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Parents and Children Reading Together: Expanding Shared Book-Reading Across Genres

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ABSTRACT

In this conceptual article we explore parents' shared book reading (SBR) interactions with their preschoolers across different book genres in their natural home settings. We consider the unique and shared contributions of narrative, informational, wordless, and alphabet picturebooks, and how reading across genres can increase children's involvement in the interaction, deepen their content knowledge, expand their vocabulary, and strengthen their visual literacy. Beyond the benefits for children, we discuss the advantages for parents of reading from different genres and highlight directions for future research.

1. Introduction

For young children, shared reading of picturebooks[1] is an important part of the day. Research on shared book-reading (SBR), where an adult reads and engages in discussion surrounding a book with a child (or group of children), reveals various factors that may influence these interactions, such as parental education and reading style (e.g., Cline & Edwards, 2017;[16] Mol et al., 2009),[44] or child characteristics such as gender, socioeconomic status, or developmental stage (e.g., Boyle et al., 2019;[10] Shahaeian 2018).[59] However, aspects of the book itself and how they impact SBR have been explored less frequently (Hoffman et al., 2015;[33] Lennox, 2013).[39] Moreover,

despite a large array of children's book genres, adults generally default to the narrative picturebook for SBR (e.g., Bingham et al., 2018;[7] Yopp & Yopp, 2006).[66]

In this conceptual article, we explore parent-child SBR of books from four popular genres in children's literature – narrative, informational, wordless, and alphabet. Drawing upon SBR vignettes[2] with young children and their mothers, we consider how the unique and shared aspects of each genre contribute to these joint interactions and provide opportunities to promote four important aspects of children's literacy development: active involvement in literacy interactions, broadening content knowledge, expanding vocabulary, and fostering visual literacy. These four elements of early literacy embody a range of factors

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1 We use the term *picturebook* to describe illustrated children's books. For detailed explanations of the types of illustrated children's books, see Nikolajeva and Scott's (2006) How Picturebooks Work.

2 The vignettes included in this article were gathered as part of a series of studies relating to SBR and different genres.

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that can be set in motion during SBR and are particularly relevant to the interactions captured in the vignettes examined in this article.

Research indicates that although the adult is the person reading the book in SBR, children's active involvement in these interactions benefits their cognitive development as well as their language and literacy skills (e.g., Bojczyk et al., 2016;[9] Grolig et al., 2020;[30] Han & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2014;[31] Hutton et al., 2017;[36] Saracho, 2017;[55] Towson et al., 2017).[63] These benefits arise from situations where the child is an active partner in exploring the text rather than being a passive listener.

Studies have also revealed that content knowledge is an important component of reading comprehension and language learning, and SBR is one way of promoting this knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2010;[29] Hirsch, 2006;[32] Neuman & Kaefer, 2018).[45] Through SBR and its discussions surrounding books, children examine and use decontextualized language, build background knowledge about a topic, and learn content-related vocabulary (Neuman & Kaefer, 2018).[45] Building "world knowledge" from a young age helps children process material and promotes their later learning (Hirsch, 2006).[32]

Alongside the construction of content knowledge, SBR helps children learn new words (Evans et al., 2011;[25] Rowe et al., 2013;[53] Senechal, 2017).[57] Extratextual talk during SBR, particularly relating to words in the form of questions, definitions, and the like, has been found to promote word learning (Blewitt & Langan, 2016).[8]

In a world that is more and more reliant on visual and multimedia communication, there is a correspondingly increasing need for children to "learn the skills of looking, appreciating, and interpreting visual material, including its design" (Salisbury & Styles, 2012, p. 77).[54] Conversations between parents and children during SBR include comparisons of the meanings conveyed by words and pictures, promoting visual literacy, and helping them understand the "third text" (Galda & Short, 1993;[26] Edwards & Willis, 2000, p. 261),[21] that is, the meaning created by the interaction between the text and the images.

While there are numerous other benefits to SBR (e.g., socio-emotional development), the four that we have selected here span the spectrum of children's literacy development, and they can all be activated during SBR (e.g., Ece Demir-Lira et al., 2019; [20] Logan et al. 2019).[42]

2. SBR & Genre

In this section we explore parent-child shared reading of books from four genres (narrative, informational, wordless, alphabet) in greater depth, and utilize vignettes to illustrate the contributions of each genre to SBR interactions, focusing on the four abovementioned important elements of emerging literacy - involvement, content knowledge, vocabulary, and visual literacy. The discussion of each genre includes examples of award-winning books (Caldecott Honors and ALA List of Notable Children's Books) that illustrate key features.

2.1 Narrative Storybooks

Narrative storybooks are the most widely used books for preschool-aged children. They generally tell a story, often with human or animal characters, and rely on a traditional plot structure with a clear beginning-middle-ending. In children's narrative storybooks, the illustrations and the text may be considered different "sign" systems that interact in complicated ways (e.g., Sipe, 2012).[60] Reading these books often involves not only understanding the main idea of the story as related by the text, but also being able to follow the progression of the illustrations that may help reinforce and elaborate on the story (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006).[47] For example, in *Last Stop on Market Street* (De La Pena, 2016),[18] CJ's bus ride with his grandmother begins with his questioning the differences he observes in the people around him, and ends with his sense of satisfaction with the people and activities in his life. This theme of understanding and appreciating differences is addressed in a different manner in *All the World* (Scanlon, 2008),[56] in which each two-page spread presents a poetic word sequence and illustration related to a specific living environment, from the "shell to keep" and "moat to dig" of the beach to the "hive, bee, wings, hum" of the farm. The vignettes in Table 1 highlight how mothers make use of both the text and the illustrations in narrative picturebooks to promote children's emerging literacy.

Throughout these vignettes with narrative texts, mothers are drawing upon words and illustrations, as well as the connections between them, to encourage the child's *involvement* with the story. By explaining specific elements in the illustration, one mother expanded her child's *knowledge* of the work done harvesting apples, and the people responsible for doing it; another fostered her child's attention to *visual clues* by asking questions about ice cream flavors. The sequencing of words and pictures in narrative picturebooks supports inference and prediction - "what is going on here", "what will happen/what will we see next?" In SBR with narrative picturebooks, as parents and children explore the connections between text and illustrations, they draw upon text-to-self connections that foster literacy engagement and deepen comprehension.

