The National Department of Education (DoE) and Higher Education's Efforts to Empower School Managers in South Africa: Lessons from the ACE-SML Programme's Pilot Group

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ABSTRACT The current transformation of education in South Africa has ensured that higher education institutions (HEIs) do attempt to build different kinds of students. There is a conscious effort towards the creation of a better and a more resourceful student. The paper is based on a qualitative study conducted among school managers who were registered in the Advanced Certificate in Education – School Management and Leadership (ACE-SML) programme. Thirty participants were interviewed and observed in the field. The findings show that universities have a potential of giving meaning to transformative efforts especially when they take into cognisance the nature of the student as well as context for learning. The interviews and observations results also demonstrate that there were a number of positive experiences by the teacher-learners in the programme. The article also illustrates that HEIs are sometimes challenged when it comes to changing some of the 'traditional' practices contradictory to some innovative programmes.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Wanzala (2013) argues that education is a complex system rooted in a society's political, sociocultural and economic context and is basically a key to preparing the much needed workforce with proficiency. This paper looks at the potential of a school leadership course to address some of the needs of the society. Giles and Smith (2012) point out that the learning process within leadership development tends towards a reproduction of an expert's understandings rather than the possibility of transformation outcomes. Higher education institutions need to ensure that there needs to be more experiential nature of school leadership preparation. These authors contend:

Within the prevailing ideological context, there is a growing international interest in reforming the design and delivery of educational leadership development programmes. In the United States of America, for example, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) has an expressed intent to engender inter-institutional dialogue to improve leadership preparation and professional development.

To embrace transformative practices, higher education institutions need to explore novel ways that are relevant to the demands of institutions that student-teachers would lead. Therefore, context becomes crucial when universities train school leaders. Kpee et al. (2012) state that the curriculum at universities needs to be regularly renewed to make it relevant and enable it catch up with changes in present day society. In South Africa school leaders trained in teacher education programmes need to be empowered in aspects such as diversity, poverty, xenophobia, social justice and gender sensitivity among others. All these are themes that have become important in the South African environment. Whilst university curricula should exhibit globalisation efforts, it also needs to reflect the local aspects hence the relevance of curricula.

School leaders who are registered in leadership training programmes, in their school where they work, deal with learners who are bread winners as parents were ravaged by HIV and AIDS. They deal with learners who do not have regular meals as these children are under the care of indigent grandparents. Some schools have teachers who may be underqualified in subjects such as mathematics and technology. Leadership training programmes have to show how these leaders deal with such challenges. Sharples et al. (2012) point out that there is a need for innovations in teaching. Social constructivist

methods into schools and foundations of universities based on methods of open distance learning have become crucial. "The pedagogic innovations of experiential learning, networked learning, constructivism, peer teaching, formative assessment and cognitive apprenticeship deserve to be as well-known and discussed" (Sharples et al. 2012: 6).

In a bid to empower more school leaders and managers, a number of HEIs in South Africa introduced a leadership programme for school managers. The current Advanced Certificate in Education – School Management and Leadership (ACE-SML) programme was initiated by the Department of Education in South Africa could be regarded as a necessary programme that has the potential to enhance the principals' practice in schools. This programme was piloted between the years 2007 and 2009 formal and informal interviews with the participants already reflected its potential. 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 ACE-SML programme shows one way of addressing the quality of school leaders by institutions of higher learning.

The question asked in this study was: What lessons can higher education institutions learn from an effective school managers' programme?

Sub-question asked included the following:

How can universities utilise knowledge in advancing professional development of teachers?

Literature Review

Craig and Perraton (2008) state that continuing professional development is receiving increasing attention for a number of reasons. "Education is changing rapidly and teachers need to keep pace with the changes so there is pressure from governments, and from the teaching profession itself, for updating" (Craig and Perraton 2008:91). Bush and Charron (2008) cite UNESCO's Delors report where it was recorded that the most important factor in school efficiency and quality improvement is the openness,

competence and efficiency of the principal. Universities need to introduce programmes that would address this need. Craig and Perraton (2008) mention a number of functions that can be presented by HEIs' teacher programmes for continuing education. These include raising the skills, deepening the understanding and extending the knowledge of teachers generally.

