

Curbing Social Impediments for Educational Innovations in the Context of Higher Institute of Learning

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Social impediments are the greatest threats to higher institutions of learning in developing countries. The influence of social ills is felt as attendance in learning institutions continue to dwindle and result to growing students drop-out rates. Curbing and incorporating social impediments in the higher education system can enhance innovative collaborative skills to solve global problems thus providing adequate opportunities for students to experience real-life learning experiences in different fields of the job market. For the purpose of this study, the scoping review aided by qualitative approach were used to plot extant evidence for insights into social impediments in the context of higher institutions of higher learning. Primary data based on interviews was extracted through thematic technique supported by quotations and narrative summaries from forty-five (45) participants. The final outcomes show increasing interest by learning institutions to try and curtail social impediments. In addition, it was revealed that curbing social ills, more educational institutions should include social issues as part of their core curricula to shape students' future for specialized innovative skills.

Key words: *Social Impediments, Educational Innovations, Higher Institute of Learning*

INTRODUCTION

This paper solicits to address the issue of curbing social impediments that seems to engulf innovations in the context of higher institute of learning, with special reference to South African students. Mechanisms and strategies implemented by institutions of higher learning are gradually taking shape, but do not succinctly address the ailing social impediments which prepares higher education students for future specialized innovative skills. The existing social impediments in higher education have further been exacerbated by the emergence of COVID-



19 pandemic, which introduced and propelled students to adjust to emergency online learning. The focus of this paper is about curbing social impediments for educational innovations in the context of higher institute of learning that is threatening to shape and prepare students for future specialized innovative skills to fit in a viable job market and be creative entrepreneurs. Given the saturated job market and a lack of sustainable Small and Medium Entrepreneurs, due to lack of funding in South Africa, and the persistent social impediments to higher education, the situation has further deteriorated with the social ills that are presented to students in higher education. This paper shows how social impediments can be curbed in the context higher education especially for South African students. Recent studies reveal an association between high poverty rates and students' dropout (Dieltiens and Meny-Gilbert, 2008/09) due to social impediments. Equally, several factors such as race, gender and poverty, among others are contributors to students dropping out from the Higher Education Sector (Klein, 2010). Students' dropout can be caused by three broad factors, namely, personal, family, social based and macro or general according to (Cunningham, McGinnis, Gacia-Verdu, Tesliu and Verner, 2008). Social risk issues refer to demographic factors associated with higher likelihood of school failure such as minority-language status, family income, parents' education and family structure. Social risk factors have been shown to negatively affect a students' academic performance and thus linked to student dropout (McKee and Caldarella (2016).

Thabethe (2017) also asserts that socio-economic experiences may leave students feeling disempowered as a result of being discriminated against and lack of support could lead to failure as students (Karimi, 2015). Individual quest to belong to peer group is another social issues such as stress and learners' anxiety which impact on the learning environment (Dieltiens and MenyGilbert, 2009). Peer pressure, however, has been cited as the greatest contributor to the school dropout rate among the youth (Munsaka, 2009; Masitsa, 2006; Fobih, 1987). According to recent study, most students' dropout from the Higher Education Sector due to suggestions by their peers (Dizon-Luna, 2013). Other studies have shown that students who are faced with peer rejection do not only lack the necessary motivation to attend school but are also unable to actively participate in various social activities (Barclay and Doll, 2001).

The study discussed the Maslows Hierachy of needs to further highlight the social impediments experienced by students of higher learning. Justification for using Maslows Hierachy of needs stems from the fact that this theory talks to humanistic psychology. This paper is presented in five sections namely, the introductory section which presents the main conceptual frame of discussion. The second section explores the literature review related to the study social impediments experienced by these student in higher education. The key factors of the section leads to suggested recommendations that can be used in curbing social impediments for educational innovations in the context of higher institute of learning. Next, the author examine the Lastly, the concluding remarks were outlined based on the recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Cummins, Davis, Freeman, Giesinger and Anathanarayanan (2017), significant challenges impeding technology adoption in Higher Education, the six challenges were improving digital literacy, Integrating Formal and Informal Learning, Achievement Gap, Advancing Digital Equity, Managing Knowledge Obsolescence and Rethinking the Roles of Educators.

