Teacher-Learners' Search for Relevance: Lessons from a Principals' Leadership/Management Qualification in South Africa

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ABSTRACT The attempts to expand higher education in South Africa is yielding a number of benefits. The historically disadvantaged are finding paths to higher education institutions gradually opening. With calls for relevant and competitive curricula, formal education is also expected to respond to local challenges as it moulds well-rounded lifelong learners. A number of current practice-based teacher programmes have been introduced and these are geared towards the attainment and enhancement of professional development. In certain instances though, there are challenges that pervade as some students maintain that their needs are not entirely addressed by institutions of higher learning. This paper explores findings of a qualitative study that focused on school principals who were candidates in the practice based Advanced Certificate in Education - School Management and Leadership (ACE-SML) qualification. Many, from three universities under investigation, were frequently daunted by the institutions of higher learning that did not always address their immediate needs.

INTRODUCTION

The Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) points out that in the 1970s and 1980s, focus was on basic education in primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, SARUA states that most African governments perceived higher education as a "luxury" (SARUA 2008). Since the 1990s though, there had been advocates to massify higher education as its elitist image is being gradually phased out. The doors of the higher education institutions (HEIs) were opened for the previously disadvantaged or at least, there have been concerted efforts towards this ideal. The Commission for Africa Report by the World Bank was to highlight that higher education is the "breeding ground for the skilled individuals the continent needs" (SARUA 2008).

In tandem with this higher education institutions' need to continuously skilling people, Craig and Perraton (2008) aver that initial teacher training alone is not enough for achieving good quality and teaching. Furthermore Craig and Perraton (2008: 91) posit:

Education is changing rapidly and teachers need to keep pace with changes so there is pressure from governments, and from the teaching profession itself, for updating. As more teachers gain initial qualifications, so the focus of governments has tended to shift towards the improvement of quality. At the same time lifelong learning in many professions, including teaching, is seen as a necessity for economic development in the competitive global economy.

Recently, a new qualification referred to as the Advanced Certificate in Education- School Management and Leadership (ACE-SML) was introduced to enhance the skills of principals and other managers such as the heads of department in schools. This programme was piloted from 2007 to 2009 and informal interviews with the participants already reflect its potential. Moreover, the interim findings of the Zenex-ACE research also shows the potential of this qualification in future (Bush et al. 2009). The ACE-SML is a practice-based part-time programme of study that is aimed at providing management and leadership support through a variety of interactive programmes that improve the students' practice, professional growth and ethos of leadership (Mestry and Singh 2007). The programme equips school managers as they constantly learn about various themes in leadership and management. The participating HEIs (those offering this programme) offer it over two year's part time. The assessment includes exploration of case studies, writing of assignments and some HEIs have introduced tests as forms of assessment.

With this brief background, the study posed the following questions:

- What are the paradoxes in higher education institutions' (HEIs) practices that defeat the goals of quality and effective education?
- How can the HEIs strive for relevance in an era of change?
- What potential value do registered learners bring to the HEIs?

Review of Literature

Among others, the ACE-SML accords principals a platform where during contact sessions they are able to meet with colleagues from other schools. As peers they address their challenges as they deal with common and unique challenges. Principals need to learn from their mistakes, and this can strengthen the profession by providing an honest and accurate stance of their position (Grady 2004). All conscientious school principals strive for effectiveness. Effective principals have strong commitment to the teachers and staff in their schools and they build relationships with the learners (O'Hanlon and Clifton 2004). Schools that are beset by adversity may struggle to achieve success. Sometimes principals complain that their schools are under-resourced and teachers are burnt-out hence it is not possible for their schools to succeed. Yet, O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) opine that to be an effective principal, one has to believe that one can achieve; moreover that certain goals are attainable.

Botha (2004) cites Caldwell who states that the workload of principals is becoming unmanageable and as a result many principals, especially in secondary schools, lack the time for and an understanding of their leadership roles. In the current period where rapid changes are occurring at phenomenal rate, much is needed to empower and enhance the practice of all school principals. This is particularly true for principals of disadvantaged schools. However, these managers cannot change their schools for the better if they are not able to identify the challenges they are confronted with. If the school managers were to change their schools for the better, they would need to identify and understand the depth of the challenges confronting their workplaces. Growing research has been conducted to acquire a better understanding of the politics of "failing" historically disadvantaged schools in South Africa. Many of these schools are situated in historically black areas as well as in many rural areas.