Table 1 Vignettes of SBR with Narrative Picturebooks Demonstrating Elements of Literacy

	Involvement	Content knowledge	Vocabulary	Visual literacy
Book Title (Author)	*The Mitten Tree* (Christiansen, 2009: 7)[15]	[56]*Groundhog Stays Up Late* (Cuyler, 2005: 1)[17]	*Apple Picking Time* (Slawson, 1998: 4, 8)[61]	*Curious George Goes to an Ice Cream Shop* (Rey, 1989: 7)[52]
Context	*"All that day Sarah couldn't stop worrying about the little boy with no mittens. Late in the afternoon, as the sky grew dark, Sarah dug through the basket of yarn scraps she had saved for many years. She found her needles and four shades of blue wool. Then, Sarah began to knit."*	*"Groundhog was not the kind of groundhog who liked to hibernate."*	*"We meet outside the town in cars and pickups. Papa finds a place behind Grandma and Grandpa's truck. Then our families follow the narrow dirt road to the orchards"....* *"Dave is our foreman"*	*"Mr. Herb dipped out a scoop of strawberry. George was curious. Could he scoop ice cream, too?"*
Vignette	**Child**: What's she knitting? **Mom**: We're going to see. What do you think she's going to knit? **Child**; Don't know **Mom**: Maybe something for the little boy? **Child**: Gloves **Mom**: Gloves, right. Mittens.	**Mom**: You know what hibernate means? **Child**: What? **Mom**: We read it about a bear, one of our books, it's about a bear that hibernates. Do you remember? **Child**: No. **Mom**: It means to sleep for a very, very, very long time, usually in the winter. So some animals hibernate in the winter, they sleep for a long time	**Mom**: Orchards - That's where the apples grow. **Mom**: The foreman - he's the man in charge.	**Child**: What's this one (pointing)? **Mom**: It's purple. **Child**: No, what's this flavor? **Mom**: What flavor do you think it is? **Child**: I think it's. . . **Mom**: Grape? **Child**: Yeah, grape. **Mom**: And what's this one (pointing)? **Child**: Um **Mom**: Well, the man with the yellow hat said he wanted strawberry, is that the strawberry (pointing)? **Child**: yeah **Mom**: What's this one (pointing)? **Child**: An orange one **Mom**: And what's this one (pointing)? **Child**: A banana one **Mom**: And this one (pointing)? **Child**: A cola one

2.2 Informational Picturebooks

Conversations between early childhood caregivers and young children are peppered with questions about the how and why of everyday experiences, suggesting the potential appeal of informational books. Despite this, parents and teachers tend to select narrative rather than informational books for SBR (Bingham et al., 2018;[7] Yopp & Yopp, 2006).[66] Informational books generally aim to convey information in an engaging style, incorporate visually attractive formats and include graphics and/ or photos and illustrations to enrich and reinforce their communicative impact. They are often written in an expository fashion, and generally have a large percentage of technical and content-specific words (Mar & Rain, 2015).[43] The structure of informational books and the variety of language in them encourages adults' use of decontextualized language and provides unique opportunities for children to gain *content knowledge* and domain-specific *vocabulary* (e.g., Baldwin & Morrow, 2019;[4] Loewenberg Ball et al., 2008).[41] Further, the expository nature

of the books and the frequent inclusion of access formats such as glossaries, graphs, etc. can facilitate parents' use of questioning and discourse strategies that can increase children's *involvement* in these interactions (Blewitt & Langan, 2016).[8] For younger children, informational picturebooks often relate to topics in the natural and social worlds – e.g., animals, science, weather, cultural traditions and practices (Duke, 2009).[19] They may also include elements from other genres, such as "how-tos", biographical information, or a more narrative style of writing. Recent years have seen an increase in multi-genre picturebooks for young children, which embed information within narrative formats, sometimes using poetry rather than prose. This trend is apparent in *Mama Built a Little Nest* (Ward, 2014),[65] which juxtaposes pages of poetic narrative about individual species with pages that provide information about each species' nesting habits. Another trend in informational books is highlighting connections to contemporary issues such as cultural diversity, climate change and social justice. In this vein, *We are Water Protectors* (Lindstrom, 2020)[40] draws upon the traditions and history of Indigenous people in North America to provide resources to support a call for action for environmental justice. The vignettes in Table 2 illustrate how parents' SBR with informational books utilize features of informational texts to foster involvement and comprehension, two cornerstones of emerging literacy.

In these vignettes, we see mothers using questions to engage and maintain the child's *involvement* with the reading experience and the information that is being communicated. Mothers use references to the illustrations to encourage the child's attention to details of the *content*, for example, the different steps that are involved in making ice cream. They also reference the *illustrations* to provide a visual referent for introducing new *vocabulary*, for example, "field". Throughout the vignettes, the questions (e.g., "how does the bear spend his winter") and prompts (e.g., "use a magnifying glass") that are characteristic of informational texts serve as scaffolds for the conversation.

Table 2 Vignettes of SBR with Informational Picturebooks Demonstrating Elements of Literacy