Improving Digital Literacy: The productive and innovative use of technology encompasses twenty- first century practices that are important for success in the workplace and beyond. Digital literacy exceeds gaining isolated technological skills to generating a deeper understanding of the digital environment, enabling instinctive adaptation to new contexts and cocreation of content with others.

Digital literacy is the set of competencies required for full participation in a knowledge society. It comprises knowledge, skills and behaviours involving the effective use of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop personal computers for purposes of communication, expression, collaboration and advocacy. Digital information is a representative of data and literacy refers to the ability to read for knowledge, write logically, and think critically about the written word. The individual is able to find, apprehend and evaluate information. Digital literacy requires the individual to comprehend the societal issues raised by digital technologies and acquire critical thinking skills (Digital literacy, 2017).

Institutions are indicted with developing students' digital citizenship, ensuring mastery of responsible and suitable technology use, including online communication protocol and digital rights and responsibilities in blended and online learning settings and beyond. This new classification is affecting curriculum design, professional development, and student-facing services and resources. Owing to an assortment of elements comprising digital literacy, higher education leaders are confronted with obtaining institution-wide buy-in and to support all stakeholders in developing these capabilities. Frameworks are helping institutions to evaluate current staff capabilities, identify growth areas and develop approaches to implement digital literacy practices.

Santo and Serpa (2017) postulate that in a context of development and expansion of a progressively digital society, training in competencies within the space of Digital Literacy (DL) of higher education students becomes crucial (Jeffrey, Hegarty, Kelly, Penman, Coburn, and McDonald (2011); thus far, it is frequently viewed as something that is "often taken for granted" (Murray and Perez, 2014). Equally, at the political level, the importance of training future professionals in both digital and scientific capacities is acknowledged (Murray and Perez, 2014). The ability to use ICT and the Internet becomes a new form of literacy and is becoming a requirement for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Without these competencies, citizens cannot contribute fully in society nor acquire the skills and knowledge



necessary to survive in the twenty-first century (European Commission, 2003 as cited by Murray and Perez, 2014). Heitor (2016) also shared the same sentiments by alluding that it is imperative to further promote scientific culture. Digital Literacy (DL) is presently vital for social, academic and professional success and will play a crucial role in the near future (Murray and Perez, 2014; Martin, 2006). Therefore, the link between DL and promotion of scientific culture, in formal and informal environments, both in face-to-face teaching modality and in online learning processes, is, therefore, critical (Prior, Mazanov, Meacheam, Heaslip and Hanson, 2016; Knutsson, Blåsiö, Hållsten, and Karlström, 2012; Kivunja 2015; Meyers, Erickson, and Small, 2013; Jeffrey et al., 2011).

Integrating Formal and Informal Learning: As the internet has opened an interest of self-directed and curiosity-based learning, more and more people have the ability to learn something new. Informal learning is comprised of these activities, along with, life experience and more unexpected forms of learning, and serves to improve student engagement by encouraging them to follow their interests. Many specialists believe that blending formal and informal methods of learning can create an environment that nurtures experimentation, curiosity, and creativity. An all-encompassing goal is to encourage and pursue lifelong learning in Higher Education.

Cummins, Davis, Freeman, Giesinger and Anathanarayanan (2017) posits that institutions are beginning to experiment with flexible programs that provide credit for prior learning and capabilities gained through employment. Bagui and Mwapwele (2019) asserts that with such abundance of information available to anyone with a stable and fast Internet connection, the potential for informal learning is crucial enough to threaten the institution of formal education (Cox, 2013). It means that a resolute learner would learn almost anything from their connected device.

Notwithstanding, such potential lies with the mobile device, particularly, the smart device which benefits from the explosive penetration of mobile technology and ICT infrastructure into underdeveloped SubSaharan Africa (Aker and Mbiti, 2010). Consequently, in countries such as Togo, Gambia, Senegal, Cameroon, Uganda, Rwanda, Botswana, including South Africa, just to mention a few, it is noted that learners who possess a mobile device, are able to access the Internet (Aker and Mbiti, 2010). They are frequently engrossed in them; largely accessing social media platforms for socialization, recreation and entertainment (Magde, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley, 2009).

De-Marcos, Garcia-Lopez, and Garcia-Cabot, (2016); and Schugurensky, (2000) posits that many studies have suggested that a lot of learning considered to be authentic and experiential takes place in personalised informal spaces which is created by majority of learners equipped with a mobile device in educational infrastructure disadvantaged Sub-Saharan Africa.



