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Providing Ubuntuism Through Participatory Culture Framework: Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5

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ABSTRACT

South Africa is a country of diverse sets of individuals who have different backgrounds and beliefs, there has been a global discussion for the promotion of sustainable development goals, and this paper proposes an approach for the implementation of sustainable development goals 4 and 5 within the South African landscape. (1) The purpose of the research is to discuss the utilization of the African Ubuntu Philosophy through the participatory culture framework for promoting inclusive education. (2) This research was conducted utilizing the 11 components of the Participatory culture framework to practically implement the African Ubuntu Philosophy through the themes defined by Adewale (2023) which included inclusive education, gender sensitization programs, peer support, and mentorship, life orientation curriculum, conflict resolution and restorative justice, student leadership and participation, parent, and community involvement. The utilization of the African Ubuntu Philosophy within a South African University was successful and showed that the approach promoted teamwork and collaboration among the students, it further ensured the provision of leadership roles during classroom activities. The application of the participatory culture framework contributed to the promotion of Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 within the classroom environment.

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development Goal 4 speaks of the provision of quality education which provides equity well as promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all while Sustainable Development Goal 5 speaks of Gender equality. Universities play a key role in the attainment of sustainable development goals, especially with respect to SDG 4 and SDG 5 which speak to equal access to tertiary education and the promotion of lifelong learning (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2020). Universities have a major role with respect to the human formation of knowledge and innovations. There has been a lack of literature on how best SDG4 and SDG5 can be achieved through education as well as a lack of examination of knowledge production (Aarts et al., 2020; McCowan, 2019; Owens, 2017).

There have been various techniques utilized by South African universities to meet the requirements of SDG4 and SDG5 such as University of Pretoria which utilization of research to serve as a tool for solving societal problems (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2020). Ahfad University for Women (Sudan) which provides a holistic student experience through academic research, on-job training, community engagements, and academic courses all aimed at supporting women (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2020). Chankseliani and McCowan (2020) highlight that there is a need to still document various academic activities aimed at sustainable development,

and it should be known that there is a lack of evidence to show the progress and approaches utilized to achieve these goals. Various world leaders have tried to redress the wrongs that inequality has caused but there are still several aspects that require redress, and that proposed redress has not been fulfilled.

This is the current state at all levels of education in South Africa (university, secondary and primary). A series of discussions have taken place with respect to skills acquisition but there has not been any concrete method or approach to attain or achieve these skills. Furthermore, there has not been a solution to redress or implement a project to ensure an even distribution of skills between male and female students (Olajuwon et al., 2021; Adewale, 2023). The South African government has tried to promote equality along the gender and inclusive education lines especially since the gap between males and females, educated and non-educated is evident in the South African landscape. Females are not seen for their educational abilities but are considered for their proposed cultural duties such as cooking, laundry, and caring for siblings. All these various duties limit females from focusing on school, as well as limit males from seeing females as their equals or as equal collaborators. Therefore, if the government of South Africa is trying to improve access to inclusive education and equal rights there needs to be an approach that can be utilized to achieve this objective.

Following the suggestions indicated by Adewale (2023), the notion that being born female or poor should not be the factor that limits an individual's ability, furthermore, there is a need for equal opportunities and opportunities for females to show their skills through inclusive educational environments. The benefit of this is awareness and early interventions can be implemented to promote an understanding of the role women can play in building a community through education. Furthermore, there is a need for female students to have a voice through inclusive education through inclusive academic activities. But for this to take place, there needs to be a practical application of the African Ubuntu Philosophy as a lens through which education can be provided. The research gap noted there has been enough discussions about the African Ubuntu Philosophy but there has been very little discussion on the implementation of the philosophy in teaching and learning. Adewale (2023) provided a platform for the implementation of the philosophy by providing 7 themes that can be utilized to achieve this philosophy. The novelty of this research is in the implementation of the African Ubuntu philosophy through a Participatory culture framework within a practical course called game design. The selection of a game design course is best for the practical implementation because it is a creation class, which utilizes teamwork and skills which are interdisciplinary in nature to ensure the digital video games are properly designed to speak to the current South African Landscape.

