

EDITORIAL

Learning for Development – Discourse and Practice

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‘Learning for development,’ or for that matter the broader formulation of ‘education for development,’ has attracted greater attention during the past decades with further articulations within lifelong learning/ education, education for sustainable development, and digitalisation and development. Irrespective of varied perceptions and interpretations of ‘development’, the general view has been that education and learning must ensure freedom and lead to a holistic development of human beings in relation to their environment and context, and in relation to others. Drawing on the work of Amartya Sen on ‘development as freedom’, Daniel (2014) argues that economic and educational equality, universal human rights, values and sustainable development continue to (and, shall continue to) dominate the policy and practice of the development agenda of nation states.

In the context of higher education, Tait (2018) analyses that for widening access to higher and further education, the developments in ‘distance education’ have come a long way now, emphasising more of ‘open education’, with the affordances of digital technologies, contributing to the development agenda and also gradually blurring the distinction between online and campus-based education. This blurring and blending will continue further, vis-à-vis what happened during the period of COVID-19 and beyond. Today, technology dominates almost all aspects of human life and our environment, and information and communication technologies (ICT) will further expand to new heights in the future, demanding our consistent engagement in reflective discourse on its contours and practices. In this context of the process of development, what Zheng et al (2018) argue holds good – that we need to confront diverse ideologies, power structures and forces of power in the embedding of ICT for development. In this context, development is viewed as short and medium term, and as long-term societal transformation, based on ‘development as discourses’, and in which ‘theory of change’ may provide the required direction toward implementation. Within the sustainable development agenda, there is also a need to integrate sustainable learning and transformation in (higher) education; and self-reflection by teachers and trainers on their own values is critical in developing the potential of students to act as agents of sustainable development for a sustainable future (Filho et al, 2018). The critical factors and the model formulated by Rohweder and Virtanen (2009), based on a constructive research approach, relating to contextual, mental and activity dimensions, may help educational institutions in their efforts toward promotion of societal change for sustainable development.

The Commonwealth of Learning’s agenda and interventions have been based on the larger view of ‘learning for development’, as also on the more practical view of lifelong learning and learning for sustainable development, and a bottom-up approach to learning as a facilitative but self-sustaining process. To further this agenda among the scholarly circles and to critically appreciate the work done at the grassroots and in-context, it initiated in 2014 the scholarly ‘*Journal of Learning for Development*’ which in the past has often deliberated and reported on the concerns of ‘learning for development’. In



this issue of the *JLAD*, we present 11 articles which deal with this theme through various discourses as well as practices.

The first '*invited*' contribution to this issue by Terry Evans and Viktor Jakupec will add to the current discourses on 'education/learning for development'. The scholars provide an extensive background discussion on the shaping of international development and sustainability; and deploy the theories of modernization and dependency to analyse how international aid agencies have basically driven the agenda of the developing nations to catch up with the developed ones. The authors plead for the Commonwealth of Learning (which is 'one of the most significant multi-national organisations addressing education for development') to develop and share more indigenous/ local knowledge as part of a 'Lockean commonwealth of learning' and to sharpen the research capacity of developing nation states to produce more local knowledge and also to dig out the lost indigenous knowledge.

In the second '*invited*' contribution, Mapine Makoe and Don Olcott analyse and echo similar sentiments in the African context — with the backdrop of technological developments, the COVID-19 pandemic and a perception of the ill-preparedness of the nation states — arguing that governmental and institutional policies need to be geared toward embracing the future with respect for dignity, indigenous culture, language and heritage, and for a renewed Pan-African Ubuntu.

In the '*research articles*' section, we have included six papers, which in one way or the other contribute to 'learning for development'. Two papers deal with COVID-19 and pedagogy/ learning in the African continent. In the first research paper, Ramashego Mphahlele and colleagues from three southern African countries report on digital inequality in accessing online educational provisions in the Covid-era in comparison to pre-Covid blended learning (which was generally accessible to all) due to significant gaps in digital access and literacy between rural and urban, and digital immigrant and digital native students. The authors suggest that there is a need to ensure digital equity among pre-service teachers and also development of their digital learning skills. In the next paper, Kadhila and Nyambe, while echoing similar problems in Namibia, found additional issues relating to navigation to learning content and quality of online learning. The authors underline for governments and institutions the importance of learning from the transitional phase of COVID-19 and further developing online pedagogies as a definite trend for the future, with built-in quality assurance measures aligned to the newer approaches.