Cavus, Bicen, and Ackil, 2008; Lin and Lin, 2016; Melhuish, Falloon and Melhuish 2010; Wu, Wu, Chen, Kao, Lin, and Huang (2012) as cited by Bagui and Mwapwele (2019) further suggests that research deduces learners using mobile devices for academic purposes and suggests it affords learners without computers at home, access to learning materials that they were unable to understand in class which complements classroom learning (Cavus, Bicen, and Akcil 2008; Lin and Lin, 2016; Melhuish, Falloon, and Melhuish, 2010; Wu, Wu, Chen, Kao, Lin, and Huang (2012). For example, learners would use mobile devices outside the classroom to support peers and siblings, search databases and assume online online quiz, or tests, hold online meetings and discussions to enhance recommended textbooks as well as to search for information they can utilise for their lives (Carlson, 2005; Mwapwele, and Roodt, 2016; Nguyen, Barton, and Nguyen, 2014).

Achievement Gap: Cummins, Davis, Freeman, Giesinger and Ananthanarayanan (2017) further postulates that the achievement gap replicates a disparity and academic performance between student groups, defined by socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity and gender. Despite the fact that emerging technological developments, for example, digital courseware an open educational resources (OER) have made it easier to take part in the learning resources, pertinent issues of access and equity, especially from low income minority, single-parent families and other marginalised student groups. The challenge facing higher education is to fulfil the needs of all learners, while aligning post-secondary programs with deeper learning outcomes and attainment of twenty-first century skills, enabled by personalised learning strategies. Bensimon (2005) postulates that the reduction of inequalities lies within individuals, explicitly, in their capacity to develop equity as their cognitive frame.

Advancing Digital Equity: It is a social-justice goal of ensuring that everyone in the society has equal access to technology tools, computers and the Internet. Puigiane (2016) defines digital equity as an unequal access to technology, predominantly broadband internet. UNESCO reports that while 3.2 billion people across the globe are using the internet, only 41% of those that live in developing countries are online. Furthermore, 200 million women compared to men are accessing the internet. Skiba (2019) refers to digital equity as an inadequacy of access to Internet, particularly, broadband access. While many may think that lack of broadband is a challenge facing only developing countries, Holmes (2016) alludes that 30 million Americans lack broadband access. It is noteworthy to note at this point that access refer to making web content accessible to disabled/underprivileged populations.

Managing Knowledge Obsolescence: Skiba (2019) postulates that as online learning has become accepted in academy, (Skiba, 2017a), research to recognise best practices in online and face-to-face learning has directed the offering of blended learning prospects. With a large scale and availability of dynamic learning management platforms, institutions of higher learning are able to advance flexibility, ease of access, and various multimedia technologies to balance the face-to-face meetings. Staying organised and current offers a challenge to academics in a world where educational needs, software, and devices advance at a strenuous rate. New

developments in technology hold a great latent for improving the quality of learning and operations. Nevertheless, when the faculty and staff are beginning to master one technology, a new version launches. Institutions are yet to contend with the longevity and back-up plans before making large investments. There is compounding pressure to ensure that any tools selected are in service of deepening learning outcomes in ways that are quantifiable. Additionally, the pervasive emphasis on research over teaching for promotion and term consideration has endangered progress in designing high-quality learning experiences, requiring faculty to balance the two and track relevant professional development even in the face of insufficient budgets Cummins, Davis, Freeman, Giesinger and Ananthanarayanan (2017).

Rethinking the Roles of Educators: Saykilia (2019) suggests that the developments in digital connective technologies in the twenty-first century prompt another change pressure in the roles and responsibilities of the instructors at the higher education. Moreover, instructors are also required to be fortified with new sets of skills and qualifications in the digital age (Odabasi, Firat, and Izmirli, 2010). Educators are progressively expected to employ an array of technology based tools such as digital learning resources and courseware. Furthermore, they are assigned with the power to instil methodologies and problem-based learning. The persistent shift to student-centred learning requires academics to act as guides and facilitators. Tallying to this challenge, is the progression of learning through the rise of capability based education, which further converts the academic experience to students' needs. As these technology-enabled methodologies gather condensation, many institutions of higher learning across the world are rethinking the primary responsibilities of educators. Due to these compounding expectations, are the prospects and implications of societal changes and developing faculty models where an increasing percentage of classes are being taught by non-tenure track instructors.