The Participatory culture framework is aimed at encouraging participation with respect to core media literacies that can promote participatory culture in the digital age (Jenkins, 2009). These 11 core media literacies include play (experimentation), performance (identity adoption), simulation (constructing dynamic models), multitasking, distributed cognition (interacting with tools), collective intelligence (group work), decision (evaluating judgment), transmedia navigation (utilizing sources across modalities), networking (finding and sharing information) and negotiation (understanding and respecting multiple perspectives). All these skills require social skills which can only be achieved through networking and collaboration, that is why students were put into groups of 5 for the project and for the duration of the course. Today, these are skills required to properly address the skills required for participatory culture. The instructional model of inquiry was adopted which included digital composing, sharing, discussion, and a reflection process. The utilization of an inquiry-based approach was deemed the best as it promoted community engagement and participation that is active among the students in the classroom.

Furthermore, it encouraged the students to investigate and interrogate issues that were of keen interest to them and relevant to their upbringing, as well as bringing a voyage of exploration (Edelson et al., 2015; Pedaste et al., 2015, Alalem, 2023). The uniqueness of the

Theory is based on the notion that knowledge obtained from analysis is packed into verbally attractive and engaging multimodal video, which is then distributed and analyzed inside the classroom, this promotes the change of the class into a space for social activism which is inclusive and conducive for collaboration. Furthermore, this engages the students with the 11 core media literacies required for active engagement in the technological-driven age. Inquiry-based models begin with a preliminary phase where the student's prior knowledge with respect to African narratives in video games, is aimed at bringing in their prior knowledge and experiences to determine and identify critical issues to them. This is then followed by an investigative phase which takes place for a week where the students go and gather information for their groups, which enables them to understand the problem and answer it, then the final phase the students synthesize the acquired information in a cohesive format. The utilization of inquiry-based frameworks has been utilized by Alalen (2023); Hutchinson and Novotny (2018); and Beck et al. (2021) where the theory included three phases namely identify, understand, and respond. Regardless of the terms or names provided by previous scholars, the key ingredients are still constant, namely problem identification and investigation are vital to inquiry models. The utilized theory encompasses African digital narrative development and promotes participatory culture.

Research Objectives

The research goals are targeted at the implementation of the African Ubuntu Philosophy themes in addressing inclusive education and gender equality in South African universities.

Research Questions

1) How can a participatory culture framework be utilized to achieve the African Ubuntu Philosophy themes?
2) How can the participatory culture framework be utilized within a learning environment to promote the learning experiences of students?

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilizes a combination of deductive and inductive approaches through the transformative paradigm (Adewale, 2023; Omodan and Makena, 2022). The uniqueness of the transformative paradigm is its ability to provide room for flexibility within multiparametric Design space (MDS) (Qutoshi, 2015). The rationale promoting social equity and social justice is sufficient for this paradigm within the social sciences to properly explain the link between power structures and inequalities (Mertens, 2012; Phelps, 2021; Bayeck, 2023). The utilization of the transformative paradigm in this paper aims to explain the causes of racial inequalities, cohesive education, and lack of freedom of expression as forms of social injustice. With this well explained the transformative paradigm was utilized to explain ways of ensuring social justice and social expression to meet the sustainable development goals for neglected and marginalized groups.

The adopted approach for this research was the thematic approach which will be utilized to interrogate the subject matter expensively. The characteristics of thematic analysis include identification, analysis, and decoding or interpretation of the paradigm through quantitative data meaning (Adewale, 2023). The technique to start thematic analysis includes familiarization with data, code generation, theme construction, analysis of proposed themes, classification, and definition of themes, and then report generation (Terry et al., 2017). The benefit of thematic analysis can be seen in its ability to be used to discover insights through interpretation within research (Ibrahim, 2012). The second uniqueness of the thematic approach is that it encourages students to link occurrences within a theme to an entire context or an entire research position (Adewale, 2023).