	Involvement	Content knowledge	Vocabulary	Visual literacy
Book Title (Author)	*How and Why Animals Prepare for Winter* (Pascoe, 2000)[48]	*Snow is Falling* (Branley, 2000: 9)[13]	*From Cow to Ice Cream* (Knight, 1997: 9)[38]	*Apples* (Gibbons, 2000: 24)[27]
Context	Questions at the end of the book: *How does a black bear spend winter?*	*"Sometimes snowflakes stick together and fall as a cluster of flakes. They also fall as single flakes. Look at the single snowflake on the mitten. Use a magnifying glass to make it look bigger. Each snowflake has six sides. The snowflake may look like this or this, or like this.*	*"Twice each day, the cows come in from the pasture to be milked by machine. Some of their fresh milk is sent off to an ice cream factory."*	Illustration: *How to Plant and Care for an Apple Tree*
Vignette	**Mom**: What does he do all winter, do you remember? **Child**: He's in the cave **Mom**: And what does he do in the cave? **Child**: He sleeps **Mom**: That's right!	**Mom**: See? These are all the snowflakes under the magnifying glass. **Child**: Mm hm; nodding **Mom**: That's how they look, with their 6 sides. They look different than when you just see it like that (pointing to previous page), right? **Child**: Nods	**Mom**: You know what the pasture is? **Child**: What? **Mom**: Field, where they walk around and eat grass. **Mom**: That's where they make ice cream.	**Mom**: Look, this is really interesting. *It is best to plant a seedling in the fall.* **Mom** - pointing *Dig a hole that is big enough to give the seedling's roots room to grow.* **Mom**- pointing *After placing the seedling in the hole, add topsoil.* **Mom** - pointing: That's the dirt that goes on top of the little seedling. *Pack down the soil to give the seedling support.* **Mom** - pointing: So it doesn't fall over. *Water the seedling. It will need about ten gallons of water each week during the first few months after planting.* **Mom**: That's a lot of water.

2.3 Wordless Picturebooks

Wordless picturebooks offer young children the opportunity to use a curated collection of pictures to create a story. Jalongo et al. (2002: 167)[37] describe wordless books as "pure" picturebooks, where "the pictures tell it all". Many picturebooks have a text accompanying the pictures that helps convey information or the story, and the child's task involves "filling in the gaps between the words and pictures to construct meaning" (Salisbury & Styles, 2012: 97).[54] In contrast, wordless picturebooks rely solely on the illustrations to tell the story, and often require the reader to be more involved in focused literacy conversations to construct and convey meaning from the book (Arizpe, 2013;[2] Gibson, 2016;[28] Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006;[47] Serafini, 2014).[58] Sharing wordless books offers the child an opportunity to engage in an open-ended literacy experience in which there are no right or wrong answers (Reading Rockets, 2013),[51] which can help build literacy motivation and engagement (e.g., Trelease & Giorgis, 2019).[64]

Spurred by research documenting the educational benefits of engaging with wordless texts, there has been a recent upsurge in the publication of wordless books dealing with a broad range of topics including social-emotional issues of childhood (e.g., family relationships and transitions), phenomena and inhabitants of the natural world (e.g., animals, seasons), and social issues (e.g., immigration, diversity). For instance, in *Fly!* (Teague, 2019),[62] a baby robin counters his father's encouragement to fly with humorous alternatives in interactions that strongly resemble human parent-child exchanges. *A Ball for Daisy* (Raschka, 2011),[50] addresses the joys and sorrows associated with a special toy. Both of these wordless books use animal protagonists to explore a range of emotions and circumstances that occur frequently in the lives of young children and their parents. The vignettes in Table 3 illustrate how parents' SBR with wordless books models story creation and storytelling in ways that support their children's emerging literacy.

Table 3 Vignettes of SBR with Wordless Picturebook Demonstrating Elements of Literacy

	Involvement	Content knowledge	Vocabulary	Visual literacy
Book Title (Author)	*A Day at the Seaside* (Elzbieta, 1972: 7-9)[23]	*Summer Riddles* (Elzbieta, 1972: 12)[24]	*Summer Riddles* (Elzbieta, 1972: 6)[24]	*Summer Riddles* (Elzbieta, 1972: 17-18)[24]
Context	Bear finds an egg on the shore and prepares to make an omelette, not realizing that his friend the bird is preparing for a chick to hatch from the egg.	The bear in the story is "chasing" the moon and paddles out to an island where he sees the moon shining above a mountain.	The dog looks at the barrel of water and the bear wants the dog to get in so he can bathe him.	Bear returns to the shore and sees the puppy there. Together they play and then fall into the barrel of water.
Vignette	**Mom**: Bear sees the egg in the bird's nest and thinks, maybe he can make an omelette from the egg. **Mom**: The bird comes back, sees her egg gone and sees Bear getting a fire ready to cook the egg. She cries and cries. Bear asks her, "why are you crying?" **Child**: Because her egg is lost **Mom**: "Because that's my egg," she says to him. **Mom**: Bear says, "that's why you're crying? I'll give you back your egg." **Child**: You don't have to cry **Mom**: That's right. Bear gives her back the egg.	**Mom**: He paddles and paddles and paddles out to the island. Then, he takes his bag and he climbs and climbs on the small mountain. **Child**: Which is the small one? **Mom**: Here. Then, he climbs and climbs some more until he gets to the peak. Do you know what a peak is? **Child**: No **Mom**: A peak is the very top of the mountain. Like right here (points). Then he jumps and he jumps and he jumps. What happens if you jump and jump at the top of something tall? **Child**: You fall **Mom**: Right! And that's what happens. He fell.	**Mom**: Look, here's the barrel of water, and the brush. **Child**: Here's the brush. Mom: Right. But the dog hesitates. Do you know what it means to hesitate? **Child**: No **Mom**: It means he's not sure what he wants to do so he's thinking about it before he decides.	**Mom**: Bear decided to go back to the shore, that's over here (pointing). So he gets back in his boat, and paddles back to shore, and look, who does he see waiting for him (pointing)? **Child**: The puppy! **Mom**: Right, the puppy. Do they look happy to see each other? **Child**: Ya, they're smiling. **Mom**: Good! **Mom**: The puppy says, "I'm so happy to came back, I was waiting for you." And then Bear says, "I'm so happy you're waiting for me." Let's play tag. **Mom**: They play tag and run around, and then what happens (pointing to the page)? **Child**: They fell into the barrel!