According to Saša, Nikola, Branislava, Margareta, Teo, Mirta, Iva and Josip (2021), a study conducted on 207 households with children growing up in poverty (Rubil, Stubbs, and Zrinšč, 2018), produced encouraging findings that 42% of childrens' parents who receive the guaranteed minimum benefits believe that their children should receive higher education, while 31% of the surveyed primary school students from this group envisaged obtaining higher education. Bandalović, Vučica, Z. and Gvozdrenović, 2019) states that a more recent survey conducted between July and August 2019 on 216 full-time students of the University of Split who had worked during the past year, indicated a 95% of respondents who worked due to an unfavourable financial situation, but the same percentage of respondents were motivated to gain new experiences and knowledge. Thirty eight percent (38%) of the surveyed students were not satisfied with the hourly rate, yet, 48% of students stated that they had fewer labour rights than other workers. Additionally, 24% of the employed students thought that their work affected their success, and 20% felt that they would have had better study success if they did not have to work.

SOCIAL IMPEDIMENT EXPERIENCED BY STUDENTS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

This section will present a thematic analysis of the themes and sub-themes identified from the semi-structured interviews conducted with students in the South African context. Bryan and Bell (2011:350) asserts that the goal of thematic analysis is to identify, analyse and describe patterns or themes across the data set. Table 1 below depicts the social impediments/themes experienced by students in South African Higher education.

Table 1: Social factors, themes and sub-themes.

	THEMES	SUB-THEMES
SOCIAL FACTORS, THEMES AND SUB-THEMES		
1.	Core enabling factors to academic success	1.1 Loneliness and a feeling of not belonging to a University
2.	A sense of identity and belongingness	2.1 Finding pressure from friends
3.	Family and Societal support structure	3.1 Poor Family background 3.2 Society and community's influence
4.	Family circumstances and finances	4.1 Family finances 4.2 Being a bread-winner at home
5.	Overcommitment clashing with studies	5.1 Indebtedness resulting to students departing early to seek employment 5.2 Multi-roles, for example being a family man/woman

Emanating from the above themes and sub-themes (Table 1), it is imperative to discuss the Maslows Hierarchy of need and explain how this theory fits in this study. Firstly a Maslows hierarchy of needs diagram is depicted to support the discussion.

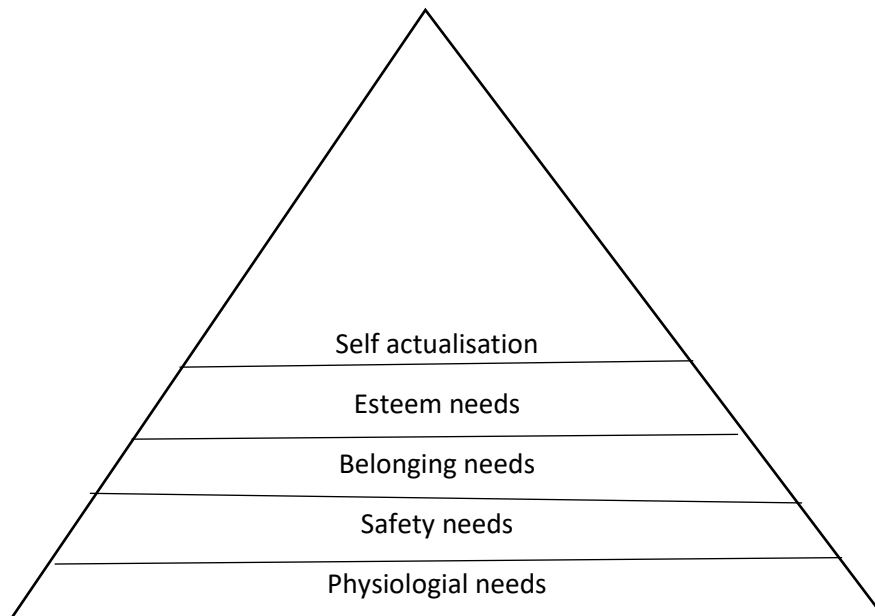


Figure 1: Maslows Hierachy of needs

Physiological needs

These refer to basic physical needs like drinking when thirsty or eating when hungry. According to Maslow, some of these needs involve our efforts to meet the body's needs for homeostasis, that is, maintain consistent levels in different bodily systems. Maslow reflected on physiological needs to be the most essential of our needs. If someone is deficient in more than one need, they are likely to try to meet these physiological needs first. For example, if someone is extremely hungry, it is hard to focus on anything else besides food. For the purposes of this study, this is associated with lack of food experienced by students either from the home or university setting, they are likely to lose focus on their academic activities as their physiological need of hunger is not fulfilled.