Based on the guidelines and suggestions provided by (Adewale., 2023; Terry et al., 2017) on how thematic analysis should be conducted this research locates its data within the African

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Ubuntu philosophy through the Participatory culture framework. The research will explain how the African Ubuntu Philosophy can be achieved through a Participatory culture framework. It will further explain how these will be implemented in line with the goal of this research to produce a report. This data was collected by reviewing vital articles (karppinen and Moe, 2023; Adewale, 2023) on African Ubuntu Philosophy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Research Question One: How can a participatory culture framework be utilized to achieve the African Ubuntu Philosophy themes?

The research utilized the participatory culture framework to provide guidance on how the African Ubuntu Philosophy can be achieved. To ensure this was properly implemented an inquiry-based method was utilized to ensure that all aspects of the theory were properly implemented within the classroom. The components of the inquiry-based inquiry model included identify, investigate, compose, share, discuss and reflect. These 6 components comprise some or all the 11 pedagogical tools of the Participatory culture framework. Figure 1 provides a pictorial representation of the framework.

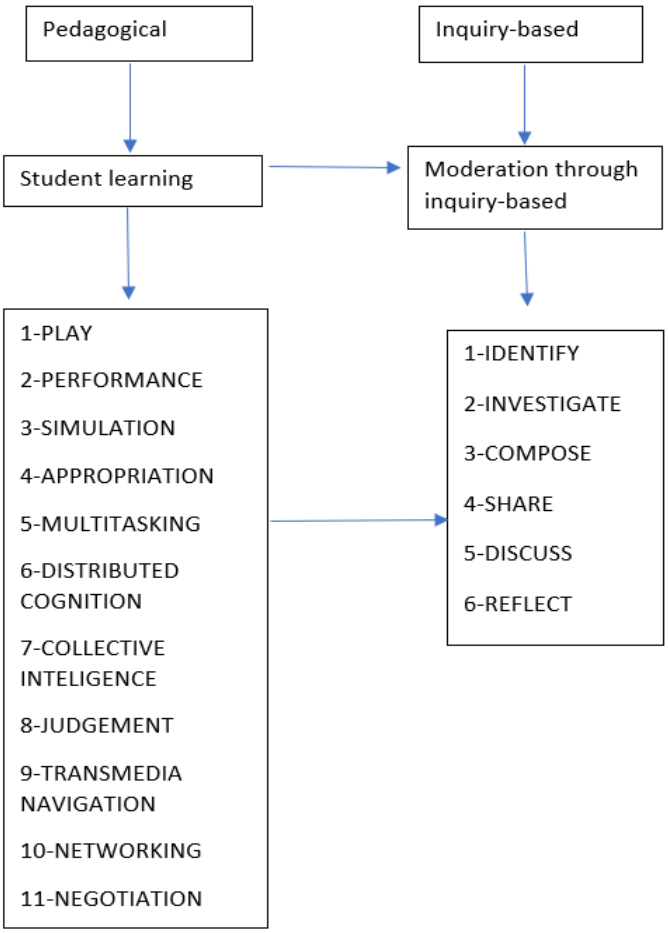


Figure 1. Pictorial representation of the implemented framework

Research Question Two: How can the participatory culture framework be utilized within a learning environment to promote the learning experiences of students?

This research utilized the 7 themes derived from Adewale, (2023) interrogation of African Ubuntu Philosophy, and implemented them through the participatory culture framework.

Discussion

Africa as a nation has historically worked under the African ubuntu principle before the advent of colonialism and has operated as one (group). The term Ubuntu focuses on the need to engage on issues as a collective and not as an individual. Africa as a continent has gone through several issues and South Africa has gone through unique issues especially before apartheid ended in 1994 which has led to uneven distribution of wealth and uneven distribution of economic opportunities (Moyo et al., 2022). The Uniqueness of South Africa as a nation with a historical past of Apartheid necessitates the need for the utilization of the African Ubuntu Philosophy through the Participatory culture framework. This philosophy has been used to solve issues amongst Africans as it utilizes the historical African perspective as a guide which is centered on an Afro-centric approach that utilizes African techniques to solve African problems (Mpofu, 2023; Lateef et al., 2023). The philosophy can be seen in the way people interact and relate and work with one another, where the notion is we are because we are. The African philosophy speaks to Claybrooks, (2023) perspective on the utilization of an Afro-centric approach in the delivery of teaching and learning. For the proper development of students through the key building ingredients such as community engagement, inclusion and participation, respect, and learning of tolerance can all be found within the African ubuntu philosophy (Guillemot et al., 2022; Walton et al., 2022).

