school and how the conditions could be created and sustained for school and teacher effectiveness. In line with the dysfunctional contributory factors, the study probes the climate issues underpinned by transformative learning theory (Mezirow 1997) as its theoretical framework. The transformative learning theory (TLT), as a lens, looks at the education system in its true nature and defined it, which Pretorius (2014), further perceives it as an interwoven structure. Transformative learning theory, as further articulated by Mezirow (2000), is qualified in all its aspects by being educational and finds its possibilities and limitations within the planned and organised education of the learning in partnership with home-based schooling. Its qualification is concurred by Okeke (2014), proclaiming that it holds that learners have different assumptions, expectations, and beliefs that help them to make sense of the world around them which is strongly characterized by parental involvement. Transformative learning theory, as authenticated by Mezirow (2000), involved generational meanings made of higher order schemata, propositions, goal orientation and evaluations, of which in this context, embarked on prior interpretations to construct new interpretations to guide future actions towards the functionality of education. Therefore, transformational learning theory (TLT) encapsulated the position of the researcher as it questioned the academic-oriented approach in sustainable development realms of education.

Research design and methodology: The research study was accomplished within the confinements of the transformative learning paradigm through a qualitative form of approach. The research design and methodology were adorned by discursive

dialogues, focus group discussions, observations and social interactions in the form of social engagements and interactive participation. Mertens (2007), perceived transformative form of approach as a perspective where the study focused on the relationship between the participants in a way where a fair understanding of vital viewpoints be created, and the power of the research did not overpower the findings considered to be crucial on the two-way process. In relation to this study, as also supported by Boyd (1991), the transformational paradigm explicitly addressed social justice issues in relation to the functionality of education that call for human participation, where people developed critical self-reflection to consider their beliefs and experiences through transformative means of seeing things based on behavioural change. As an integral part of the cultural sphere and totally involved societal context concerned, participatory action research (PAR) in education (McTaggart 2015), was used as an approach for data generation. As far as the societal interwoven structure is concerned, the non-numerical data that has been qualitatively generated from the purposive sampled participants was analysed through a critical discourse analysis (CDA). In critical discourse analysis, as concurred by Van Dijk, (2003), empirical praxis was used to obtain the profound meaning of the generated data. CDA corresponded with TLT in that both seek to find the origins of problems and solutions to the challenge at hand while working for social justice, and in a more mutual and reciprocal way, work for equality among the participants.

RESULTS

Dysfunctionality of schools reflects the result of poor governance and poor management by both the school principals and the SGBs, whom at the same note seemed to operate within the realms of educational dysfunctionality. Improper school management by less competent principals and less equipped SGBs are a contributory factor to glitches in schools because of their incapacity. The biggest problems in education today include major challenges or climate issues currently facing public schools, based on the perspective of many involved in the world of education today. To mention just few, classroom size, poverty, family factors, technology, student attitudes and ill-disciplined learner behaviours, as well as a lack of effective parental involvement. It is the fact that teachers are the most important school related factor in the department of education, and solely affecting learner achievement, but in the case of South African education system, there is a grappling, largely besieged by a mostly dispirited, demoralised, under-performing, and angry unionized teachers who, randomly, denounce classes for union matters any time they like to do so. Apart from dysfunctionality in the education system, the largely ineffective and democratically orientated teacher turn to be an arguably fundamental catalyst in the dysfunctionality and defused system. The tautology of educational reforms derailed teachers from teaching what they are trained to teach, henceforth, ever changing advisory interventions tarnish their commitment. The statement by the South African Human Rights Commission (2006) declaring that teachers in rural areas "lack passion and culture of teaching and learning, not in the classroom enough, many underqualified and not trained to implement the curriculum and disconnected from the communities in which they teach", turn to be an assumption and baseless within the South African context.

