

Realigning Education for Developments in the Institutions of Higher Learning

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This paper sought to highlight and discuss the immediate need to realign education for developments in the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL). Through research that has been covered worldwide, education is one of the most important pillars of any country's development. It is therefore imperative that the education sector needs to be realigned in line with the developments taking place with the modernization of general business to industrial and technical development for the better benefits and outcomes. This realignment for development will be underpinned by highlights and a discussion from Education 1.0 to the present Education 5.0 as a standard for developments in the institutions of higher learning. Education 5.0 is highly rated in terms of its association with the current business needs and integration with the industrial and technological developments. Institutions of higher learning ought to adopt the use of modern industrial and technological revolution like artificial intelligence, robotics and data analytics as they provide an immersive and interactive learning environment that focuses on student development in society and nation at large. The representative sample consisted of ten (10) participants who were selected from two higher learning institutions in Eswatini. Data generation 2 tools such as in-depth face to face interviews and document analysis were used in this study. A qualitative approach anchored on a philosophy of phenomenology and an interpretivism paradigm was employed to guide the research methodology. Thematic Analysis was used to analyse data. One of the key findings of the study was the failure to know how realigning education for developments in the institutions of higher learning would contribute to the economic development, human capital and social development of Eswatini. Another key finding from the study was that education and businesses are interlinked with each other whereby technology enhanced and improved the quality of education. Recommendations from the study included the following: The Ministry of Education and Training should adopt Education 5.0 in all Institutions of Higher Learning; and Institutions of higher learning should adopt proactive means and ways when coming up with policies that contribute to the economic, human capital and social development of the country.

Keywords: Education, education 1.0, education 5.0, higher education, realigning.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Worldwide, there is widespread consensus that the world is not static, but dynamic. Being that as it may sound about such a proposition true or false, this has become less debatable due to the fact that several things continue to occur that are changing in the world on a daily basis. Some well-established scholars have

attributed these changes to population increase, new discoveries and inventions, varying political and social structures, technological advancement and the emergence of new ways of life. One such key sector that has been a driving force in some of these changes is education. In line with the thrust of this paper that focused on “**REALIGNING EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING**” that sought to fulfill the

multifaceted roles that straddles beyond educating learners. Scholars have often identified three distinct but interrelated purposes in institutions of higher learning that include: teaching, research, and community engagement. The need for realigning education for developments in the institutions of higher learning prompted the researcher to embark on this study in Eswatini.

Prior to realigning for developments in the institutions of higher learning globally from Education 1.0 up to the current Education 5.0. There have been several studies that were conducted that sought for a harmonized learning that was inclusive of attainment of knowledge and practical skills that benefit communities and industries. Education 1.0 evolved in parallel with the inception of the Internet during mid-1990s. Education 2.0 came into being by the end of 1999, and it was marked as “*Read-Write-Publish*” technological framework that non-technical users (academics included) benefited in their publications. Education 3.0 is known as the semantic executing web that led the world to newer phenomenon of “*Read-Write-Execute*”. Education 3.0, is anchored by three pillars that are, teaching, research and community engagement.

The coming on board of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4th IR) gave rise or movement in the education sector to Education 4.0 (Awang, Y., Taib, A., & Muda, N., 2020). This was an approach to education that made use of the technology in the learning environment. The education landscape was being realigned in line with the industrial revolution that focused on smart technology, artificial intelligence, robotics, machine learning and data analytics for a better conducive, immersive and interactive learning environment; all of which now influence our everyday lives. Education 5.0 is the use of new technologies to provide more humanized teaching, with a focus on learners’ social and emotional development and solutions that improve life in society. All social spheres like work, industry, communities and health have come to appreciate that technology can (and should) be favourable to life. Education 5.0 is anchored on five pillars namely teaching, research, community engagement, innovation and industrialization.

The need for realigning education for developments in the institutions of higher learning has become significant in the linkages of filling the skills gap between university graduates and industry. Twenty-first-century learners have expectations that are not met within the traditional model of mainstream higher education. Though the role of higher education in human and social development remains unchallenged, institutions of higher learning do also require to realign their programmes and curriculum to be line with the demands of industry. Over centuries, higher education has contributed to the advancement of industrialized countries and attempts have been made in developing