Safety

Once people's physiological requirements are met, the next need that arises is a safety environment. Our safety needs are apparent even early in childhood, as have a need for safe and predictable environments and typically react with fear or anxiety when these are not met. Maslow alluded that in adults living in developed nations, safety needs are more apparent in emergency situations, but this need can also explain why we are likely to prefer the familiar or why we do things like purchase insurance and contribute to savings account.

Love and Belonging

According to Maslow, the next need in the hierarchy involves feeling loved and accepted. This need includes both romantic relationships as well as ties to friends and family members. It also encompasses our need to feel that we belong to a social group. Significantly, this need encompasses both feeling loved and feeling love towards others. Since Maslow's time, researchers have continued to investigate how love and belonging needs impact well-being. For example, having social connections is related to better physical health and, conversely, feeling isolated (having unmet belonging needs) has negative consequences for health and well-being.

Esteem

Our esteem needs involve the desire to feel good about ourselves. According to Maslow, esteem needs include two components. The first involves feeling self-confidence and feeling good about oneself. The second component involves feeling valued by others; that is feeling that our achievements and contributions have been recognised by other people. When people's esteem needs are met, they feel confident and see their contributions and achievements as appreciated and important. However, when their esteem needs are not met, they may encounter what psychologist Alfred Adler called "feeling of inferiority."

Self-Actualisation

Self-actualisation refers to feeling fulfilled, or feeling that we are living up to our potential. One unique feature of self-actualisation is that it varies from one person to another. For one person, self-actualisation might involve helping others; for another person, it might involve achievements in an artistic or creative field. Fundamentally, self-actualisation means feeling that we are doing what we believe we are meant to do. According to Maslow, achieving self-actualisation is moderately rare, and his examples of famous self-actualised individuals include Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein and Mother Teresa.

From the interviews conducted, through qualitative data collection method, from groups as well as individuals respectively, and coding of participants, the following responses were recorded emerging from themes and sub-themes:

1. Core enabling factors to academic success

The following reflected participants' responses regarding core-enabling factors to academic success. Sub-themes include loneliness and a feeling of not belonging to a University.

• **Sub-theme 1.1: Loneliness and a feeling of not belonging to a University**

The following section, responses and quotes will focus on all participants' feeling of loneliness and not belonging to a university.

Group B, there was a mixture of responses, some respondents stated: "They do not experience loneliness", yet some stated: "One respondent said, " I do feel lonely, especially when I have to face reality that I no longer stay with my parents and siblings".

From the same group, a married participant stated "I face a problem, especially at night, I miss my children and husband and I am very lonely....."

Group D, they do not feel lonely as majority of them stayed at home. Those that stayed at the residences had created friendship with others. *One participant stated: "I miss my child in the evenings"I wish I was staying with him.....I wait for Fridays to go home and see him".*

Group E, stated: "we feel being part of the university as all our requirements and expectations are met.

Theme 2: A sense of identity and belongingness

The following responses and quotes reflected in the participants' sense of identity and belonging. Sub-themes include experiencing pressure from friends that could lead to dropout and discouragement due to inability to purchase designer clothes.

Sub-theme: 2.1 Finding pressure from friends

Generally, groups said they did not feel any pressure from friends. Except one participant in group B, *stated:....." I have a friend who comes from a rich family"..... "she has all the fancy things, like an Apple phone and top of the range laptop, she goes to the best restaurants" ... "I feel pressured if I have to go with her as I do not have money and cannot match up to her living standards"*

On the individual respondents, participant W stated: " I feel pressured when we have to go out as friends...." I do not have pocket money" ... they buy everything for me" ... my mother is a domestic worker and my father relies on piece-jobs".

Theme 3: Family and Societal support structure

The following quotes and statements reflected groups and individual participant's responses pertaining to societal support structures. Sub-themes included family background as the main driving force to discouragement which could lead to social impediment within society.