Throughout these vignettes of SBR with wordless picturebooks, we can see the child actively *involved* with the mother in constructing the story from the illustrations. This demonstrates Arizpe's (2013: 170)[2] idea that wordless picturebooks involve "a heightened co-authoring role that requires taking risks with the imagination, activating intertextual and cultural knowledge and trusting in the readers' ability to make sense of the story". Further, these vignettes illustrate that even without a written text, picturebooks can be used to promote both *content knowledge* (e.g., identifying the tops of mountains as peaks), and *vocabulary* (e.g., "hesitate"). Moreover, the vignettes show how, by attending to details in the pictures, children practice and strengthen *visual literacy* through "noticing deeply" (Holzer, 2007).[35]

2.4 Alphabet Books

Alphabet books are a common genre in children's books, and studies show that many parents regularly read alphabet books to their children (e.g., Bergman Deitcher et al., 2021;[3] Chiong & DeLoache, 2013).[14] Many alphabet books present a variety of words for each letter related to a specific theme - e.g., "artichoke", "avocado", "apple" on the "A" pages of *Eating the Alphabet* (Ehlert, 1989).[22] Some authors take a more conceptual approach, as in *The Graphic Alphabet* (Pelletier, 1996),[49] in which the author determined that "the illustration of the letter-form had to retain the natural shape of the letter as well as represent the meaning of the word" (dust jacket). The visual salience of the letters in alphabet books can help draw children's attention to the print, which they may not normally consider (e.g., Neumann et al., 2015).[46] In this way, unlike the other genres discussed in this article, alphabet books focus on specific knowledge about elements of literacy, building children's awareness of letter-shapes, letter-names and letter-sounds (Bradley & Jones, 2007).[12] Indeed, research indicates that reading alphabet books is associated with children's letter knowledge and has the potential to promote their phonological awareness (Brabham et al., 2006;[11] Evans et al., 2011).[25] The vignettes in Table 4 show how parents talk about alphabetic features with their child in SBR with alphabet books.

As illustrated in the vignettes in Table 4, alphabet books elicit conversations about the *sounds and meanings of words*. These conversations about how variations in the structure of individual letters and words communicate differences in meaning encourage the child to look more closely at written language. Gaining this knowledge about the structure of the language gives children a greater understanding of how letters and sounds work.

Table 4 Vignettes of SBR with Alphabet Picturebooks Demonstrating Elements of Literacy

	Involvement	Content knowledge	Vocabulary	Visual literacy
Book Title (Author)	*Laughing Letters* (Ben Dor, 2006)[6]	*Laughing Letters* (Ben Dor, 2006)[6]	*Letters in Silly Juice* (Hoffer, 2005: 5)[34]	*Letters in Silly Juice* (Hoffer, 2005: 5)[34]
Context	Alphabet book - page for the letter "R"	Page for the letter "H"		Letter "D"
Vignette	**Mom**: This is "Laughing Letters" written by Datya Ben-Dor. Do you know other things written by Datya Ben-Dor? **Child**: "Riddles"! **Mom**: That's right! *"R" Oh no, cried the rabbit! I'm late for the train again!* **Mom**: Train is with an "R" **Child**: OK **Mom**: What "R" is this (pointing to the train)? **Child**: Oh...train...T! **Mom**: You're right. I was making you crazy. Why did they put a train here if it's the letter "R"? The rrrrabbit (points to the picture). Maybe it's a train for rrrriding?	**Mom**: Hey (letter) - this is a difficult letter. You know how when we play the game in the car, when we say a letter and we have to list animals or other things with that letter? If we get to hey or vav we always skip it because it's hard. *"H" Hachoo Hachoo! What happened?* **Mom**: So look. In most of these words, this letter shows up at the end of the word and you don't hear it. So in this word, it's at the end and you don't hear it. But in this word, it's at the beginning and you do hear it. **Child**: OK.	**Mom**: Do you know what this is? **Child**: A porcupine! **Mom**: Well, close, but this is an animal called a hedgehog. Do you want to know the difference between a porcupine and a hedgehog? **Child**: Ya **Mom**: They both have spiky things called spines, but the porcupine is much bigger. I'll show you a picture a little later.	**Mom**: Do you want to tell me what you see in the picture instead of me telling you what to look for? **Child**: I see a "doll" here. **Mom**: OK. And other than a doll, what else do you see with the letter D? **Child**: Hmmm...duck! **Mom**: Good, what else? **Child**: Pointing to each picture in the illustration: dog, donut, dinosaur. I'm great at letters! **Mom**: You did a great job finding the pictures for the letter D.

3. SBR Across Book Genres: Implications & Future Research

Authentic parent-child SBR interactions in the home offer insights about the advantages of using different genres for this important aspect of children's early literacy experience. Selecting books that children find relatable and meaningful requires adults to consider the children themselves -- developmental stage, attention span, interests, as well as their motivation. Children who show reluctance surrounding one genre may engage eagerly with another. For example, some children may satisfy their burgeoning curiosity about the natural world through informational books, while others may expand their imagination through narratives or wordless books. Future research can examine how different genres relate to children's motivation to engage in SBR.

Beyond thinking about the children, adults also need to consider their goal for the reading interaction -- quiet time before bed, learning about something new, focusing on a cultural event (e.g., holiday), working through a developmental milestone or difficulty (e.g., going to the dentist for the first time, parents divorcing), among others. Using different book genres enables adults to address this broad range of circumstances and goals related to engaging in SBR. For example, learning about an upcoming holiday can be accomplished by reading a narrative about a child and the holiday, but also through an informational book about the cultural history and significance of the holiday. Including both genres opens up different types of conversations and offers the child different perspectives on the holiday. Similarly, parents who want to teach their children the alphabet can consider both stories about the alphabet as well as more traditional alphabet books that examine each letter separately. Future research can help determine effective methods for increasing parents' awareness of the characteristics of various genres and the features that make them particularly suited for different reading interactions.

Characteristics of different genres may make SBR more accessible for parents who may feel unprepared or less comfortable engaging with their children in more traditional SBR. For example, parents with limited content knowledge about a topic may utilize the questions, glossaries, and graphs that are often featured in informational books to scaffold their conversations with their children. Parents whose cultures include strong oral traditions may find that genres such as wordless storybooks offer a natural link between oral storytelling and interactions that include a physical book. Additionally, parents with more limited language and literacy skills can use alphabet books to focus directly on the building blocks (i.e., letters) of the language. Future research should focus on whether and how different genres can impact parents' attitudes towards and inclination to engage in SBR.