In addressing some of these challenges, the ACE-SML programme showed the important changing role of the university. The materials used in the programme are interactive and engaging thus expecting the lecturers to change the traditional delivery in lecture halls. The materials also expect certain commitment and accountability from the learners. Tucker and Codding (2002) aver that principals need to be prepared thoroughly now because we live in an age of accountability. Furthermore, These authors contend that as the years have gone by, parents and the community are no longer trusting principals. There appears to be constant battles that frequently amount to abuse from which there is no escape. Therefore, there is much need for schools to assume more power as they strive for effectiveness and training principals can be one solution. The society is changing rapidly hence Hill (2002) points out that the emphasis on the role of the principal has shifted to that of a change agent or transformational leader. Principals are usually urged to look to business for effective leadership models (Hall 2002). Eiter (2002) lists a number of leadership dimensions necessary for school leaders of successful schools and these are:

- The leader as a strategic thinker;
- The leader as a driver of change; and
- The leader as having a teachable point of view.

Among others this paper seeks to examine how universities can teach such skills. It seeks to explore how higher education institutions can make the learning to be conducive to the needs of teacher learners. The main objectives of the study are spelt out below.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to address the following:
- Explore higher education practices that enhance quality and effective education;
- Investigate how higher education institutions can sustain relevance in an era of constant changes;
- Explore how teachers as lifelong learners can bring meaningful contributions in the course of learning; and
- To investigate the role of higher education institutions in developing and addressing local challenges

Below the focus is on theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

Heutagogy is a system that emphasises self-directed learning and was developed after andragogy. Andragogy lays the foundation for effective heutagogy. Nafukho et al. (2005) cite

Lindeman who underscored the value of the adult learner's experience with regards to adult education, observing that the approach to teaching adults should be through situations rather than subjects. Furthermore, these writers opine that the best way to manage differences between adult learners is by creating activities that tap into their experiences, such as group activities and simulations (Nafukho et al. 2005). Michael Knowles who pioneered adult learning identified the following characteristics of adult learners: autonomous and self-directed; foundation of life experiences and knowledge; goal-oriented; relevancy-oriented and being practical (Lieb 1991). Lieb also expands on Knowles' theory when he contends that adult learners can learn only if four critical elements are addressed and these are: motivation; reinforcement; retention and transference. This author further asserts (Lieb 1991: 5):

Although adult learning is relatively new as a field of study, it is substantial as traditional education and carries a potential for greater success. Of course, the heightened success requires a greater responsibility on the part of the teacher. Additionally, the learners come to the course with precisely defined expectations. Unfortunately, there are barriers to their learning. The best motivators for adult learners are interest and selfish benefit. If they can be shown that the course benefits them pragmatically, they will perform better, and the benefits will be longer lasting.

The essence of Lieb's (1991) assertion is linked to experiential learning and some writers have highlighted the need for this aspect in the field of adult education (Widemeersch 1992; Jansen and Klerq 1992). Knowles (1980) has also argued extensively on the value of experiential learning in adult education, distinguishing between andragogy and pedagogy. Wildermeersch (1992) cite Weil and McGill who have shown that experiential learning is associated with a number of educational practices. These two delineate the educational practices of experiential learning into four aspects. The first is concerned with assessing and accrediting learning from life and work experience. The second focuses on the organisation of institutional change. The third raises consciousness and community action. Finally, experiential learning is related to growth and development (Wildermeersch 1992). Houben (1992) also

points out that any adult educational programme should be modified to the level of knowledge, the experiences and the client's needs if the developer wants to be successful. Moreover, Gadbow (2002) underscores the needs to teach all adult learners as if they are special; emphasising individual learning needs as well as differences.

Michael Knowles has written extensively on the importance of self-directed learning in adults. Knowles (1975:18) defines self-directed learning as a process where individuals take the initiative with or without the help of other people, "in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes". Furthermore, he argues that there are three reasons for self-directed learning. Firstly, people who take initiative in learning, learn more than do people who sit waiting to be taught. Secondly, it is a sign of maturity when people develop an ability to take increasing responsibility for their own learning. Finally, learners need to take initiative under the current educational developments for them to lessen the chances of being anxious and frustrated.