The tenants or the core principles of the African Ubuntu Philosophy can be seen utilized through the participatory culture and can be achieved through Adewale's (2023) tenant. The key components of a community can be achieved which can be utilized to promote collaboration, and interdependence. It promotes an understanding of the other students' perspectives on issues, as well as the provision of a lens to view other students' perspectives on current issues but most important is the unique shifts from an individualistic perspective to a communal or collective perspective. This shift from individualist to collectivist perspective is the African Ubuntu Philosophy. Adewale (2023) indicates the components of the Ubuntu philosophy can include excellence with is ethical, arguments that are ethical, compassion, and mutual respect which is indifferent to race, culture, and gender. The provision of such an approach or environment encourages the growth and proper nurturing of the SDG4 and SDG 5 which are at the core of this research. One of the benefits of the African Ubuntu philosophy is its ability to promote inclusivity, this form of inclusivity can be seen in student activities that bring all parties together instead of separating parties or students (Walton et al., 2022; Le Fanu et al., 2022).

The utilization of the Participatory culture framework to provide the African ubuntu philosophy speaks to the utilization of negotiation and reflection to understand perspectives and lead to an inclusive solution to the assignments or tasks at hand, this is the essence of ubuntu where it is not about the individual, rather it is about the collective. With the current crop of students being educated in universities, the African ubuntu philosophy acts and serves to provide inclusivity and supports the promotion of SD4 and SDG5 which respectively focus on quality education and gender inequality. The ubuntu philosophy does not see man or woman but sees all as one, which encourages proper respect, promotion of morals, and protection of the basic rights of individuals (Maistry, 2022; Jenkin & Sibiya, 2023; Yuan, 2022). One of the key components for this principle to work is in the implementation where inclusivity must be encouraged and guided within the participatory culture framework being is further regulated by the African ubuntu philosophy to ensure a student-centered system. Studies such as Majoko and Dudu (2023) have indicated the need for a change within Africa with respect to the provision of an inclusive environment for learning and the provision of education through the unique African perspective. The application of this research is based on feedback on the lecturers teaching through the participatory culture framework.

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Application of Ubuntu in Teaching in Universities

Adewale (2023) provided 7 themes namely inclusive education, gender sensitization, peer support and mentorship, life orientation curriculum, conflict resolution and restorative justice, student leadership and participation, and parent and community involvement. These themes will now be explained and how they are implemented within the learning environment through the Participatory culture framework (PCT). The implementation of the 7 themes utilized in a teaching course, below indicates the themes and how they were implemented into the teaching of a course. The course had 74 students, out of which 44 were male students and 30 were female students. The students were put into groups of 5 which was a combination of both male and female students to ensure proper participation and inclusivity.

Theme 1: Inclusive Education

Adewale, (2023) indicated that the role of interconnectedness within an environment was crucial in bringing people together, where values such as respect and tolerance for one another can be achieved regardless of gender or class. Walton (2018) indicated the role of inclusive education is the reduction of exclusion and the provision of means for participation and learning success. Furthermore, there has been discussion for the decolonization and utilization of 90 percent African content in teaching as a means of promoting inclusive education (Walton, 2018). Walton (2018) further indicates that the utilization of a decolonized project such as this game design project will be suitable to promote the values of a decolonized project. This suggestion can be done through equal participation in learning environments. The components of the PC Theory utilized to achieve this aspect were performance, networking, and negotiations.

Implementation through participatory culture framework

Students in a game design course were encouraged to develop a video game based on African-themed storylines. The students were grouped in groups of 5 to ensure proper participation. The idea for the group was to be discussed by the group members and students should be aware of sensitive issues. As well as exploring all the possible issues. The process of putting the students into groups speaks the spirit of African ubuntu philosophy (Walton et al., 2022; Le Fanu et al., 2022) where teamwork is at the core of the philosophy.