4. Conclusions

Due to its positive association with children's outcomes, doctors, educators, and various media encourage parents to start reading to their children from a very young age. While well-intentioned, this messaging for SBR may have unintended consequences by implicitly elevating narrative books over other types and portraying a narrow view of the SBR experience. Studies show that while parents naturally engage in a variety of behaviors and ways of talking during SBR, receiving guidance and support can improve the impact of SBR (e.g., Aram et al., 2013;[1] Barone et al., 2019).[5] In this light, encouraging parents to read across genres can broaden their choices and opportunities for engaging in SBR with their children.

SBR of informational, wordless, narrative, and alphabet books offers the chance for children to become involved, gain content knowledge and vocabulary, and hone visual literacy skills. Combining these benefits has the potential to yield significant positive outcomes for children in terms of language, literacy, and school learning. Furthermore, SBR with multiple genres benefits parents as well, enabling them to draw upon the features of different genres to generate a broader range of conversations about books and their meaning. Having an arsenal of genres from which to choose also provides parents with ways to consider their own and their children's unique characteristics. The interactive nature of SBR opens a space in which children and their parents collaborate to explore the content and messages within books, and the features and devices through which these are expressed and conveyed. Future research can expand our understanding of the unique potential of different genres to enhance an early childhood activity already recognized for its importance as a building block in language and literacy development.

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ARTICLE

Internet Plus University and College Foreign Language Reform

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ABSTRACT

The "Internet Plus" on-line platforms provide many innovative approach to learning; but providing convenient college education on-line also poses many new challenges that have not been explored. Some of these educational challenges are explored in the development of an innovative foreign language teaching program in China Universities. Foreign language education networks can be designed on "Internet Plus" platforms to enhance teachers' teaching capabilities. Using "Internet Plus" platforms is key to foreign language teaching reform in colleges and universities.

1.Introduction

The "Internet Plus" platforms integrate the traditional internet with Internet information technology. For example, channels such as business model improvement of production or economic transformation are integrated with traditional Internet resources. This instructional model reflects a new social form for using Internet technology to access social resources, enhance social productivity, and achieve information development [1].

The emergence of "Internet Plus" provides resources for new college and university teaching models that use information technology principles to organize new and traditional internet resources. "Internet Plus" adds the best educational resources, blocking the authority of the monopoly of knowledge, and further expansion of the traditional learning methods of the students. "Internet Plus" gives learners more access to education resources which allows college students and instructors the freedom to break cultural space-time limitations. In traditional teaching knowledge and theories come from textbooks and teacher's lectures. The authors' of this paper will explore the educational assets and difficulties of using the "Internet Plus" platform for foreign language instruction and learning.

2 "Internet Plus" for College and University Teaching Reform

2.1 Opportunities for Reform of Traditional Teaching Mode

The traditional education and teaching mode has a teachers in the main position and a textbooks as the main resource. This single explanation model when teaching English frequently does not lead to high quality of foreign language teaching because ccollege students lack learning English consciousness and usually cannot meet the teachers'goals [2].

The development of "Internet Plus" allows many educational platforms to improved to improve using Information Technology principles, such as the widespread

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use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) and micro lectures. These resources especially enrich the teaching of foreign language in context. Students can interact with the curriculum, location, and practice on the education platform, and obtain experts' as teaching resources. For example, searching for foreign languages resources within the platform to locate explanation videos empowers the students. The platform facilities variety of resources which increases the theoretical knowledge of foreign languages instruction. Student not only learn more, but also cultivates a motivation and consciousness for learning. Teachers' can transform their teaching by making use of the student access to more technology to require exploration of foreign language teaching forms and methods which will promote a cooperative learning environment for students. "Internet Plus" allows for and strengthens the Reform of Foreign Language Teaching while improving teaching efficiency.

2.2 Opportunities for Changing the Traditional Ways of Knowing and Learning

The new open educational model offers students more learning opportunities than the single textbook and teacher's explanations. The Internet's diversified platform allows for access to immense information. Former students required a physical classrooms and access to only those present. Using background of the "Internet Plus" teachers can build a students' centered platform that combines the always available convenience of the Internet, to further broaden the foreign language teaching space and learning space. Free arrangement of teaching and learning time changes address the issues of teacher, resource, and classroom spaces shortages.

2.3 "Internet Plus" Will Bring Opportunities for Teachers' Instruction Capabilities

My country's education model has always been the form of teachers' face-to-face teaching students. Teachers are defined as a tutorial of knowledge, which is also the standard of traditional teaching. This form of instruction only requires teachers to have good knowledge and literacy of the foreign language. Some mastery of basic computer operations is required to use some multimedia resources to carry out foreign language teaching. The arrival of "Internet Plus" provides foreign language teachers with new challenges and opportunities. In the new era, teachers facilitate instruction by empowering students to use internet resources to achieve learning goals. Teachers help students set and achieve learning goals and help when students encounter difficulties and ask questions of

their qualified companion [3].

From the surface, the teacher's teaching task is simplified, but the teaching requirements of "Internet Plus" require teachers to improve their operational skills of new media classroom and continuously enhance their expertise and teaching skills for productive discourse. Such teaching changes require teachers to develop strength in using information technology and constantly strengthen their own technical level of the Internet. In the reform of college foreign language teaching, teachers must learn how the internet resources can used to learn foreign languages, students must master new internet learning methods, and universities must support advanced technologies for the reform foreign language instruction brought by "Internet Plus".

3. The Insufficient Foreign Language Teaching Reform in "Internet Plus"

3.1 Students' Side

Although "Internet Plus" brings a lot of convenience to students, it provides a lot of high-quality learning platforms. However, foreign languages have always been a compulsory course, which includes a wide range, and professional vocabulary, many composite sentences are more complicated, and many college students have no interest in learning, unwilling to communicate with teachers in foreign language teaching, leading to Many students have not developed a good study habit. On the free-arranged foreign language network learning platform, some students have lacked the interest of learning foreign languages, learning motive shorts, and some learning methods are not properly, and have not developed the attitude of active learning. Because the teaching of the new era mainly student is the subject of learning, if the students don't have independent learning attitudes, it will lead to the reform effect of foreign language teaching in colleges [4].