In an attempt to enhance student learning there is a growing number of universities that have adopted heutagogy. As mentioned earlier, heutagogy builds on the noble principles of andragogy. It is fast being viewed as a natural progression from earlier educational methodologies and may well provide the optimal approach to learning in the 21st century (Kenyon and Hase 2001). Heutagogy is perceived as an approach that has gone one step beyond andragogy; to a new set of principles and practices that may have application across the entire spectrum of the education and learning life span (Kenyon and Hase 2001). It promotes student independence and goes beyond knowledge acquisition. It also underscores how that knowledge is given meaning and interpreted. We are now at a time when innovations are happening at a rapid pace hence the teaching and learning strategies need to be adjusted accordingly. Heutagogy is opposed to teacher-centred approaches and wants to ensure that the students design the course of study whose outline is given to them by their teacher. Unlike in simple pedagogy, the students in a heutagogic environment determine assessment

through stressing learning on what interests them more. However, the introduction of heutagogical strategies should not imply the disappearance of the teacher or facilitators especially in undergraduate programmes. McAuliffe et al. (2008: 4) contend:

Even although the heutagogical principles indeed empower the learner within a learning situation, it is still seen (especially in undergraduate education) that the educator/facilitator should remain a vital part of helping learners interpret their world while at the same time maintaining a distance appropriate to encouraging learners to actively engage in that world through the process of discovery as it relates to their own interests and needs.

This implies that students need to be supported until they reach a certain level of maturity. Heutagogy works well if it is able to nurture students to be able to grow within the programmes they are enrolled in.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in two South African universities through the use of focus group interviews as well as observations in 18 schools where the participants came from. The participants were principals enrolled in the ACE-SML programme and were studying at two different universities at the time of the study. In addition to this, 10 lecturers or teaching staff from the two universities were interviewed individually. Opportunistic sampling was used in this study as the researcher went out to ensure that the sample of the principal consisted of principals from farm schools, rural schools and urban schools. Opportunistic sampling refers to when a researcher was observing s group of people may decide on the spur of the moment to observe certain activities that appear to be interesting, but were not considered important before the study began (Struwig and Stead 2004). At the time the researcher was studying the practice in rural schools and decided to investigate the universities' practice after some participants stated that sometimes the higher education institutions do not address the needs of their schools. The 18 schools under study consisted of two former White primary schools, six historically Coloured schools and 10 historically Black African schools. The researcher visited

five centres where ACE candidates attended contact sessions by the two institutions.

The 18 candidates were interviewed in three different focus groups of six each. Focus groups are naturalistic as the participants say what they would like to express. Focus groups also enable the researcher to listen not only for the content of focus group discussions but for emotions, ironies, contradictions and tensions (Grudens-Schuck et al. 2004). This is supported by Krueger (1988) who points out that a focus group is a planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a non-threatening environment. The researcher also observed three classes in each centre. He also visited the schools to observe the management practices of the participants in their schools. During class observations the researcher's observations included the following:
In Contact Sessions
- Forms of delivery and their effectiveness
- Interaction with the material
- Peer learning
- Application of relevant theory
In Schools
- Daily running of the school and the application of what the candidates have learnt during contact sessions
- The ACE-SML impact (effectiveness or absence thereof)
- Leadership styles

RESULTS

The participants stated that the universities tended to overstress the importance of assessment in the programme. The candidates from one university were also opposed to the forms of assessment employed, which included a number of assignments and "a few class tests" for some modules. They also pointed out that some lecturers created an unnecessary stress among the candidates who lost the focus on practice-based strategies to concentrate more on the assessment component. Many of the participants also stated that some lecturers were very pedantic in looking for technical aspects such as "referencing and formal academic writing style". As one candidate put it:

Some facilitators treat us as if we are to go ahead and do Masters Degrees and other higher academic degrees. We are here to improve our

professional practice. I am certain there are very few of us who will want to continue with academic qualifications. As practicing principals, there are more important aspects than looking for the format of the bibliography.

Another one concurred as she stated:

Many of us were surprised when we received back our assignments. The marks were very low. Yes, some of us do not write assignments until the last minute. However, many of us are hard working so it was always shocking to find that you got a 45%. Many of us have been principals for a number of years. It is an insult then to be told that you do not know your practice, just like that. It is disrespectful!

The lectures though stated that although they agree that there was much assessment in the ACE-SML modules, there were candidates who did not sacrifice enough when it came to their studies. Moreover, seven of the lecturers maintained that it was necessary for university students to know how to cite references. The university, they said, would have failed if students cannot cite properly. Three of these facilitators though maintained that there was too much emphasis on technical aspects of writing.