Theme 2: Gender Sensitization Programs:

Eunifridah and Potokri (2022) have indicated the need for understanding gender issues and promoted the creation of an environment that promotes respect supportive perspectives and understanding of the individual preferences of individuals. The concept of ubuntu focuses on the collective action to redress and address violence and gender-based issues. The components of the PCF utilized here were collective intelligence, and negotiation through understanding perspectives. Gumbi et al. (2015) explained the inclusion of empathy and understanding for each student or group member's perspective promotes gender equality and respect among students where their opinions are taken and acknowledged.

Implementation through participatory culture framework

To promote gender-sensitive programs, some of the games developed utilized women for roles of leadership, while some games ensured the color of the characters and gender of the characters were well portrayed. A good example was the video game which ensured that the color of the characters was black, and the headgear of the characters was female African headgear. This was aimed at showing that women could lead female roles in video games. The utilization of the Participatory culture framework speaks to Ngunjiri, (2016) which explored the leadership roles given to women due to the power and

influence provided by Ubuntu perspective. It further shows that women and ladies are capable of taking on leadership roles provided they are encouraged as a group.

Theme 3: Peer Support and Mentorship

Mentorship and Peer support are one of the core principles of ubuntu, where ubuntu means we are one, and we exist as one. Ubuntu also understands that for it to be properly implemented there needs to be community building and mentorship approach and peer support for motivation. Swartz et al. (2016) indicated that the role of peer support can be from the perspective of senior students providing or sharing their skills, knowledge, techniques, and experiences with younger students, or academically weak students thereby providing strength, or providing the needed skills for their empowerment and growth. Geber and Keane (2017); and Stripling, (2017) indicated the mentorship approach could utilize the ubuntu perspective where mentor and mentee may gain from each other's cultural perspectives on issues and interaction, the benefit is it provides the utilization of both approaches to provide a holistic view and the acknowledgment of people's views rather than silencing their views makes them or makes the students feel secured. The components of the PCF utilized were networking, collective intelligence, decision, and negotiation.

Implementation through Participatory culture framework

Peer support and mentorship were some of the good aspects of the implementation, students were put into groups of 5 where Academic strong and weak students were incorporated into the groups, and gender was well maintained in the groups. The intent for this was to ensure that every student was supported throughout the work, and the groups selected their leaders. Most of the group leaders were female and they were supported by their group members appropriately. This speaks to Munir, (2020) whose studies indicated that one of the ways to ensure skill transfer from one generation to the next is through the ubuntu perspective, where mentor and mentee operate with an inclusive supportive environment.

Theme 4: The Life Orientation Curriculum

The life-orientational curriculum of African Ubuntu proposed various skills and knowledge on various aspects of South Africa. And it promotes shared values such as social, intellectual, and physical aspects (Weybright et al., 2017). Adewale (2023) indicated that integration of the African Ubuntu Philosophy into the curriculum would foster gender equity, empower students to challenge societal norms, and understand diverse perspectives. Swarts, (2018) indicated that learning experiences need to show or reflect local realities, they should not be frictional. The components of the PCF utilized here were transmedia navigation and play to ensure that participants of the group were able to see issues from the other person's or other group members' perspective.

Implementation through participatory culture framework

This was implemented through the Participatory culture framework by making students do presentations where student groups were made to make pitch presentations which discussed their ideas and made students aware of their perspective on issues. Note the video games created were all portraying a perspective of African Ubuntu Philosophy. Some of these include awareness of the customs of other parts of South Africa, awareness of the roles that men and women can both take or assume in video games and understanding of the challenges that people face in different parts of the country. Swarts et al., (2018) have indicated the need for the provision of local knowledge which could promote life orientation, and this can be achieved by including it in the curriculum.