countries to structure and transform higher education to play a role in development (Chan, R. Y., 2020).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to highlight and discuss the immediate need to realign education for developments in the Higher Education Institutions of Learning (HEIL).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To highlight and discuss the immediate need for realigning for education for developments in the institutions of higher learning.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the rationale behind the immediate need for realigning for education for developments in the institutions of higher learning?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study used the qualitative methodology/approach in which a variety of qualitative multi-methods were used to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to attitudes, perceptions and behaviour. The qualitative methodology/approach was anchored on a philosophy of phenomenology and an interpretivism paradigm to guide the methodology. Data generation was done using two instruments that are in-depth-face-to-face interviews, and documentary analysis. For data analysis, the thematic analysis was used. Sampling technique used was purposive sampling. The targeted participants were university lecturers and administrators who had the requisite knowledge and relevant experience about the institutions of higher learning in Eswatini. Qualitative methodology was judged to be the best in eliciting the participant’s perceptions, feelings, attitudes, opinions, interactions, behaviours, and actions regarding the issue of realigning education developments in the institutions of higher learning. The study also involved the examination of various local, regional and international instruments that relate to the subject matter as well as the writings of various authors on the subject of developments in the institutions of higher learning. Ethical and legal considerations that were observed in this study included anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The challenge for realigning education for developments in the institutions of higher learning were varied from the institutions that were used in the study. The findings were based on individuals perceptions, experience, knowledge and understanding of developments in the institutions of higher learning. The following themes emerged from the findings and they are:

Theme 1: Educational Contributions to Development

One of the findings was the failure to know how realigning education for developments in the institutions

of higher learning would contribute to the economic development, human and social development of the Eswatini. With the Covid-19 pandemic, life turned more digital, and things were now different in educational institutions (Alshaikh, K *et al.*, 2021). Online classes and distance learning were no longer trends, but reality, and everyone had to get used to them. Beyond technological devices, the pandemic made clear the need to prepare human beings for adversity, for emotionally intelligent people who know how to turn digital transformation into a tool for social transformation. This is supported by the philosophy underpinning education 5.0 which is *a chain that links digital and technological knowledge to human social and emotional skills to promote well-being*.

Theme 2: Quality Education

Second key finding from the study was that education and businesses are interlinked with each other whereby technology enhanced and improved the quality of education. In order to realize and understand the inclusivity and quality of modern learning, it is very important to develop a strong technological base in the country's development. Blended learning (online and face to face learning) was embraced thereby yielding benefits to the accelerated academic learning (Castle, S., & McGuire, C., 2010).

Theme 3: Innovative Research Hubs

Third key finding from the study in the process of realigning for developments in the institutions of higher learning was the need to come up with strategies that results in institutions of higher learning sustaining their activities without much subsidizes from central government. The creation of innovative research hubs and launching of new programmes both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels will contribute to economic, human capital and social development.

Theme 4: University Partnerships

Fourth key finding from this was the need for institutions of higher learning to create partnerships with other institutions of higher learning that will add value to their programmes as well as the academics through staff exchanges. By so doing, institutions of higher learning will be enriched be it in Africa or Europe.

Theme 5: Artificial Intelligence

The use of artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, machine learning and data analytics in the modern education is a common phenomenon today and will increase in the future for a conducive, immersive and interactive learning environment. Apart from focusing on the realigning for education for developments in the institutions of higher learning, the study also looked at the overall innovation process of academic education, in terms of developing the rules and regulations of programmes. Furthermore, the study findings also stressed that the philosophy of education be totally changed and lecture room/classrooms are an old fashion

lecture deliverance. The role of the lecturer/teacher as a facilitator is to guide and help the learners to get used to run and adopt the technology. Some of the participants in the study were of the view that *Education 5.0 captures the importance of curriculum development, policies and for the advancement of the academic sector to modern stages underpinned by the five pillars*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There were three major recommendations from the study. Below are the recommendations:

- The Ministry of Education and Training should adopt Education 5.0 in all Institutions of Higher Learning.
- Institutions of higher learning should adopt proactive means and ways when coming up with policies that contribute to the economic, human capital and social development of the country.
- Institutions of higher learning should put resources to setting up new posts such Director Quality Assurance, Director Works, Director Marketing, Director Publications and Communication, ICT Director, Assistant Director to the PVC Academic Affairs, PVC Business Development and Corporate Planning and Director Research.

CONCLUSION

Institutions of higher learning need to realign their educational mandate in line with developments in the education sector and industry as well as to support increased access to programmes for the 21st-century learner via alternative means. Globally, improved access to learning experiences is one of the shared characteristics between the institutions of higher learning and government objectives to see educational graduates with knowledge and practical skills that exhibits innovations. This study provided a detailed literature that provides a framework on utilizing Education 5.0 in academic environment of the country through realigning education for developments in the institutions of higher learning for the good of the country (Eswatini). The study also gave insight of the Education 1.0 to Education 5.0 by giving brief description of category. Education 5.0 is in the phase of reforms in terms of updating the body of knowledge, hence it is highly recommended that future studies must go further deeper to address the issues and concerns that bring up the doable solutions for the betterment of overall academic environment.

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