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We presented research proposals and findings at the 35th Japan Society for African Educational Research held in Soka University from April 19th to 20th.

We are pleased to announce that Ms. Shino Manabe, a student in the Master's Program, has received the Best Presentation Award.

The Nexus of School Culture and Teacher Motivation in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi

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Background:

Malawian secondary education comprises different school types: Conventional Secondary Schools, Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs), Open Secondary Schools, and Private Secondary Schools. Student performance in CDSSs exhibits a notable deficiency compared to other school types. Previous studies indicate that CDSSs lack facilities, resources, qualified teachers, and community-school engagement (Bostain et al., 2024). However, the nexus of school culture and teacher motivation in CDSSs is not explored, which is critical to understanding student performance (Oko, 2014).

Research objective, questions, and significance:

This study aims to examine the nexus of school culture and teacher motivation in CDSSs by exploring teacher perceptions to existing school norms. Three questions framing the study are: (1) What type of culture exists in CDSSs?, (2) What kind of teacher motivation exists in CDSSs? and (3) What is the relationship between existing school culture and teacher motivation in CDSSs? This study enlightens on the strategies for improving educational practices and cultivating conducive environments for both educators and students, potentially improving students' academic achievement.

Key terms:

School culture: "This is regarded as a holistic entity that involves the ways school members perceive, think, and feel about schools in terms of the basic norms and values that the school members shape." (Thieu & Lee, 2023; p 2).

Teacher motivation: This embodies the vigor or impetus propelling educators to actively participate and perform proficiently in their responsibilities, aiming to enhance students' academic achievements and attain predetermined objectives (Mulyani et al., 2022).

Methodology:

This study employed a convergent parallel design. Data was collected from 14 randomly selected CDSSs in Mzimba District, Malawi. Using Stata, questionnaire responses from 111 teachers were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Themes and codes were extracted from semi-structured interviews with 14 head teachers, two focus group discussions with 7 and 10 students respectively, and school observations.

Findings:

RQ1. *What type of culture exists in CDSSs?* Positive attributes reported include: effective teacher engagement, positive relationships and administrative transparency, high teacher expectations of student achievement and remediation, and high student' collaboration. Retrogressive practices reported include ineffective teacher-reward systems, teachers missing lessons, limited collaborative planning, the predominance of traditional teacher-centered methods, limited technology incorporation, and failure to complete syllabuses.

RQ2. *What kind of teacher motivation exists in CDSSs?* Positive reported attributes include a strong teacher commitment to the profession, highly motivated by collaborative activities, having passion for making a difference in teaching, positive alignment with school goals, and the use of innovative teaching methods. Teachers, however, reported dissatisfaction with limited opportunities for professional development, inadequate rewards, exclusion from decision-making processes, and poor student academic performance.

RQ3. *What is the relationship between existing school culture and teacher motivation in CDSSs?* Results show significant relationship at the 0.05 level. School Governance, Academic Press and Partnership, Student-Minded Practices, and Community Engagement related with Professional Fulfillment and Performance-Oriented Motivation. This implies that schools with effective governance and those that employ collaborative academic practices are likely to have teachers who are professionally fulfilled and motivated to work. The academic partnership also related with teachers' interest and commitment, which suggests that a culture where teachers work together improves their interest and commitment to their profession.

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The Relationship Between Social-Emotional Competence and Academic Achievement among Primary School Students in Malawi

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Social-emotional competence encompasses essential skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, all of which are critical for academic success (CASEL, 2020). These competence not only support learning but also contribute to future career success and social adaptation. Recent research has highlighted the impact of Social-emotional competence development on academic performance and future success (CASEL, 2020), with a particular need for empirical studies in Sub-Saharan Africa (OECD, 2021). In Malawi, issues such as low academic achievement and high dropout rates have been identified, and it is believed that improving emotional social-emotional competence can potentially address these problems. However, there is limited research on social-emotional competence in Malawi, especially among primary school students. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the social-emotional competence of primary school students in Malawi, and analyze the relationship between social-emotional competence and academic achievement.

The study employed a quantitative research method, targeting grade 8 students from three public primary schools in the Zomba district of Malawi in December 2024. A questionnaire was used to measure social-emotional competence. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. The first section included 26 questions regarding individual information such as gender, number of grade repetitions, and household economic status. The second section comprised 15 questions designed to assess social-emotional competence. The questions assessing social-emotional competence were adapted from the Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire (M. Zhou & J. Ee, 2012), with the number of questions adjusted to 15. Also, data for academic achievement from regional assessments were obtained. Conducting factor analysis of 15 questions related to social-emotional competence was classified into three factors, namely, goal achievement, collaboration with others, and emotional regulation. In analysis, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were employed.

The results showed that students generally evaluated their social-emotional competence relatively highly, with a mean score of 44.65 out of 60. However, specific items revealed areas of concern, such as "understanding the reasons for others' reactions," which had a low average score of 2.13, suggesting limited evaluation of empathetic understanding. On the other hand, items related to logical decision-making, such as "considering selected criteria before making recommendations" and "weighing pros and cons before using a strategy," had higher mean scores of 3.14, suggesting that students exhibit a relatively logical approach to decision-making. Unexpectedly, there was no relationship between social-emotional competence and academic achievement. For instance, the relationship between emotional regulation and academic achievement was $r = -0.23$ ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, the relationships between goal achievement and academic achievement, as well as collaboration with others and academic achievement were $-r = 0.13$ and $r = -0.17$, respectively. Unlike studies in other countries where a positive correlation between social emotional competence and academic achievement is typically observed, this study found different results. It means that those with higher academic achievement did not necessarily have higher social emotional skills. This might be a lack of structured social emotional competence curriculum in Malawi.