Another aspect that the majority of the participants agreed upon was the use of lecture-method by some lecturers. The candidates stated that some lecturers talked over the candidates using more theory and less practice. A middle-aged woman principal averred:

The programme has magnificent material where there are a number of case studies that can be done by groups. Some of these are very useful, as they tend to talk to our practice. Yet, some lecturers appear to believe in theory and we lose a chance of discussing real life problems in our schools. You must see in classes where the facilitators use these case studies. The contact sessions become more interesting. We also learn immensely.

Other participants highlighted that, the fact that the schools and universities are so further apart in reality is manifested in these contact sessions. They say that they find that some lecturers are so aloof from what is happening in schools. One primary school deputy principal pointed out:

With due respect, some of us sometimes see that some facilitators do not know what really happens in schools. They are left behind when it comes to class discussions. As one colleague

said when we chatted that, he wonders how research on schools can be done when universities do not have links with schools.

The lecturers agreed that there are a number of innovations that lecturers might not be aware of. They stated that universities needed to forge more links with schools. One lecturer also stated that research could indeed be enhanced if university staff can work closely with educators in schools.

According to the participants, many university staff members do not appear to be used to practice based programmes. Many could not apply the participatory techniques in the ACE-SML programme because they are used to different type of knowledge production and different understanding of what university courses are supposed to do. While lecturers agreed that universities are not really using such practice based models in their teaching, but "a number of lecturers teaching in the ACE-SML have grown to be better lecturers in the programme. However, the participants pointed out that universities tended to load them with information and theory. One participant stated:

There is much information overload in the programme. The ACE-SML materials are bulky enough, but you will find that the lecturers still supplement the materials with extra readings. How can they do that? They are concerned with bombarding us with much information.

One lecturer though said that "universities are also concerned with standards". University candidates are expected to have certain level of knowledge. Some of these lecturers stated that ensuring that educators become lifelong learners, they need to read as wide as possible.

The participants also claimed that the university staff failed to visit schools although one of the required practices in the ACE-SML is site visits. Of the 18 participants in the study, only five were visited by the university staff; four in one university and one in the other. However, the lecturers stated that lack of finances and personnel thwarted efforts to visit schools.

Below the findings are discussed under four themes that came up during the interviews:
(i) Reflective practice as an objective of learning
(ii) Lifelong learning and professional development
(iii) Building learning communities
(iv) Preparing faculty for open learning systems

DISCUSSION

Reflective Practice as an Objective of Learning

Bell and Mlandenovic (2013) assert that reflective practice has various benefits for academic development. They state that it enhances overall effectiveness and increases capacity for change. Reflective practice is also beginning to be accommodated in programmes around the world. Collins et al. (2013) argue that reflective practice is now a key competency in Western initial teacher training programmes. As evident in the data collected, participants perceived the modules in the programme as enhancing their need to reflect upon their practice. Participants maintained that universities should be leading in ensuring that students should be selective practitioners if they are to grow and make their learning more meaningful. Experiential learning cited above leads the teachers and make them to be reflective. The participants concurred that they could understand their leadership style through various ways of leadership style. The HEIs and the module enabled many to engage in teacher research on leadership styles and theories. Hobson (1995) points out that sometimes we are so close to a subject we can hardly see it. He states that one of the basic benefits of conducting teacher research is the opportunity it afford us for seeing out world in a fresh perspective.

In line with this argument Lewin (1948) and Schon (1983) underscore the need to begin with the self when they conduct research. Schon (1983) for example coined two terms, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action highlighting that an educator who reflects will eventually lead to better action. Any university course needs to sharpen this reflective skill. The participants highlighted how the modules gave examples of various case studies for the purposes of class exercises. As a result of these, they end up narrating their own stories and the latter is a part of reflection. Jalongo and Isenberg (1995) aver that through telling their stories, teachers can examine past events as if they were current, reflect on different teaching contexts or even anticipate future courses of action. Among the participants there was this sense that universities need to emphasise reflection.