Menzies and Jordan-Daus (2012) argue that where teachers have had an extensive effective initial training in schools, they perform better and that universities bring great strength to the training of teachers. This can be translated to mean the same in school leadership; that school leaders who were trained well in the leadership are more likely to lead successful schools. This however, puts much pressure on institutions of higher learning to engage students if effective teaching and learning is to take place. Lukowiak and Hunzicker (2012:1) aptly capture this:

Student engagement in learning is closely related to effective teaching. Research shows that student engagement in learning is likely to increase when teachers use instructional time efficiently (O'Neil 1995), connect classroom learning to real life, practical experiences (Brewster and Pager 2000; Hancock and Betts 2002; Lumsden 1994), and allow student choices, regarding what and how to learn…In our own college classrooms, we found that brisk pacing and instructional variety, paired with a balance of higher order, student-centred activities and teacher-led activities effectively engaged students in learning.

Adult students enjoy being involved and being made to use their experiences in learning activities. Effective professors in higher education institutions will use this well. Jones and St Hilaire (2012) assert that in the past, universities were dominated by student passivity; instruction that makes students to assimilate new content into their pre-existing cognitive schema is new. These authors argue, "No longer is college teaching primarily focused on quantity of information, but rather the quality of learning as measured by specific student learning outcomes" (Jones and St Hilaire 2012: 34). Higher education institutions today are challenged to change the traditional practice of being teacher-centred. Students are required to develop critical thinking skills as they engage with societal challenges. Jones and St Hilaire refer to this as a paradigm shift that seeks a redefinition of teaching.

Interdisciplinary learning is one aspect that can lead to significant learning. There is much that students can learn from interdisciplinarity. The latter also necessitates faculty to conduct inter-disciplinary research. In fact, Jones and St Hilaire mention the following as pertinent to significant learning at universities:

- Connecting academic work to other areas of life;
- Formation of learning communities; and
- Interdisciplinary learning.

All these are effective in ensuring that work is integrated. Polizzi and Frick (2012) also emphasise the need for preparation programme to inform school leaders. And enable them to meet the demands of increasingly challenging work within schools. These authors underscore the need for these training programmes to utilise prior learning experiences. "A preparation and professional development curriculum that acknowledges and utilises prior learning experiences fosters a change that needs to occur on a personal level which will influence the school leaders' professional performance" (Polizzi and Frick 2012: 21). Furthermore, they state that the leaders should be exposed to a holistic and transformative approach and reflective learning is crucial in this regard.

Tucker and Codding (2002) also postulate that principals need to be prepared thoroughly now because we live in an age of accountability. Furthermore, Tucker and Codding (2002) contend that as the years have gone by parents and 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. Cross and Sehoole (1997) pointed out that higher education institutions need to strengthen horizontal links between themselves and other institutions. Furthermore, they conceded that higher education institutions should form vertical links with schools and non-governmental organisations while bridging the vocational academic gap. The vertical and horizontal links would play a major role in minimising wastage and underutilisation of resources, duplication of programmes and unhealthy competition between institutions (Cross and Sehoole 1997).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In conducting this qualitative study, purposive sampling was employed. Sometimes referred to as judgemental or theoretical sampling this method is based on the judgement of a researcher regarding participants that are typical or representative of the phenomenon being studied (Brink 2000). When employing purposive sampling the researchers usually use their previous knowledge of a population. Researchers assume they can use their knowledge of the population to judge whether a particular sample will be representative (Fraenkel and Wallen 2000). Thirty participants were selected from a list of first-year and second-year students of an Advanced Certificate in Education, School Management and Leadership (ACE-SML) registered in one of the four Eastern Cape universities. These participants attended their lectures in two different centres and it is in these centres where the researcher observed and interviewed them. The researcher also interviewed six lecturers (who were part of the 30); facilitators in the programme. Classes were mainly held during schools holidays and some Saturdays. The researcher visited the centres for about 20 days in each centre. One group attended their lectures in one of the university's site while the other used an outside venue. The researcher asked questions relating to the quality of the programme. Questions asked included:

- Which aspects of the programme have assisted you in your leadership practice?
- How do you rate the materials used in the programme?
- What is the level of facilitation in the programme?
- Is the university supportive to you and other candidates? Explain.

