

Transforming K-12 Education By Blending the Ubuntu Philosophy and Social Justice Principles

Ernestina Wiafe, MS. ernestinawiafe@ksu.edu

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY
Curriculum and Instruction Doctoral Program

Background

Considering the highly diverse nature of U.S population, there is no surprise for the calls for a socially just education and a transformative diverse pedagogy in schools seeking to promote a sense of community and belonging. The researcher is of the view that while sections of the population such as Native Americans, People of African Ancestral Origin (Blacks), and Hispanics come from a background of oppression, marginalization, limited opportunities, and exclusion, a blends of ubuntu philosophy and Social Justice principles can be essential to enact K-12 students with values capable of cultivating consciousness about Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB).

- *Ubuntu* is an ancient African worldview associated with humanness or being humane (ed. Letseka, 2000; Caracciolo & Mungai, 2009).
- It translates to *I am because you are, you are because I am*. Ubuntu concerns with 'I/We' which are more acceptive of interdependence, as opposed to the 'I/You' relationships, which assert individualism (Letseka, 2000).

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to

- Explore how a blend of the *Ubuntu* philosophy and Social Justice principles can be employed to enact consciousness about Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) among K-12 students.

Research Questions

- What are the key components of the Ubuntu philosophy and Social Justice principles?
- How can ubuntu philosophy and social justice principles be integrated effectively into K-12 education to promote DEIB?

Collective Fingers principles

- The principle behind the Collective Finger theory is that a thumb although is strong cannot kill an aphids on its own. It would require a collective cooperation and equal contribution of efforts from other fingers.
- Individual people need to work cooperatively to achieve any aspired goal.
- Survival, spirit of solidarity, compassion, respect and dignity (Mbigi, 1997).



Theoretical Framework

- Fraser's work focuses on social justice, particularly in the context of issues related to gender, race, and economic disparities.
- The theory offers a unique perspective on justice by examining how different dimensions of justice intersect and how they can be addressed in a comprehensive and equitable manner (Fraser, 2008).
- 3 tenets: Recognition (cultural), Representation (political), and Redistribution (economics).

Findings

Ubuntu Pedagogy

- Is a humanizing approach to teaching and engaging students in the learning process (Blackwood, 2018).
- Pedagogy that create a learning space that affirms, validates, and treats students as dignified human beings regardless of their gender, race, or class (Ukpokodu, 2016).



Methodology and Methods

Qualitative inquiry approach, employing document analysis methodology was used. This method is associated with the systematic assessment and evaluation of printed and electronic content documents that have been recorded without the researcher's intervention (Bowen, 2009). In this case the printed and electronic document included peer-review articles, books, and Kansas Education Report. These Documents and data underwent examination and interpretation to uncover significance, acquire understanding, and generate empirical knowledge, akin to the thematic analysis employed in qualitative research (Bowen, 2009; Owen, 2014).

Analysis

Data analyzed using Inductive thematic research analysis following (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Implications for Kansas

- The study identified interventions that promote unity, coexistence, respect, and cooperation through the intersection of the Ubuntu pedagogy and Collective Fingers principles. These interventions have proven crucial in instilling values that can foster equity, recognition, and active participation among individuals from diverse social, economic, cultural, linguistic, and sexual backgrounds in the State of Kansas.
- If legislators and communities consider these proposed interventions and adopt them with deliberate systemic and structural efforts, it will be attainable to promote coexistence among students and community members. This, in turn, will facilitate the achievement of social cohesion in educational contexts within the State of Kansas.



References

- Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. Routledge.
- Blackwood, A. (2018). Transformative Learning: Improving Teachers' Cultural Competency Through Knowledge and Practice of Ubuntu. Unpublished PhD dissertation. University of Central Florida. Florida.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Caracciolo, D., & Mungai, A.M. (Eds.). (2009). *In the Spirit of Ubuntu: Stories of Teaching and Research*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Fraser, N. (2008). *Reframing Justice in a globalizing World*, in K. Olson (ed.), *Adding insult to injury: Nancy Fraser debates her critics*. Verso Publishers.
- Letseka, M. (2014). *Ubuntu and Justice as Fairness*. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5(9), 544–551. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n9p544>
- Mbigi, L. (1997). *Images of Ubuntu in global competitiveness*. Flying Springbok.
- Owen, G. T. (2014). Qualitative methods in higher education policy analysis: Using interviews and document analysis. *Qualitative Report*, 26. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2014.1211>
- Ukpokodu, O.N. (2016). *You can't teach us if you don't know us and care about us: Becoming an ubuntu, responsive and responsible urban teacher*. Peter Lang.
- KSDE Data Central - Kansas Education Report: https://datacentral.ksde.org/report_gen.aspx