Lifelong Learning and Professional Development

Lifelong learning is recognised among the most important competencies that people need to have (Collins 2009). This author also adds that promoting lifelong learning as continuous, collaborative, self-directed and fulfilling practice has emerged as a major global challenge. In this study, one of the most crucial decisions that schools and their district offices need to do is to implement a formal policy of continuous professional development. Currently this is haphazard and formal professional development is dependent upon individual teachers. The comments from the participants in this study showed that universities can play a crucial role in continuing professional development of teachers. For continuing professional education to occur there needs to be more voice given to teachers in schools where they could inform what institutions of higher learning emphasise. It was amazing to hear the principals in the study stating that they were learning aspects of management and leadership that they never knew before. A close collaboration between district offices, schools and universities needs to be emphasised for continuing education to be able to address the immediate needs of the schools. However, educational policy makers and practitioners worldwide are facing major challenges as education systems develop from historically bureaucratic, hierarchical models to those which give greater emphasis to school site management (Goleman and Early 2005).

However, continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers should take cognisance of context. Kaser et al. (2002) point out that when it comes to professional development programmes, "off the shelf" and "one size fits all" simply do not work. Furthermore, these authors state that skilled professional developers know when to take context into account if their professional development programmes are to be successful. The participants in the study repeatedly highlighted the relevance of the ACE materials in their contexts. Goleman and Earley (2005) state that CPD opportunities are based on three priority areas: Individually focused, School focused and National/District focused. In their CPD framework these authors illustrate the interconnectedness among these three tiers. Individual tier includes professional skills, the

school focused tier includes school improvement and the last one, local and national focused tier refers to national initiatives and professional links.

HEIs need to know similar frameworks if they are to develop relevant modules that would interact with the teachers' experiences. Effective CPD also means moving away from conventional practices. Daniel (1999) avers that there is a need to challenge conventional academic practices as HEIs show a different approach to effective teaching can be more successful than lecturing. As the changes in the education system are embraced, the faculty is expected to facilitate teaching and learning that would result in far reaching changes in learners than does learning in general. Clark (1993) highlights the importance of transformational learning which refers to learning that shapes people making them different afterwards in ways that they and others could recognise. In the study the participants pointed it out that some faculty members were so sophistic in the use of conventional methods even when the materials were clearly for new participatory approaches. The traditional approach to education include some or all the following elements; lecture presentation, teacher as authority and knowledge expert. It also includes a hierarchical power structure in the classroom, and learners as mostly passive recipients of knowledge who regurgitate back their understanding of content in examinations (Schwerin 1998).

Building Learning Communities

Davies et al. (2005) contends that student learning communities encourage peer learning that enables students to develop thorough knowledge. Peer learning in turn, encourages a student-centred approach whereby activities such as team projects enable students to develop communication skills rather than mere facts. The support of teachers in various higher education programmes is very crucial and this is even more so in continuing professional development programmes. One of the most important aspects in CPD is the development and support of learning communities. In this study the participants highly appreciated the ACE-SML contact sessions because they were able to share their concerns and learnt to be "management experts" from a set of peers. Goleman and Earley (2005)

point out that learning communities are also referred to as professional learning communities or communities of practice. This term is appropriate to education, in school for example, the question has to be asked as to how could the idea of learning be central to it if its own staff are not engaged in the process themselves (Goleman and Earley 2005). There was a creation of these communities in the contact sessions and if only the teachers could be made aware of the need to emphasise these in their schools as well. Persson (2005) aver that another important characteristic of a learning community is to develop a professional culture and knowledgebase by researching, sharing and improving educational practice to improve learners' learning.

Several writers have stressed the importance of the establishment of learning communities (Boyer 1990; Heimlich and Norland 1994; Angelo 1996). Higher education institutions can build these through the building of new institutional structures and redefining the curriculum to serve the larger South African society based on democratic ideals. One possible outcome of this important shift is the transformation of the universities from 'teaching factories' into learning 'communities' (Angelo 1996: 1). According to Angelo, many definitions of learning communities centre on a vision of faculty and students (sometimes staff and the larger community) working collaboratively toward shared, significant goals in environments in which competition is deemphasised. In learning communities all those involved have the opportunity and responsibility to learn from others. Transformational pedagogy allows students to be active participants in the learning and teaching act. Faculty needs to reinvent the learning communities as they foster collaborative learning approaches, cooperative academic culture and relevant courses designed to build connections. The decision by faculty to yearn to build learning community in the classrooms rather than replicating a conventional teaching formula is the first step toward a transformative pedagogy (Fischel and Segal 1998).