The lecturers in the programme were also asked questions pertaining to quality in the programme. Some of the questions asked were:

- What are the best parts of the programme?
- How has the programme enhanced your teaching in other programmes you are involved in?
- What needs improvement in the programme?

The lecturers were interviewed three times during the course of the study. Each unstructured interview took about 45 minutes to an hour. Unstructured interviews are freer flowing with structure limited by the focus of the research.

Unstructured interviews are conducted more like a normal conversation but with a purpose (Brink 2000).

THE FINDINGS

The participants shared positive experiences that they had in the ACE SML programme. They said that the facilitators in the programme also made learning easy for many of them because of the interactive way in which the classes were facilitated. During class there was much sharing if ideas and challenges that many faced in their schools. As one participant said:

When you are here with other principals, it always helps to see that you are not alone in experiencing these problems. As a group, we sometimes try to come with solutions although it is not always possible. However, it helps to have people who will not judge you because you are in the same boat.

The session when the student teachers shared their experiences with the group had a very cathartic effect upon them. Just knowing that other principals have similar problems made many relieved as they related their similar experiences as well. The facilitators also ensured that many student teachers led group discussions. This was important because many of the principals had a number of years' experience and it was crucial for them to share experiences and relate how many obstacles were overcome. The facilitators also commended the ACE-SML materials, which they said made the facilitation less cumbersome. One facilitator commented:

The materials are well planned and easy to follow. The case studies are superb and I wish to have similar material in other courses that I teach here. These are so bulky but you wonder what it is that you can throw away. If we have such materials in all our programmes, certainly university lecturers would be more fun.

Another lecturer talked about the way in which the materials empowered him as he facilitated in the programme:

As you prepare for classes, you realise how much you need to read and research on these things. Sometimes you discover some of the important aspects in class when the principals talk about their experiences. The manner of facilitation here has enhanced my teaching skills in other modules. I wish all colleagues could

see how this teaching can be done in an effective way.

The lecturers of different modules also talked about the ways in which their specific modules enriched the ways they perceived higher education. The Portfolio Module, the Assessment Module, the Mentoring Module are some of the modules that were regarded as enriching by the lecturing staff. The student teachers also did say that some lecturers though still used very "stringent approaches" in assessing them "by using the high academic assessment strategies of the university". Assignment marking and referencing was among the aspects that student teachers felt that some lecturers could be finicky about most of the time:

Not all of us will go ahead and be academics. We are here only to be better managers. Proper referencing is not directly relevant to our expertise as leaders and managers. This nearly killed our morale in the programme. Sometimes you get an assignment and you are given a 50% even when you know because of what you know, you deserve more than that.

However, the student teachers concurred that there were many benefits in the programme. They pointed out that they learnt many new aspects of *leadership* and *management* from the programme. Prior their programme involvement, a majority of the student teachers did not know any differences between *management* and *leadership*. Furthermore, few of the student teachers understood concepts such as *change management* and various other management strategies such as shared leadership, distributive leadership and democratic leadership. One participant argued:

Well I learnt many things in these classes. The idea of working with peers was just wonderful as we worked in groups. There were a number of new aspects learnt as well. My role as a manager of change, learning communities, working properly with external stakeholders was all concepts that brought much interest for me in the programme. This was very practical. No principals should lead schools without similar courses.

From these findings, discussion below is prepared under the crucial themes found during the collection of data. These themes are *change management*; *peer learning and networking*; *holistic leadership* and *universities making a change*.