3.2 Teachers' Side

The teaching concept of foreign language teachers is an important influencing factor in foreign language teaching reform. Teachers' teaching philosophy is the single most important factor in promoting reform of foreign language teaching. Some universities have formed a fixed teaching philosophy where teaching activities are dependent on the single knowledge of the instructor. This philosophy lacks flexibility in teaching practices and thus constraines students' foreign language development and hinders advancement of teaching reform. Also, teachers' knowledge and social learning structures affect what changes teachers are capable of making. The work pressure of teachers is

high not allowing teachers enough time to improve their expertise and develop new media skills, which restrict the reform of foreign language teaching.

Foreign language teachers must have professional English foreign language teaching with the addition of high quality reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills. With "Internet Plus" learning platforms teacher must also master advanced technology skills such as searching for foreign languages suitable for college students. Teachers' teaching skills must affect the students' practical ability to learn a foreign language, if it does not meet the corresponding requirements in teaching, it will not improving the students' learning of foreign languages [5].

3.3 Teaching Management

The premise of conducting foreign language teaching is to configure advanced teaching facilities and mechanisms for students and teachers, but in actual reforms, some universities of basic teaching facilities are still relatively backward, and they cannot provide "Internet Plus" technology. Teaching reform is restricted when student's lives are not coordinated to their learning goals, there is a lack of strong teachers, and the proportion of teachers to students is unreasonable. If effective management mechanisms are dominant in teaching reform and favorable conditions for foreign language teaching cannot be provided reform innovation will be difficult. Universities must strive to create positive reform and optimization of capabilities to provide a good atmosphere for teachers' teaching and student learning.

4. Thoughts on the Reform of Foreign Language Teaching in the "Internet Plus"

4.1 Cultivate Students' Consciousness

The reform of foreign language teaching must focus on students' learning. If you want to improve students' foreign language scores, then students need to be more invested in the learning process. Learning cannot focus on teachers and teachers cannot be single source of knowledge. Students must be more involved in their own learning by use flexible and diverse teaching methods. Let students learn, mobilize college students enthusiasm for English by actively building a cooperative relaxed learning environment that guides students to express their own views and thus promote learning efficiency [6].

Foreign language learning is complicated which causes many students to lose their interest in learning, which requires teachers of foreign language to a learning design that relates foreign language knowledge to students' interests. For example, when teaching vocabulary, the basis of

learning foreign languages, many students have difficulty remembering the spelling and meaning of words. When reading foreign language articles familiar word are identified, but translation will mix the meaning between words. Therefore, rote learning of vocabulary does not work well, but corresponding skills such as learn to learn words in a single sentence, mastering words in the article; church all kinds of memory methods, strengthen memory, such as contrast Memory, put the same symbol, synonym, etc promote true comprehension.

4.2 Improve Teachers' Comprehensive Capacity, Promote Teaching Reform, and Internet Integration

A first-class university teacher team promotes teaching reform. Reform of foreign language teaching expects the teaching effects and changes to be comprehensive in quality. Therefore, university foreign language teachers should actively participate in the training of foreign language expertise to increase their own foreign language knowledge, master new teaching skills, and update their teaching knowledge. For example, teachers can actively participate in English-speaking activities while enhancing their foreign language skills by watching foreign language movies, listening to professional research reports, and especially reading the research of foreign experts.

According to studies involving actual students, when teachers implement new teaching innovations and successful teaching modes in foreign language teaching, their teaching quality improves. Foreign language teachers must develop comprehensive expertise, but also keep pace with their information technology practical ability. They must learn to search for quality teaching content, so that students quickly adapted to diversified learning forms. The "Internet Plus" increases access to these resources by broaden the knowledge of teachers and students. Teachers can use high efficiency teaching methods to transform and innovate their own teaching methods [7].

For example, a teachers can design a lesson using "Internet Plus" functions to prepare interesting reading textbook content that including Chinese materials to increase students' understanding of reading material. Students understand the reading material but are curious about English material and are encouraged to actively explore the English resources.

Teachers can use MOOC to require students to study the language of an article and then pose their own ideas which can be consolidated into a review for the whole class. After class, teachers can use social platform features for students to exchange communication. Online students can actively participate in discussion, targeted to help them think and learn. In such online communications,

teachers guide learning by posing questions and clarifying ideas. They are the judges of the students 'learning results; the teachers should actively find resources that provide effective teaching tasks for their students and pay attention to students' learning. Help students handle tricky problems in a timely manner.

For example, you can introduce micro lecture and MOOC into foreign language teaching by designing a variety of open small problems or topics. These learning tasks are presented through video or small games which allows students to discuss answers to interesting culture rich media. You can also create a corresponding foreign language scenario and context to improve students 'ability to organize their own learning. It is also possible to combine the psychology of contemporary college students interests to help the teacher design effective new media context for learning. Teachers can transform the customs of the Western traditional culture to China classroom thus causing a motivating learning environment for students.

In advanced teachers should carefully consider teaching content, carefully organize the teaching form of college students, and fully think about classroom arrangements. They must master the necessary new education methods and technologies, master video, images, shooting, editing, etc., learn to use diversified technology to optimize the interest and practicability of courseware, and continue to increase their information literacy and technical capabilities.

4.3 Increase School Infrastructure and Management

Combined with China's national conditions, teaching reform should promote a diversified teaching model, provide teaching resources, and promote methods for teachers to help teachers' innovate teaching. Teaching reforms need teachers who love to teach and learn; but also, use scientific management means to promote leanring of foreign languages. The reform of teaching requires everyone's identity and scientific attitude. The universities need to cooperate with teachers in accordance with their needs to build an environment that is conducive to student learning. The introduction of "Internet Plus" functions and technical equipment is a great tool for this because it is a great teaching management mechanism.

For example, the school needs to share high quality teaching resources. In the context of "Internet Plus", the improvement of foreign language teaching resources is reflected in the degree of adaptation of new teaching models and materials using a information technology teaching platform. Colleges and universities should actively participate in the development, sharing and common progress of teaching platforms. Each university has its own teaching resources and excellent platforms which can be used to build foreign language teaching platforms to meet the learning needs of their students. In the platform, students have free learning choices and quality learning conditions.