Sub-theme 3.1: Poor Family background

The following section and quotes focused on family background as the main driving force that could lead to dropout.

Group A and B respectively, stated that family background does play a huge role in a student deciding to dropout. Poverty was cited as one main reason. They stated that if the family cannot afford to buy food and provide for basic needs, it was even more challenging for a student to focus on their studies, as they will be constantly thinking whether his or her family had something to eat for the day.

Participant H stated: "At home, the only person who is working is my father, he works at a factory, sometimes they have "short-times", meaning they are asked to stay at home as machines are being serviced".....If it is the case in that month, we hardly have enough groceries to see us for the whole month"..... we also share one laptop which was given to me by the lady I cut grass for, on weekends, it is slow and there are six of us to use it, sometimes we do not have money to buy data, so we can attend classes online.... It is hard" ...

Participant T stated: "No one is working at home"....."My mother collects pension, and we only rely on her grant money for survival. Currently I am thinking of leaving the university to seek employment so that I can assist my mother to provide for the family" ...

Participant AE stated: "My father passed away when we were small and my mother raised us".... I studied hard to pass matric to get to where I am today. I received the funding through my hard work"..... For me, family background motivated me to always do my best in life. "But, for some, circumstances are bad such that they cannot even get to university". "Currently there is no one working at home, but I am taking that as a motivation to excel in my studies so that I can make things better at home"..... the only challenge is a proper working computer and data, it gets finished quickly as I attend classes everyday".

Participant AJ stated: "Both my parents are late, due to a car accident. My grandmother raised me. Only my uncle is working. It is very hard at home. I thought of dropping out, but I realised I will be setting myself up for failure if I do that as my situation will remain the same for the rest of my life"..... But, when I think of my life circumstance, I feel like dropping out".

Participant AR stated: "At home we are all studying and there is only one person working. At times I feel like leaving university early so I can help to support my family"..... Majority of my siblings are in high school, their needs vary per person, sometimes it is hard to accept that you cannot get what you need as it is not your turn as yet"..... "As females, we need sanitary towels at the end of the month, if your family cannot buy it for you, the feeling of being alone and helpless does exist, you have to decide whether you buy sanitary towels of mobile

data to attend classes, as a result we find ourselves dating older men, so they can buy us cosmetics and these sanitary towels”.....

Sub-theme 3.2: society and community’s influence

The following section and quotes focused on the role played by society and communities which exacerbated or curbed impediments that hindered progression and educational innovations in higher education . The findings reveal that their communities, instead, did not discourage majority of participants, where they came from encouraged them to pursue with their studies. According to the participants, their communities viewed education as one of the weapons to fight poverty and crime but some members of the community were not convinced that education is ammunition to curb social ills. *On that note, a participant from group C stated: “my community is very supportive but, witchcraft is very rife”...*

Participant B stated:”My community is very supportive of my studies, whenever I go home, they would ask me how my studies are coming along, they would also encourage me to complete my studies and come back to the community and do uplift it”.

Participant G stated: “Where I come from, people are very different. They care about what is happening in their own lives. However, if they happen to see you, they will greet and wish you well in all your endeavors. My community is very warm”...

Participant AC stated: “My community uses witchcraft,” I do not even tell them that I am studying, as I am scared. Anyway, I do not speak about it as I am scared”. I even lost friends from high school, who are not studying, because they believe I am too much for them”. The community’s response can have detrimental effects and cause damage and demoralise and instil a sense of fear and self-doubt.”

Participant AP stated: “I come from a very religious oriented community. My Pastor and the community at church are supportive of my studies. They even collected money for me when I was coming to university for the first time. They even contribute data bundles on a monthly basis so I can continue attending my lectures.” My community is very supportive; I think it is because the foundation is God, so there is no element of jealousy”.

Theme 4: Family circumstances and finances

The following section and quotes will focus on family finances that could contribute negatively to educational innovations in higher education.

Sub-theme 4.1: Family finances

Group C stated: *“We unanimously feel that family finances can affect the student negatively as some of us come from poor families”*

Group E stated: *”....If no one is working at home or one person is working and there are so many people to look after, life becomes difficult”. Some of us, who are funded by NSFAS, use our monthly allowances and contribute towards groceries at home*

Participant K, stated: “I am a male, a man’s ego is diminished if he cannot provide for the family”. I feel bad when there is nothing I can do to save my family financially, however, I will work hard to change the financial situation at home”.