DISCUSSION

Change Management

While the student teachers highlighted the importance of learning about time management, people management many of them found it worthwhile to learn about the management of change. The majority of these school principals still think about their impotence when the new curriculum was introduced in South Africa. They could not be curriculum leaders and were for most of the time "clueless on the management of curriculum issues". However, much literature today underscores the importance of change management as well as the roles of school leaders as transformational leaders. Rowling (2003) contends that today's schools will have to change if they aspire excellence. In managing change well, leaders need to be well prepared as leaders. In the study, the facilitators taught the student teachers critical skills that made them to be leaders. The principals learnt in various ways what it meant to be influential leaders. Rowling (2003:13) states:

People do not follow others by accident. They follow those whose leadership they respect. Transformational leaders usually have the respect of those they are seeking to lead. Respect is not gained without evidence. People willing to run through fire need to be sure that the person they are running for, and with, is worth it. Such respect is based on behaviour and attitude, on example and commitment.

The above are important aspects if leaders are to be followed in schools. Change managers need to command the respect of colleagues as they lead change. The programme that the student teachers did was acknowledging their role in change initiatives. Change can hardly happen in schools without being led and supported by the principals. Fullan (2007) supports the latter when he states that he knows no improving of schools that does not have a principal who is good at leading improvement. Furthermore, Fullan (2007:162) cites other studies in stressing the crucial nature of the role of principal as change managers:

In their more recent and systematic review of professional learning communities, McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) again tout the principal is central to success. They show that principals are in a strategic position to promote or inhibit the development of a teacher learning community in their schools. They found that effective principals "leverage teacher commitment and support for collaboration, broker and develop learning resources for teacher communities", and support transitions between stages of community development.

As change managers, the ACE-SML programme magnified the influence of principals as change managers. The programme focused on the interconnectedness between the school and other stakeholders in the society. Therefore, as change managers their role moves beyond the school. The latter is akin to what Fullan (2003) refers to as the role of principals to make a difference beyond their schools. Fullan (2003) argues that principals should be concerned about the success of the other schools in their district. Fullan also contends that this is the only way that a large number of schools and communities will be able to operate with a moral purpose.

Pretorius (1998) summarised the attributes school leaders such as principals need for the new era of education in South Africa. These were some of the attributes:

- they should share the power and decision-making responsibility with others and should rely on expertise of all members of staff to accomplish the goals of quality instruction and learning;
- they should be instructional leaders;
- they should listen and learn: leading by listening;
- they should be facilitators and coaches, not judges;
- they should create a learning environment in which an attempt is made to improve the knowledge base, skills and capabilities of all staff on an ongoing basis.

Many of the above were part of the ACE-SML curriculum. The programme enabled the student teachers to engage in a number of themes dealing with the management and leadership in schools. Not only was the role of teachers as change managers new to many principals but also their need to share leadership and delegate duties. Singh and Manser (2000) state that there is a need o share vision in schools if change is to be successfully implemented and it is important that teachers support one another. This is more when one examines the relationship between the school principal and the rest of the staff. Furthermore, Singh and Manser (2000) also

point out that schools that do not have a shared vision in place and transformational leadership may have limited success in the implementation of any new curriculum.

Peer Learning and Networking

In a very isolated profession, such as teaching today, the ACE-SML programme showed the crucial nature of sharing school problems and successes. Before joining the programme, the majority of the student teachers hardly shared any of their experiences and many were on the brink of work fatigue because there was no one to listen to their concerns. The university's use of peer learning and networking ensured that these managers and leaders shared many of their profession's concerns. Teachers need practical examples and ideas; and they required coaching and mentoring as they try new techniques in their schools (Moonen and Voogt 2003). These authors also add that teacher networks can offer interesting possibilities in in-service training settings. Furthermore, Moonen and Voogt (2003) define a teacher network as a group of teachers from different schools who cooperate for a longer period on the implementation process of a certain innovation in education. This was crucial for the student teachers as they tried out new leadership strategies. Many of them maintained that the university needed to facilitate these more effectively.