Establish a reasonable scientific reform management mechanism, standardize the management for all teachers, and transform the teaching philosophy of foreign language. Foreign language teaching reform means making foreign language more modern. According to the students' point of view, improving foreign language teachings means improving technology equipment to build a scientific foreign language information receiving system. "Internet Plus" allows the building of a reasonable analysis and test system according to the actual situation of the campus service networks, improve the management of teachers, the development and improvement of educational teams in colleges and universities. Important tasks of reform requires regularly training for teachers on the modern technology applications to make full use of advanced teaching equipment.

5. Conclusion

In summary, in the context of "Internet Plus", the foreign language teaching reforms in colleges belong must involve new teaching practices such as changes to the foreign language examination system and language environment construction. Teaching and learning innovation formed according to market demands formulated from talent training objectives must be used to optimize every link in foreign language teaching. The teaching practices must increase the scientific nature of reform and then realize the purpose of foreign language teaching reform in colleges and universities.

The arrival of "Internet Plus" allows reform of the foreign language teaching mode in universities. Each university and course have its own challenges, but it is a good opportunity for foreign language teaching to make improvements. Therefore, teachers should keep pace with the times, gradually improve their cultivation and expertise in teaching, and timely mastery of information technology. Combined with the "Internet Plus", good features of foreign language teaching methods and resources, can contribute to meaningful change and development of the country's education and universities.

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ARTICLE
Benefits of Internationalization to Students Cosmopolitan Competency

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions across the world are responding to globalization through internationalization. However, there is limited research that focuses on the benefits of both internationalization-at-home and cross-border internationalization to students' cosmopolitan competency from the perspective of students. Therefore, this qualitative case study explored the benefits of internationalization to students from the perspectives of both domestic and international undergraduate and graduate students at two U.S universities. Purposeful and snowball sampling strategies were adopted to identify sixteen students. Data were garnered via interviews, institutions' websites, and documents. Constant comparative method was employed to analyze the data. Findings from this study revealed that students acquired bilingual or multilingual abilities, firsthand cultural knowledge, global knowledge, cultural nuances critical to showing respect to people from different cultures and geographical backgrounds, friendship and networking, personal growth, high tendency to develop empathy through university internationalization, and opportunity to taste food from different parts of the world. The study recommends that, institutions of higher education should provide opportunities such as foreign language courses, Rosetta Stones, language laboratories, foreign language conversation hour sessions, English as a Second Language (ESL) or Intensive English Language program for students. Also, administrators and faculty are encouraged to provide a platform for study abroad returnees to share their experiences with their colleagues. Higher education institutions should continue to recruit more international students to enrich students' experiences and global learning.

1. Introduction

Universities across the world are responding to globalization in different ways, one of such responses to globalization is internationalization (Agnew, 2012;[1] Jibeen & Khan, 2015;[35] Jiang & Carpenter, 2011;[34] Knight, 2004;[41] Lam, 2010;[42] Spencer-Oatey, 2013).[65] Consequently, many universities worldwide have incorporated international perspectives into programs, course offerings, and research, provided funds for study abroad programs, organized international events, and diversified student population by recruiting international students (Altbach, 2010;[5] Armstrong, 2007;[6] Becker, 2006;[10] Gopal, 2011;[26] Leask, 2009;[45] Otten, 2003;[54] Parsons, 2010).[57] Internationalization of higher education has the potential to sustain and advance science and scholarship through dynamic academic exchanges and developing social and economic capacity in different countries (Jibeen & Khan, 2015).[35] In addition, higher education internationalization helps to improve quality of education, pro-

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duce internationally oriented faculty, staff, and students (Jibeen & Khan, 2015;[35] Leask, 2009).[45] Jibeen and Khan (2015)[35] opine that diversity in students, staff, and faculty population enhances the learning environment for the benefits of domestic students, the university, and the nation. Additionally, internationalization can alter the lives of students because it helps to hone students' cross-cultural sensitivity and international knowledge (Jibeen & Khan, 2015;[35] Kalantzis & Cope, 2000).[39] Apart from improvement in academic quality and advancement in science and scholarship, revenue creation and brain gain are potential benefits of higher education internationalization (Jibeen & Khan, 2015).[35] Foreign students are revenue generating as they usually contribute higher tuition fees, and as they purchase services and goods during their stays: travel, accommodation, daily living expenses, telephone and internet services, health-related expenses, and entertainment (Hawawini, 2016).[29] For example, in France, the cost to the State for hosting international students on campus nationwide was around 3 billion euros, whereas the contribution of the same international students to the French economy was about 4.65 billion (BVA-Campus France, 2014).[13] In North America, during the 2017-18 academic year, more than 1 million international students studying at colleges and universities contributed the equivalent of 34.7 billion euros to the national economy and supported more than 455,622 jobs. Also, in Canada, the value of international education services in 2015, as measured by total spending by international students (the equivalent of 8.4 billion euros), amounted to 12.5 percent of Canada's total service exports to the world. This value increased to 14.5 percent of Canada's total service exports after a year. In Australia, in 2017, international education contributed over 32 billion Australian dollars to the economy, becoming the country's third largest source of export revenues. However, there is limited research that focuses on the benefits of internationalization to students' cosmopolitan competency. Besides, the limited research on the benefits of internationalizing higher education to students has focused on internationalization at home to the neglect of cross-border internationalization. Moreover, the benefits listed in the existing literature appear to be perceptions (Brandenburg et al, 2019;[12] De Wit et al., 2019;[20] Hayle, 2008;[30] Jon, 2013).[38] In general, there is little understanding of how internationalization of higher education is beneficial to students' experiences and value addition gained from internationalizing institutions of higher education. Knowledge about the benefits of internationalization to students' cosmopolitan competency could inform policy and practices toward university internationalization. Thus, the current study seeks to explore the benefits of internationalization to students' cosmopolitan competency through at-home and cross-border internationalization at two U.S universities. The research question that guided this study was what benefits do students derive from internationalization of higher education?