Dysfunctionality should be searched within the realms of governance and ambivalent democracy which is a pendulum in the educational status quo. The heavily unionized, and politically alignments of teacher organizations, school management positioning placed by mandate of affiliation, not by suitability, leadership skill and qualification, should be the dysfunctional arenas to be examined within the parameters of disintegration of the South African education system. The internal upgrading of teachers to management positions in schools imposed serious problems in some school where the dysfunctional and incompetent individuals, as aligned by Range et al (2012) are mandatory placed in the leadership position without leadership qualities, the one who has been not committed in his/her school work. Once in position thought of turning behavioural patterns through mistrust and judgment to others while his/her story is well known by other teachers. The school principals or any members in senior position place by the order or command of the politicized body will always be reminded if those who pushed him/her want favours, and they will hardly respect his/her management decisions. The school system will either be authoritarian or laissez faire where the institution is managed by a hands-off approach, allowing teachers to (unprofessionally) set and make their own decisions. The ominous consequence under such management is that the curriculum, as observed by Reddy et al (2010), is often not fully covered. Unless highly skilled and effective teachers are placed in all classrooms, there is no improvement that would be expected within the processes of teaching and learning in public schools. Innovative classrooms, according to Berry (2009), would be the results of effective teachers with right policy supports who will be ideal agents of meaningful and sustainable change even in most challenging circumstances.

Consequently, the fundamental task of the teacher, embraced by effective teaching and ensuring that learners actually learn during each period in the classroom, is hardly monitored or taken heed of due to the fact that even those responsible to monitor, are hardly at work on time. Commendable ideas are vain without consistent, good teaching and learning in the classroom, where improvement strategies need to be concentrated on the fundamental issues and problems of classroom teaching and management. The above findings point to a required urgent need for reforms in schools where education is shrinking in inadequate and unsupervised school-based managements, poor quality of teacher education programmes and dearth curricular connection and communication across schools of education in preparing new teachers. Though the intention with teacher education is clear from the reformed educational initiatives, the teacher-pupil ratio and floor space, with an exception of the dilapidated schools, stands as a climate issue within the system which need to be rectified after so many years of democracy in South Africa. Although there could be multiple factors leading to the impaired functioning of dysfunctional education system, the narrated state of findings highlights a critical problem across the broad organisational structure of the South African education system. It disposes managers who are not suitable for managerial positions or never adequately trained, and unable to turning around a failing school, even in the most disadvantaged circumstances, together with his/her staff, learners and the whole community, into an effective and successful school. The fruitless endeavour with our education system is to expect reform under the same discredited managers.

If our education system still fails to acknowledge the importance of massive upgrading in developing appropriate management capacity on all levels of the education system, dysfunctionality will always be a major problem in the South African education system.

Conclusion and recommendation

The conclusive part of the research paper infers that schools and teachers are at the core of the education system which is entirely manipulated by the government under the apparels of the department of education. However, some schools are not self-sufficient, while others are incompetently managed and unable to provide education successfully. The failing nature of the education system to be the custodian for equality and equity widen the gap between those who have and those who do not have, the advantageous and the disadvantaged, and racially divide the system back to nationalization before 1994, which Pretorius (2014) claimed as an inherited fractured history revealing the different quality of position, ethos, administration and management marking severe inequalities of provisions coincided with ethically fragmented structures of control. The dysfunctionality in the education system deteriorates the schooling system which will be a catastrophic to the growing generation. Effective educational developments should be in place regarding schools and improvement they make in the transformative processes within the education system. It is of no value for the department of education to tip the scale of dysfunctionality towards the teachers since schools on their own cannot be the savers of the plethora of academic ills of education in South Africa. The entire education system stands accountable and responsible for clarion outcries of negligent and manipulative tender frauds, nepotism and self-enrichment within the structure of the government. Among all the shortcomings, it is of the recommendation that effective developments should be in place to be turned around to provide education effectively through core educative policy guidelines. The core educative strategy in the deteriorating pedagogical discourse is to improve public education by unapologetically placing highly skilled and effective managers in schools, and dynamic teachers in classrooms, and depoliticize education system in South Africa. Furthermore, the devastating evidence of poor leadership and mismanagement in the part of managerial and administrative structures crave for immense advancement of the knowledge and skills for transformation to be on top of all agenda. The systemic support of educational services in South Africa should be investigated in connection with its competence and long-lasting sustainability in the production of marketable young generation.

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