The five key network components are that members of networks should have (Moonen and Voogt 2003: 298).

i. A strong sense of commitment to the innovation;
ii. A sense of shared purpose;
iii. A mixture of information sharing and psychological support;
iv. An effective facilitator;
v. Voluntary participation and equal treatment.

Networking is very much close to peer learning and coaching that teachers experienced in the programme. Swafford (2003) points out that teachers are frequently not able to implement new ideas because of two reasons. On the one hand, the methods may be different from those that teachers have used in the past. On the other, teachers have no support from others as they try to enhance their knowledge and their practice. Teacher leaders, like other educators, need

support from their peers. In addition to this, the student teachers in the programme enjoyed the mentoring aspects where they were paired with mentors from the higher education institution.

Holistic Leadership

Another of the ACE-SML programme is to try to equip the student teachers with a number of skills some of which might have been neglected or overlooked in their past training. Among these are the moral imperatives that make up a holistic leader. The university endeavoured to highlight several aspects of leadership and developing the holistic leader was among these. It was frequently highlighted in classes how teachers need to be aware of the moral imperative of the principal.

The moral imperative of the principal involves leading deep cultural change that mobilises the passion and commitment of teachers, parents, and others to improve the learning of all students, including closing the achievement gap.

We get a sense of the depth of the transformation required by considering what it would take to dramatically increase relational trust in schools. Where relationships historically tend to be distant or fractions: (Bryk and Schneider 2002:14).

The facilitation in the various classes showed the importance of developing trust and in fostering a culture of collaboration. For many years, some school principals have stressed the importance of managing over leadership. There is a need for principals not to lose the moral aspect of leadership. Fullan (2003) points out that principals constantly experience overload but it is far more damaging if they lose track of their moral compass. Theirs is to serve not only their schools but also the communities wherein their schools are situated. The principals need to answer questions as to what their real mission is and whom they are supposed to serve. In the programme there were many who ended up understanding the moral purpose entailed in their jobs.

Understanding school culture and school climate is crucial in understanding educational change. Leading a successful school does not only mean following the vision, mission as well as departmental policies. Isaacson (2007) writes of the need to step back, regroup and re-evalu-

ate own beliefs. He states that our personal belief system and leadership capabilities provide the strong sense of direction we want for the school and ourselves. It is for these reasons that Isaacson (2007) motions for the application of moral and ethical and leadership strategies Moral and ethical demonstrative ways to care for each other: students, staff, parents and community members (Isaacson 2007).

The delivery of much of the work of the programme was delivered via teams and this was a perfect way of modelling certain leadership strategies in their schools. Estebaranz et al. (2003: 135) contend:

Practically all learning phenomena are the result of direct experience, though they may derive vicariously from observing the behaviour. Learning by observation enables the individual to generate and regulate patterns of behaviour, and thus has a great effect in the practice of teaching. Teachers, during group work, are immersed in networks of professional relationships.

In a time of prominence of concepts such as shared leadership and working in teams, the above strategy has become crucial. The student teachers discussed the value of sharing leadership.

Universities Making a Change: Using Alternative Teaching Strategies

The successes highlighted above were because of the different kind of materials used in the programme. The ACE- SML project accorded the institution to work closely with the schools where the candidates were coming from. Furthermore, the programme required the university to use the interactive materials instead of the usual lecture methods employed by the universities. More student-centred approaches to teaching were emphasised as the lecturers facilitated the classes. Daniels (1999) pointed out that the achievement of mega-universities pose a challenge to conventional academic practice because they show that a different approach to teaching can be more successful than lecturing. As changes are embraced in higher education system, the faculty is expected to facilitate teaching and learning that would result in far reaching changes in the learners than does learning in general. The lecturing staff at universities should embrace the idea of transformational

teaching as they move away from the conventional approach. The traditional approach to education includes some or all of the following elements; lecture presentation, teacher as authority and knowledge expert, a hierarchical power structure in the classroom, learners as mostly passive recipients of knowledge who regurgitate back their understanding of content in exams (Schwerin 1998). Schwerin also lists criticisms addressed by the transformational approach to education. New faculty and veteran faculty members need to develop an approach to address these criticisms when they reflect on their facilitation of learning they also need introspection that enables them to examine their teaching styles. There are various criticisms levelled against the conventional approach education:

1) Conventional approach (discussed above) fosters inequitable social divisions and hinders attempts to build a peaceful and just social order. Students are encouraged to compete with one another to achieve the best grades. Some students lose for others to win. This breaks the sense of community among the students.

2) Conventional approach promotes passivity towards teachers and other authority figures. In these classrooms, the students are taught in an unquestioning way to digest information offered to them in a lecture format.

3) Traditional classes are characterised by the use of "power-over" instead of by the more empowering use of "power-with". Students in these classes learn from the hidden curriculum to submit to authority not to become questioning and proactive.

4) When teachers use their positions as authorities to control students, they reinforce the dominant social order. The conventional educational practices may socialise learners to value authority of the state preparing the learners to defend the status quo (Schwerin 1999: 104-105).

Few progressive academics would want the universities to perpetuate the above. Facilitation in the ACE-SML programme was done in such a way that course was planned in such a way that it accommodated need to be addressed by a curriculum that addresses democratic citi-

zenship. The principals frequently did case studies that addressed their school realities and these were able to use transformational ways of looking at management and leadership. The teacher education programmes have to explore the transformational approaches to enhance self-esteem of both themselves and their learners. As Schwerin (1999:108) puts it:

Transformational approaches should be designed to enhance self-esteem and self- efficacy, to develop the knowledge, skills and political awareness essential for democratic citizenship, to teach students and encourage them to take responsibility for their communities and their world. A guiding question or compass for transformational teachers might be; what can I do to make my approach to teaching more empowering?

The candidates in the programme experienced movement away from teaching by lecturers to embrace learning. The role of the lecturers transformed as learning was emphasised more. Universities need to see their mission as the production of learning rather than teaching.

Barr and Tagg (1995: 17) draw up the nature of roles under the instruction paradigm and the learning paradigm (see Table 1):

Table 1: Nature of faculty roles

The instruction paradigm	The learning paradigm
Faculty are primarily lecturers	Faculty are primarily designers of learning methods and en vironments
Faculty and students act independently and in isolation	Faculty and students work in teams with each other and other staff
Faculty and students act independently and in isolation	Faculty and students work in teams with each other and other staff
Teachers classify and sort students	Teachers develop every stu dent's competencies and tal ents
Staff serve/support faculty and the process of instruction	All staff are educators who produce student learning and success
Any expert can teach	Empowering learning is chal lenging and complex
Line governance: independent actors	Shared governance: team work

The ACE SML programme was also responsive to the call for change in higher education institutions. There were a number of women and black principals in the sample. It is a historical fact that there were always fewer numbers when it came to blacks and women in higher education. Badat (2004) refers to this serious contemporary under-representation of black and women students in particular fields and post-graduate level. Furthermore, Badat (2004:3) declares that one key policy imperative is to transform higher education "so that it becomes more socially equitable internally and promotes social equity more generally by providing opportunity for social advancement through equity of access and opportunity". While there were not many white candidates in the population, there were many women and black Africans. The sample was selected from a population of 50 candidates. Of these 27 were women. Of these women, four were Coloured women, two were White females and three were Indian. There were only two White males in the population.