In the repertoire of research and development in pedagogy and teaching-learning, constructivist approaches like problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PrBL) assume prime importance. In the research study on PBL in biology learning, Monika Laksmi and colleagues report the significant impact of PBL on the development of scientific explanation skills in biology in school students. The authors recommend the use of PBL in school teaching, especially in the context of biological materials about the environment. Doğan and Batdı report on a meta-thematic analysis of brainstorming as a creativity-promoting technique and its impact on the achievement of learners. The researchers analysed 34 qualitative studies, and based on seven conducive studies, found that brainstorming had a positive impact on the cognitive and affective skills of learners (i.e., problem solving via critical thinking), and that future researchers should explore further on various divergent, convergent, lateral, critical thinking and problem-solving skills in diverse teaching contexts.

In the next research paper, Luwoye, Bello and Adeoye report findings of a study, by using multistage sampling and quasi-experimental design, on the impact of demo kits on misconceptions in mitosis and meiosis by senior secondary school students. The researchers found its positive impact, and therefore recommend for teachers to use demo kits for correcting pre- and post-instructional misconceptions of students.

In a qualitative descriptive research, Yulingga Hanief and co-researchers report the factors that inhibit the publication productivity in international journals by sports lecturers. The major factors include the ability of scientific research reporting and costs involved in such an activity. Time to devote to such work was also another factor, since most of the time was devoted to carrying out field work. The researchers suggest that institutions need to encourage faculty and facilitate their participation in training programmes on scientific article writing.

We have included two ‘*case studies*’ in the next section — one on teachers’ perception of OER in English language teaching in schools, and the other on open and innovative schooling. Orwenjo and Erastus report the findings of a baseline survey on schoolteachers who had been provided access to open resources through the platform of Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) and who had attended a training workshop on how to use OER. The researchers discovered various institutional, cultural, pedagogic and personal factors inhibiting teachers to use OER, and suggest an institutional bottom-up approach to the use of OER, factoring in the constraints that teachers face. Cossa and co-researchers report a tracer study on the open and innovative schooling model piloted in fifteen secondary schools in Mozambique in the use of digital OER. The study shows that generally the pilot was successful, though to scale up the innovation, certain factors including access to devices, teacher training and support, and integration to school curriculum need to be considered and strengthened.

In ‘*reports from the field*’, we have included an important paper on learning development in a technological university in Ireland. Roisin Donnelly analyses a new approach designed and deployed for colleagues on teaching excellence and evidence-based practice in teaching-learning/ pedagogic inquiry. The innovative approach to pedagogic inquiry involved effective integration of inquiry and teaching, leading to enhancement in faculty productivity. This is also a fine example of discourse on and evidence-based application of scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education, and a showcase on the shift from ‘teaching as reflective practice’ to ‘engagement in disciplinary inquiry and scholarship of teaching and learning’. The author suggests to further consider creation of appropriate and flexible opportunities for professional development with built-in recognition and incentives.

We end this issue with a book review by Rosario Passos of *Virtual reality in curriculum and pedagogy: Evidence from secondary classrooms*, edited by Sheila Jagannathan. The review concludes that ‘this book provides practical and useful insights on the state of educational provision in a post-pandemic world, putting forward alternatives for how and where to invest in education and capacity development to meet the SDGs’.

We hope the invited discourses and externally reviewed research papers on practices shall be useful to researchers and practitioners and contribute to the literature on ‘learning for development’. I must sincerely thank Dr Tony Mays, associate editor, who has single-handedly put in so much for giving a

shape to this November issue; and to Alan Doree who has meticulously copy-edited the articles. Thanks are also due to all the contributors who have continued their work of research and scholarship even during the time of COVID-19 and so have contributed to this issue of *JLAD*.

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Cite this paper as: Panda, S. (2021). Editorial— Learning for development – Discourse and practice. *Journal of Learning for Development*, 8(3), i-iv.