Preparing Faculty for Open Learning

Msweli (2012) postulates that open learning is regarded as a system of learning that blends student support, curriculum and instruction de-

sign, removal of barriers to access, credit prior learning and other academic activities such as meeting the diverse needs of students. Therefore, open learning can be said to be part of effective learning. Craig and Perraton (2008) aver that initial teacher training alone is not enough for achieving good quality and teaching. Furthermore Craig and Perraton (2008: 91) posit:

Education is changing rapidly and teachers need to keep pace with changes so there is pressure from governments, and from the teaching profession itself, for updating. As more teachers gain initial qualifications, so the focus of governments has tended to shift towards the improvement of quality. At the same time lifelong learning in many professions, including teaching, is seen as a necessity for economic development in the competitive global economy.

However, evident in this study was that some faculty members were not well prepared for the kind of programme such as the ACE SML. It being interactive, case based, utilising experiences of the candidates, it was challenging to lecturers used to conventional ways of teacher-centred traditional lectures. Apart from the participants' concern that some faculty members were not marking assignments effectively (sometimes few or no comments but students awarded a low mark), the participants maintained that there was sometimes no balance among the modes of delivery as pointed in the findings' section. The ACE-SML materials were challenging some lecturers who were openly learning new dimensions to teaching and learning at HEIs. The programme is delivered in a mixed mode fashion; contact sessions, distance approaches which include online approaches. The mixed mode delivery was supposed to circumvent some of the challenges associated with both full time contact and pure distance education. Yet, it was apparent that some lecturers were not used to this approach. However, at a time when open learning system is spreading, faculty needs to be empowered in this approach.

Conrad (2013) posits that open learning has to do with integration which encompasses both experiential and authentic learning. It allows learners to bring their experiences and interests as they create new knowledge. Snell et al. (1987) also contend that open learning system, has its roots in the individuals' creation of their meaning. Open learning systems put the students squarely at the centre of the equation in devel-

oping their learning plan (Heydinger 1997). Furthermore, Heydinger states that open learning stands in contrast to the traditional faculty-driven curriculum model, which presents the students with a set of programme options giving them little freedom to determine their own learning activities. Proponents of massification have called upon universities to be responsive to the needs of an economy and those of a historically marginalised majority (Soudien and Corneilse 2000). Mixed mode delivery ensures that the needs of learners from different backgrounds and ability are accommodated. Scott (1998) points out that most universities around the world are seen as meeting a much broader range of national needs. With mixed mode delivery being part of open learning systems, education will move towards fulfilling the demands of the markets. The markets are dynamic as knowledge is continuously being sought. Markets set new problems more or less continuously, and the sites of knowledge production, and their associated networks of communication move on (Gibbons 1998). As faculty utilises mixed modes of delivery, they should ensure that the following happen:

- Learning styles for quality and flexible delivery within various learning contexts drawn from the students' experiences.
- The utilisation of students' experiences ensures that lifelong learning is developed and sustained.
- The flexible teaching strategies should accommodate learner-centred approaches. Many model how students should apply this knowledge in everyday life.
- The diverse delivery systems ensure that the majority of the students will be able to deal with course material.

These were all crucial for a programme like the ACE-SML discussed above, although they did not always manifest themselves in the centres observed.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that a programme such as the ACE-SML programme is bound to succeed if it recognises the nature of adults and their learning as espoused in the learning theories cited above. The programme supports self-directed learning and the candidates are also expected to assess their learning through case study

exercises. Effective lecturers will utilise the experience of the teacher-learners: what the teacher-learners bring into the lecture hall in every contact session should be magnified as the learners explore possible solutions to problems that plague many struggling schools in particular. When learners study about a familiar environment, they learn to be motivated as they try to confront their problems. Such programmes will also teach them to be self-reliant as they find ways of being self-directed in empowering themselves whilst leading with zeal. However, even a well planned meticulous programme such as the ACE-SML will fail if the HEIs are not careful about delivery. It needs lecturers who are focused and more open to change. They should also understand the challenges faced by school managers. This study also reflected that higher education institutions need to move from the traditional and conventional approaches of lecturing. As higher education institutions transform, the effects on teaching staff is immense. It is the faculty that is expected to reflect the transforming institutional culture. This paper concludes by taking a look at recommendations which now follow.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were drawn after the analysis of the findings:
- Change management should be at the core of higher education during these times of constant changes. Managers should be able to lead and lead well as higher education transforms;
- Faculty members should always keep abreast with changes in institutional culture. Interest groups can be effective in this regard;
- Higher education institutions should be responsive to local needs. They can use programmes such as the ACE-SML discussed above to support innovative strategies to turn around schools for example; and
- More research needs to be conducted to examine how higher education institutions can develop knowledge to address local and global challenges.

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