Apart from addressing the issues of equity and redress, the ACE-SML programme also attempted to attend to quality. The programme was drawn to ensure that the candidates become life long learners whose management practice would improve. The university used student-centred materials and tried to address the candidates' needs with quality delivery. Many universities have tried to address issues of equity in management. However, Badat (2004) points out that generally this achievement of equity is being compromised by inefficiencies and shortcomings in quality. In the ACE-SML though, the institution was trying to serve the candidates better. We are at a time when the graduates from higher education institutions and "to fulfil the requirements of the various professions and the labour market, to be lifelong learners and be able to function as critical, culturally enriched and tolerant citizens" (Badat 2004). The programme's delivery was responding to the challenges that principals encounter in their schools. The material focused on real life case studies that address everyday challenges that principals face. For the university situated in the Eastern Cape Province there are pressing needs for it to be relevant to the province's unique needs. Pillay (2004: 86) contends as she writes about the Eastern Cape:

The higher education institutions are situated in a province characterised by high levels of poverty, with declining employment trends... one of the central challenges for higher challenges for higher education is to contribute to

developing the human resources of particular importance in the province, such as the need for teachers, health and social service professionals and personnel for the public sector.

The ACE SML programme in the institutions was a direct response to this challenge. With all the strategies and materials, the programme was also addressing the need for better schools in the province. The university was preparing the candidates to go back to their schools as matured professionals. Gold (1999) writes of the need to universities to support teachers and ensure that they develop psychological maturity to cope in their schools. At a time when head teachers experience a number of challenges in their schools, the programme was effective in enhancing their professional management styles. Gold (1999) points out that when university teacher education includes psychological support programmes, the teachers trained will be able to enter their schools better prepared to handle themselves and the stress related to their jobs. Furthermore, Gold (1999) contends that when teachers possess psychological maturity, they are able to handle their own needs and that emotionally as well as psychologically matured teachers are better prepared to grow in their knowledge and skill as teachers. The ACE SML programme was planned in such a way that it addresses these as well. The HEI had to adjust its teaching towards this direction. It was interesting to listen to the lecturing staff when they pointed out that they hoped that they would be able to apply the teaching strategies learnt in the programme to other programmes they were teaching at the university. Not only had the candidates grown in the programme but the university staff as well. The staff stated that many aspects in the programme were new to them; the portfolios, the interactive materials, the school visits and mentoring were all aspects that were long overdue in the attempt to sustain relevant, supportive institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study illustrates the importance of the transforming university's role in the enhancement of skills. The new facilitative roles of the teaching staff, the interactive materials, the commitment of the university to respond to student needs, all addressed issues of relevance. The candidates in the ACE SML programme all gleaned from the experience because the materi-

als as well as the service provider had altered its role to respond to the needs of the students. The study has also demonstrates that education will not only be as effective as its materials and lectures. Addressing the immediate needs of the students' matters in any higher education programme. The ACE-SML showed that it was striving for relevance as it addressed the experiences of the school managers. Any formal education should strive for this relevance and applicability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After the conclusion of this study the researcher drew a number of recommendations. The recommendations mainly focus on how higher education institutions can improve their practice and relevance whilst facilitating learning among students:

Critical Thinking Should Be Emphasised by University Programmes

University programmes should emphasise the critical skills needed in this century of technological advancement. It is crucial for today's students in university programmes to be able to generate own knowledge as they learn. Universities should move away from the traditional ways of teaching where students learnt through rote learning and teacher-centred approaches.

Need for Universities to Envisage New Kinds of Teachers

Lecturers in higher education institutions need to change with the times. They need to understand their role in today's institutions. Lecturers also need to support students who are self-directed and lifelong learners. This means they need to re-educate themselves as they work to support students to be critical thinkers. In this study one can see how students needed to be supported to utilise their experience in changing their management skills for the better.

Higher Education Should Transform Students

Finally, higher education needs to intentionally transform the role of students. The most powerful of programmes offered will be impotent if these institutions do not model the kind

of students needed for the future. Passivity should be discouraged by ensuring that all students become part of the teaching and learning process. The modules should be prepared in such a way that they promote student engagement and criticism. Learning will not happen effectively if higher education institutions do not exhibit their expectations as to how students should be in their programmes. Even noble programmes such as the ACE-SML explored in this study will fail if the students fail to be critical and active role-players.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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