

Editorial

Dear readers,

It is with immense pleasure that we welcome you back to *Papers in Education and Development (PED)*, where we once again present to you Volume 41, Issue 2 of December 2023. As always, this issue delves into a vibrant tapestry of themes, trends, and experiences shaping the educational landscape across all levels of education and diverse educational sectors in sub-Saharan Africa. Arriving amidst a dynamic and ever-changing landscape of education throughout the world, this issue presents a stimulating collection of thoughtful and timely research-based papers tackling critical issues in education across diverse geographical settings in Africa. The issue is released in the context where many countries around the world are still grappling with the lingering effects of the post-COVID-19 era, navigating the complexities of technological integration and striving to ensure access to quality education for all. Overall, the 11 articles presented in this edition explore a kaleidoscope of thought-provoking themes and questions challenging us to critically examine the existing educational policies and practices, embrace innovative solutions, and work towards a better future for all.

This issue opens with an insightful investigation by Hadija A. Mcheka, William A. L. Anangisyse, and Moshi A. Mislal, who explore the impact of the School Quality Assurance (SQA) policy on teachers' power and identity in Dodoma, Tanzania. Their findings reveal a paradox where teachers, crucial to school functioning, are inadvertently positioned as passive actors in school improvement initiatives within the SQA policy framework. This positioning not only disempowers teachers by making them inert objects of evaluation but also hinders their potential for active involvement in school quality evaluation. This thought-provoking study calls for a paradigm shift towards teacher empowerment through collegial supervision, thereby echoing a growing movement towards collaborative school improvement models worldwide. In the second paper, Joseph Oluyemi Adesoji and colleagues' quantitative study sheds light on the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in Nigeria, highlighting its prevalence, diverse forms, causes, and consequences on students in higher learning institutions. Their findings reveal the harrowing reality of sexual harassment in Nigerian higher education institutions, where power imbalances between students and faculty members create fertile ground for abuse. This powerful research underscores the urgent need to confront this systemic problem head-on, using robust intervention strategies, including frequent reporting of sexual harassment incidences and comprehensive awareness campaigns to ensure safe and inclusive learning environments for all.

In the third paper, Patrick Severine Kavenuke and Mjege Kinyota's research illuminates the influence of parents' socioeconomic status on gender inequality in Tanzanian higher education. Their study reveals both the underrepresentation of

women in STEM and teacher education programmes and the influence of parents' socioeconomic status on these disparities. This insightful study emphasises the need for policies and targeted interventions to dismantle gender-based barriers and promote equitable access to educational opportunities for all. Inclusive education takes centre stage in Divine D. K. Kumekpata, Doreen Ahwireng, and Fred K. Boateng's fourth paper. Examining teacher professional development programmes in Ghana, their study showcases how inclusive education topics empower teachers to support students with special educational needs. Besides demonstrating the positive impact of such programmes on teachers, their research highlights the importance of ongoing, practical, and collaborative PD initiatives to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for inclusive classrooms. Budeba Petro Mlyakado and Ikupa Moses Mwandambo's study further contribute to this issue by examining student-teacher experiences of mentorship during teaching practice in Tanzania. Their findings highlight the positive impact of effective mentorship on fostering confidence, competence, resilience, and adaptability among aspiring teachers. However, the study identifies the need for greater support and guidance for mentors to ensure consistent and impactful mentorship experiences for all student-teachers.

Collaborative practices among teachers emerge as a promising pathway for professional development in Georgina G. Mugisha, Aneth Anselmo Komba, and Harun J. Magosho's exploration of secondary school teachers in Tanzania. Their findings demonstrate the efficacy of coaching, teaming, and mentoring in fostering confidence, knowledge sharing, problem -solving, and pedagogical innovation among teachers. This valuable research advocates for broader integration of these collaborative practices as a cost-effective strategy for improving teacher instructional efficacy and student learning outcomes. Moreover, navigating the digital landscape, SAM-KAYODE Christianah Olajumoke, OJO Samuel Timileyin, and ALIYU Rasheed Taiwo assess the level of digital literacy among science teachers in Nigerian junior secondary schools. Their findings reveal the need for equitable access to ICT facilities and continuing professional development to empower science teachers to effectively utilise these resources and enhance their teaching practices in classrooms. In the eighth paper, Swaib Seguya, Eugenia J. Kafanabo, and Chris M. Mauki explore the influence of social norms on university students' response to COVID-19 vaccination in Tanzania. Their study highlights the significant role of parents and peers' subjective norms in shaping university students' decisions regarding COVID -19 vaccination. This study underscores the importance of incorporating social norms into health promotion strategies to encourage positive health behaviours among young adults.

Cyberbullying, a growing concern in the digital world, is tackled by Hezron Zacharia Onditi, who, in his poignant study, delves into the complex interplay of individual and social factors influencing adolescents' coping strategies. His findings reveal how factors self-esteem, assertiveness, and relationships with parents, teachers, and peers

influence adolescents' use of retaliation as a coping mechanism for cyberbullying. This insightful research calls for gendered and age-specific interventions that promote positive social relationships and responsible online assertiveness skills to empower young people to navigate cyberbullying effectively. Turning to the classroom, Tawi Yotham and Joyce Ndabi's study sheds light on the often-neglected area of feedback provision practices among geography teachers in Tanzanian secondary schools. Their study reveals shortcomings in the clarity, specificity, and continuity of feedback provided by geography teachers. This research stresses the need for improved training to equip teachers with effective feedback strategies to enhance student learning.

Finally, professional learning communities (PLCs) hold immense transformative potential for fostering pedagogical innovation. Rehema J. Mwakabenga and Lynn Paine's study in Tanzania investigates the effectiveness of PLCs in promoting competency-based teaching. Their findings reveal that while PLCs have the potential to contribute to competency-based teaching in secondary schools, teachers require training and support to maximise their effectiveness and shift away from examination-oriented approaches. The study highlights the need for effective and targeted training for teachers on establishing and managing effective PLCs to foster competency-based teaching and move beyond exam-oriented approaches.

As we conclude this issue, a common thread emerges—the undeniable need for collaborative action to navigate the complex challenges and opportunities in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. Policymakers, educators, researchers, parents, and the wider community must join forces to foster a vibrant learning environment that empowers teachers, nurtures innovation, and prioritises student well-being. Together, we can, if we agree to learn from each other, challenge existing paradigms, and collectively shape a future where education empowers and transforms lives for all.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I extend my sincere gratitude to all authors, reviewers, and editors who have contributed to making this issue a reality.

Eustella P. Bhalalusesa

Chief Editor, Papers in Education and Development (PED)