Participant W, stated: “At home we are six children...” all of us have needs. From the six children, four are girls... There are special needs at specific times of the month, like sanitary towels that we need, if I do not have it, I find a man to buy it for me as my family cannot provide me” It is not a good idea, but I do not have a choice”.

Participant A stated: ...” I personally have a problem with my family’s background because I cannot understand why I am different from other students. My uncle and mother are working; I do not understand why they would fail to provide for us all. I did not ask to be brought into this world”.....I feel very different from other students, I do not have the things they have”why?”

Sub-theme 4.2: Being a bread-winner at home

For this sub-theme, groups were hesitant to comment collectively. The perception was that they would be judged as being breadwinners whilst at university. However, when the individual participants were interviewed, the revelations were as follows:

Participant T stated:” Yes, I am a breadwinner at home, I attend lectures during the day, in the afternoon I have a part-time job in one of the big restaurants. I work shifts from 17:00 to 22:00. I am paid on a weekly basis and I am able to provide for my family.

Participant V stated: “I work for a lady on weekends..... I clean her garden and she pays me every month end” In my case, yes, in I am a bread-winner and it is not easy”

Participant AA stated: I am a married man..... “I have to provide for my family” I attend lectures during the day and work night shift, just to make sure that I put food on the table for my family” It is not easy, but I have to do it”

Theme 5: Over commitment clashing with studies

The following section and quotes will be focused on students' over commitment that might clash with their studies that could lead to early departure thus further escalating the challenge of educational innovation in higher education.

Sub-theme 5.1: Indebtedness resulting to student departing early to seek Employment

There was no clear indication on the focus groups that suggested indebtedness. However, one participant from group B stated: *"I have debts from my clothing accounts".... Sometimes I feel like running away as I cannot meet my monthly instalments" ...*

Participant D stated: " I am not in debt as yet, but I get offers from the stores wanting to give me credit"I get tempted sometimes"but I am scared to be blacklisted when I do not pay as I am not working" ...

Participant E stated: "I am a father of two boys... I have to buy clothes and other necessities for my children... I am indebted to a few retail stores... I use my NSFAS allowance to pay, but if I did not receive this allowance, I would have had to leave university and seek employment" ...

Participant AH stated: " I do have debts, but they do not hinder me to proceed with my studies". I manage them well... I spend within my monthly budget, including buying data bundles" ...

Participant AS stated: "I come from the farm. Creating debt is something I am not used to. Whenever my grandmother goes for her pension payment, she buys everything for us.....so there is no need for me to create debt..... and I do not care about an expensive lifestyle" I am happy with what I have" ...

Participant AA stated: "As a man of the house, my kids expect me to buy items for them. As I have a part-time job, sometimes I do not have cash all the time, I therefore applied for credit ... I only use these cards in difficult times.... So, yes, I am indebted and the only way I can come out of it, is to work hard so that I can get a better job"

Participant AF stated: "I am a woman, I love nice things" I love to smell nice, so I open accounts and buy on credit. I even use one of my cards to buy food from one of the retail stores as it can be used to buy both clothes and food". Some months it becomes difficult to pay and I often feel like quitting my studies and seek employment so I can pay off the debts....

Participant AQ stated: "... At home, we have a house built of mud. The NSFAS allowance I receive on a monthly basis assist towards buying the building material for us to have a decent home" My mother does not work" I end up going to loan sharks in order to survive as I



am left with no money to support myself. When the loan sharks come to collect the loaned money with interest, I hide in my room” I really want to quit as I do not have the money to pay back the loan sharks” ...

Sub-theme 5.2: Multi-roles, for example being a family man/woman

Female respondents mostly identified with the mutli-role sub-theme. The reason could be that, generally, females are expected to perform house chores more than their male counterparts or siblings. The following responses were recorded:

Participant J stated: “ I have to get up early to cook porridge, clean the house, and cook lunch.... immediately after serving lunch, I must start preparing supper. I hardly find time to attend lectures”... sometimes we are given assignments to work on, due to the workload at home, I end up coming to campus a night before, and start with my assignments, as a result, I get up late the next day as I had not slept a night before, trying to complete the task and meet deadlines.” My assignments are always late... it is hard.”