The findings of the study provide new perspectives on the educational challenges in Malawi and suggest the need to actively consider integrating social emotional competence programs into the education system. Addressing these gaps could potentially improve both academic achievement and students' overall development.

Exploring the Impact of a China's International Educational Cooperation Project on Teacher Education in Ethiopia:
A Case of CFIT project

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Background

To support African countries in enhancing teacher quality and strengthening teaching skills, the Chinese government partnered with UNESCO in 2012 to establish a trust fund: the UNESCO-China Funds-in-Trust (CFIT) Project. It is specifically dedicated to advancing education in Africa with the mission of promoting the development of teacher education and bridging the education quality gap in Africa. The project selected ten countries across two phases, with Ethiopia being one of the first eight participating nations. According to fieldwork conducted by Ye (2023) in Ethiopia in 2019, there were significant gaps in awareness and utilization of aid resources and it. underscored the need for a deeper examination of the accuracy of aid data and the validity of project evaluations.

Objective and Research Questions

The objective of this study is to identify the impact and challenges of China's CFIT project on teacher education in Ethiopia. Using CFIT Ethiopia as a case study, this study promotes to present the achievements and challenges of China's education assistance programs to Africa and to offer suggestions for improving China's future foreign education cooperation. To achieve the purpose, two research questions were answered: What has the CFIT project influenced the professional qualifications and teaching capacity of Ethiopian teachers? What kind of factors influenced the teacher's professional qualifications and teaching capacity?

Significance

In the process of China's educational aid to Africa, both practical experience and theoretical research remain insufficient. Research on African teacher education, particularly regarding teacher education in Ethiopia, is significantly lacking. Studies on teacher education in Africa by China are still largely confined to macro-level overviews, with limited micro-level investigations, and even fewer studies focusing on teacher education in specific African countries. Such research can provide valuable policy recommendations for improving educational assistance, while also contributing to a deeper understanding of the field and enriching the body of knowledge on China's education aid to Africa.

Literature Review

The following is a list of previous studies on this research. Carolin (2001) discussed six hierarchical levels at which program impacts manifest and be measured. He found that the approach to impact evaluation needs to be aligned with the focus of the desired change as well as the intervention strategies used to bring about such change. Cheng et al. (2015) analyzed the implementation and effectiveness of Chinese educational cooperation projects in Africa based on a questionnaire survey and interviews with African international students and government officials. They also recommended measures to address existing areas for improvement in light of Africa's needs and expectations. Chen (2018) provides a detailed account of the implementation process of the first phase of the CFIT project, highlighting its impact on teacher education and primary education in Ethiopia. He also examines how China's educational aid to Africa differs from that of other countries, offering insights into evaluating and understanding the effectiveness and broader impact of China's aid programs in Africa.

Methodology

The research methodology begins with a comprehensive literature review to provide an overview of the development of teacher education in Ethiopia. This will be followed by a questionnaire survey and interviews with teachers who have directly benefited from the CFIT project. Additionally, a field study will be conducted to evaluate whether improvements in the ICT infrastructure in schools and the implementation of training programs have enhanced teachers' professional qualifications and teaching quality.

Exploring the determinants of Female access to Higher Education amidst Socio-Economic Barriers:
A case of Northern Ghana

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Background

Most females in Northern Ghana have, over the years, faced challenges in accessing higher education due to the entrenched socio-cultural beliefs and economic constraints. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in rural areas, where agriculture is the primary economic activity. Alhassan and Odame (2015), posit that in this patriarchal society, significant decisions are taken by the male members of the family, which puts females at a disadvantage when it concerns their education and social empowerment. Cristel (2020), observed that although tuition fees for most public institutions are free, students still require financial resources to cover other expenses in school. In addition, students need to attain the correct scores in Mathematics, English language, and Science to access tertiary education, which demoralizes most females. Kankpi & Graham, postulate that family background, self-motivation, school climate, and interaction with female role models play a vital role in boosting the morale of females in Senior High Schools. The 2019 Tertiary Education Statistics Reports indicate that, out of a total of 264,994 students enrolled in public universities, 156,289 were male and 108,705 were female.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that have enabled a significant number of females to access higher education despite numerous barriers and to investigate the distinct contributions of these factors to female access to tertiary institutions. Additionally, the individual and family benefits of female education will be examined. The study will focus on answering the following questions. (1) What enables females to pursue tertiary education in Northern Ghana? (2) What are the contributions of these factors to female education in the region? (3) How does the attainment of higher education impact females at the individual and family levels?

Significance of the Study

The study identifies the prevailing determinants of higher education for females, which could serve as important sources of information for government and private organizations whose work is geared towards accelerating female access to higher education.

Methodology

This study will employ questionnaires and interviews to apply a mixed-methods approach. These two instruments are likely to elicit in-depth answers from respondents and contribute to the gathering of practical data for the study.

References

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