Theme 5: Conflict Resolution And Restorative Justice

Schoeman (2016) indicated the importance of the family setup and involvement in addressing issues that focus on social issues. The research explains the roles of community, family members, neighbors, and community in building a system that enables easy problem-solving and promotes the resolution of issues through the understanding of the different perspectives of an issue. The benefit of this is that it helps promote SGG4 and SDG5 which speak to quality education and gender equality Simulation was the tool utilized to obtain this, where the video games were able to serve as a tool for restorative justice, through the thought process of the effect of certain actions. Also, negotiations and collective intelligence on what video game was to be designed and produced were accomplished to ensure conflict resolution. Akinola et al., (2018) have explained the belief that adherence to the principles of Ubuntu would reduce societal strife and violence led to its resurgence in Africa. We also view the utilization of this framework would reducing social strife by students seeing the perspective of others, as well as portraying their views through video games.

Implementation through participatory culture framework

The participatory framework was able to address this aspect through video games, where some of the video games provided pathways for video game players to see the consequences of their actions. A good example was a video game that showed the consequences of robbing a store and the results of headwork. Another video game discussed the role of electrical load shedding and how the video game was able to inform people about the need to manage electricity. Risimati and Rankoana (2023) understudies this approach in their review of the utilization of ubuntu in resolving conflict in certain regions of the Limpopo province in South Africa.

Theme 6: Student Leadership and Participation

Omodan et al. (2022) indicated Democratic and Egalitarianism are strongly encouraged by the African ubuntu philosophy where everyone's opinion matters. Furthermore, girls and boys are encouraged to take pole positions in groups and actively participate, the uniqueness of this is participation can be through any medium such as video, voice, or text to ensure all messages are delivered. The utilization of this technique encourages girls and young ladies to take on active roles with groups, thereby reducing inequality. Mashile et al., (2016); and Walton et al., (2022) have indicated that student partnership can be fostered through ubuntu and this also speaks to the leadership of the groups. The PCF elements that were used to promote this were the multi-tasking tasks that group members had to perform, as well as the negotiation that group leaders had to make with group members with respect to where the direction of the video games should focus.

Implementation through Participatory culture framework

The student's leadership and participation were achieved through the democratization of the groups' concept or video game idea, members brought in various ideas and they voted on the best idea, they also discussed issues such as the sensitivity of the ideas or concepts, thereby making sure the idea was well agreed by group members. Tafirenyika and van den Berg (2023) indicate that there is a need for a policy that promotes student leadership and participation through an Ubuntu perspective, as students are willing to work as a group.

Theme 7: Parent and Community Involvement

The PCF implemented this role by networking where the audience was welcomed to view the video games created by students, which will also give the audience a perspective of what has been designed and how it speaks to the African ubuntu Theory. Gilliam (2021) has indicated the importance of the relationship between students and university and

parents towards the academic success of the student, where the students benefit from this relationship. Masondo (2017) further indicated the benefit of the stakeholders such as parent bodies as they serve as a motivation and a presence through encouragement for the students.

Implementation through participatory culture framework

The role of parents and community can be enhanced through their inclusion and their promotion of the ubuntu philosophy amongst the children (Willmore et al., 2023). These parents have had the experiences of ubuntu and can promote them to the children or students. The PCF promoted community involvement through the display of video games an end of end-of-year academic events, at the departmental colloquium to ensure people were aware of the games and the issues they speak to. Once the students played the video games and made decisions in the game, they were able to see the consequences as well as the rewards.

CONCLUSION

This research utilized the African Ubuntu Philosophy through the participatory culture framework to address sustainable development goals 4 and 5 within the South African educational landscape. Seven (7) thematic themes which were identified by Adewale (2023) were utilized and analyzed through a transformative paradigm adoption and were successfully implemented in the teaching of a video game design course in a South African public university. SDG 4 and 5 which speak to empowering women and providing quality convenient education are promoted through the framework. The recommendation based on the successful implementation of the African Ubuntu Philosophy is that other practical courses should be encouraged to utilize this approach to improve students' participation with the view of actualizing SDG4 and SDG5. The limitation of this research was that it was utilized for only students in a course within a university setting, further studies will investigate the utilization within non-academic settings such as Game jam events or hackathons to see how effective the framework could be. Further studies could be done through the utilization of other teaching and learning frameworks to implement the African Ubuntu Philosophy.

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