Participant L stated:” my story is different.... I am a bar lady ” ...I hustle as I do not want to worry anyone for money. Sometimes the bar closes at 22:00, I still need to go to go home and study..... by then I am already tired as I did not get a break during the day....as a result, my studies tend to be neglected, especially during busy times, like the weekends as the bar is opened for extended hours”

Participant R, (who was male) stated: “... we are only boys at home and my mother is not well”. There was no one to look after her and my siblings” I have to clean the house, bath my mother, cook, do homework with my little brotherit is too much for me ...sometimes I feel like dropping out of university and take care of my family full time:

RECOMMENDATIONS IN CURBING SOCIAL IMPEDIMENTS FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER INSTITUTE OF LEARNING

The Department of Higher Education should improve the student financial support system for students from underrepresented and vulnerable groups, thus, allowing fair financial access to all students. In the same breadth, Higher education institutions should invest on “the adoption of engaging curricular and pedagogical approaches that result in the achievement of learning outcomes, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, oral and written communication, collaboration information literacy and global competencies, if they seek to achieve 21st century skills while preparing learners to innovate, create and contribute to the knowledge economy.



It is further recommended that Higher education institutions should promote explicit and intentionally reasoned Digital Learning development strategies to allow users/students to develop criteria for selection of relevant and pertinent information, respecting the scientific criteria of each area while enhancing the digital competencies they possess. Furthermore academic staff need to intentionally train their students in digital competencies as advanced digital information skills are necessary for both teachers and students if they are to participate in higher education and lifelong learning. Processes must be established for both technology and pedagogy discovery so higher education professionals can filter, interpret, organise and retrieve information in an efficient manner. The one-size-fits-all approach of traditional higher education paradigms is in contrast with increasingly diverse global student population, therefore, more flexible degree plans are needed.

Institutions of higher learning should have a well-established programme to identify and assist students who are presenting signs of social ills, which could hinder innovation and entrepreneurial skill from a students' perspective. This can be done in the form of a peer review by senior students, with the psychologist's intervention. Some students will resist this strategy. However, when they enrol for the first time, it must be made mandatory for every student that they undergo such review, should there be a need to do so. An increase in societal awareness across communities and family structures to educate communities with stereotype issues surrounding education, especially, towards female students is highly recommended. This can be done by using quarterly newsletters by means of print or audio media sent to these communities, detailing the courses offered at the institution/s, job opportunities, entrepreneurial skills and exposure. This will highlight the importance and the relevance of education in our societies and the world at large. It will also send a message to the communities that life is not all about cultural and social stereotypes. It is about going out there and learning how the world operates and acquiring new skills to make a better world for all.

The institutions of Higher learning ought to take advantage of "Internet of Things" and ensure that students take full potential of such technologies if they are to positively contribute to the ever-evolving economy. Students who experience information overload at university, they should utilise the time whilst they are not attending lectures to familiarise themselves with the content and use the available resources to do so. Students should also make use of the Library online facilities, to keep up with the digital world. These facilities are available throughout the Library hours. During examination and test times, they are available on extended hours. Lastly, as students hail from different backgrounds, their circumstances will always vary as they join universities, it is therefore recommended that universities and students alike, try and reach a common ground in achieving academic excellence in spite of the challenges that have engulfed the whole universe, being COVID-19 and having to learn from home a sudden transition of learning online, for some, with no training provided on how to use these online platforms and for, some having to use technology for the first time, and sometimes having one equipment being shared amongst all who are studying at a particular household.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

Persistent need for academic staff to improve their digital skill competencies in order to fully prepare students for the 21st century has become imperative, while students must adopt and adjust to evolving revolutions taking place in the technological spaces especially, taking full advantage of “Internet of Things” to acquire more skills and knowledge more importantly, in the COVID-19 times as technology has become the “new normal”. The incorporation and adoption of digitisation in the curriculum becomes crucial as students are prepared for the new context in the market. In spite of social impediments such as poor family and financial backgrounds, the environment propels students to adjust to the evolving circumstances surrounding them.

Higher Education institutions are now compelled to keep up with global trends in their quest to move towards customer centricity and be at the forefront of leading institutes in the learning space. As the society is still grappling to adjust with the fast-paced student population, an awareness will go a long way in educating our communities to fully support university students in the best way possible so that a better and competent workforce and capable entrepreneurs can be produced and nourished by all South Africans.



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