2. Literature Review

Internationalization of higher education is critical to students' ability to function effectively in today's world (Wiley, 2001).[69] Internationalizing higher education is an effective way to produce a workforce that appreciate and understand cultural differences (Altbach & Knight, 2007;[4] Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007;[8] Jie, 2006).[36] Therefore, internationalizing the curriculum is not to change the curriculum, but to change the perspectives of students (Bond, Qian, & Huang, 2003).[11] Internationalization activities such as curriculum internationalization, study abroad, and institutions' intentional efforts to nurture interaction between international students and domestic students have significant effect on students' multi-lingual abilities, cross-cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Jon, 2013;[38] Parsons, 2010).[55] Nesdale and Todd (2000)[51] argue that international orientation programs, resident hall tutorials, and floor-group activities positively impacted domestic students' cross-cultural acceptance, intercultural knowledge, and openness. Several researchers concur that domestic students' intercultural knowledge development increased through class projects with international students and students' engagement in campus international events (Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2007;[21] Gordon & Newburry, 2007;[27] Jon, 2013;[38] Klak & Martin, 2003;[40] Leask, 2009).[45] Similarly, Tedrow & Mabokela (2007)[66] argued that internationalization improved students' personal abilities and socio-cultural skills. Likewise, Gill (2007)[28] studied a small group of Chinese students studying in the United Kingdom and found that intercultural learning enhanced students' skills and understanding, changed their ways of thinking and perceiving, and affected the "reconstruction of their self-identity" (p. 176). Presence of international students on campus is likely to foster interaction that will lead to cross-cultural knowledge, understanding, and competency among students. In addition, having international students on most campuses of higher education provides opportunity for students of the host country to acquire cultural understanding through interactions with international students (Foster, Yao, Buchanan-Butterfield, & Powell-Brown, 2013;[22] Lin, 2012).[46] Also, analysis of whether students who go on study abroad exhibited high global awareness skill than students who studied at-home institutions, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004)[14] found that students who participated in study abroad pro-

grams displayed "confidence in intercultural awareness and functional knowledge" (p. 167) than their counterparts who did not participate in study abroad program. Moreover, studies show that students who embarked on study abroad programs acquired employable skills which prepared them for opportunities and challenges in an increasingly globalized and interdependent world (Crossman & Clarke, 2010;[18] Hser, 2005,[32] Murphy, Sahakyan, Yong-Yi, & Magnan, 2014).[50] For example, Prospect Marketing (2006)[59] reported that Australian employers recognize the potential for overseas study to enhance soft skills. Consequently, students who have studied abroad had an advantage over their counterparts who have not had any study abroad experience.

Benefits of Internationalization to Students

Internationalization of higher education inculcates in students, qualities such as international mindedness, and open-mindedness, second language competency, flexibility of thinking, tolerance, and respect for others which are critical to cosmopolitan competencies (Jibeen & Khan, 2015, p.197;[35] Wiek, Bernstein, Foley, Cohen, Forrest, Kuzdas, Kay, & Keeler, 2016).[68] Leask (2009)[45] argues that "the development of intercultural competencies in students is a result of an international curriculum which calls for a campus environment and culture that encourages and rewards interaction between international and domestic students within and outside the classroom. Similarly, Kalantzis and Cope (2000)[39] maintain that "changes to student population due to increases in student mobility provides the opportunity for a valuable resource for the creation of an open, tolerant and cosmopolitan university experience" (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000, p. 31).[39] Such an experience is pivotal to ensuring that domestic and international students develop the skills and knowledge required to work in a global setting" (Leask, 2009, p. 206).[45] Diversification of the student population through the presence of international students is likely to transform higher education institutions and classrooms into a vibrant microcosm on the world when their contributions and experiences are harnessed and incorporated into the curriculum (Leask, 2009).[45] However, students' perspectives on the benefits associated with higher education internationalization has received little attention. Moreover, the limited research on the benefits of internationalizing higher education to students has focused on internationalization at home to the neglect of cross-border internationalization (Brandenburg et al, 2019;[12] De Wit et al., 2019;[20] Hayle, 2008;[30] Jon, 2013).[38] In general, there is little understanding of students' experiences and value addition gained from Higher education internationalization.

Thus, the current study seeks to explore the benefits of internationalization to students' cosmopolitan competency through at-home and cross-border internationalization at two U.S universities from the perspective of domestic and international students.

3. Methodology

This project that is part of a larger study used qualitative case study to explore the benefits of higher education internationalization to students from the perspectives of students from two U.S universities. Case study was appropriate for the study because internationalization of higher education consist of events, activities, and processes (Yin, 2014).[71] Also, the researcher was interested in gathering data through triangulation of data sources such as interviews, documents, and institutions' websites (Creswell, 2014;[17] Glesne, 2011).[24] Besides, internationalization is bound to a real-life context (Creswell, 2014;[17] Glesne, 2011;[24] Johnston & Christensen, 2012;[37] Yin, 2014).[71] Moreover, the researcher was interested in comparing findings from the two universities to obtain in-depth understanding of the benefits of internationalization to students (Bazeley, 2013, p. 255).[9]

3.1 Study site

University A and University B share some similarities that make the two sites appropriate for this research. Both universities had international offices charged with internationalization. The two universities offered and coordinated study abroad programs. University A and University B are in the United States. Recruitment and admission of international and exchange students to University A and University B. International faculty recruitment was common to the two study sites. Both universities are accredited research institutions.

Differences

The two study sites are different in several ways. University A is in the Midwest of the U.S, whereas University B can be found in the southern region of the U.S. University B won the Senator Paul Simon Award in 2011 for comprehensive campus internationalization, however, there was no evidence that University A received any accolades for internationalization. Whilst University A covers 1,850-acre land, University B covers a total land area of 384 acres. The overall student population at University A was 38, 857, with international students' population of 1, 859, whereas, University B had a total student population of 29,114, with international student population of 1300 at the time of data collection. University A was

awarded the Senator Paul Simon and Andrew Heiskell awards for comprehensive campus internationalization and innovation (Childress, 2010)[15] however, such cannot be said about University B. University A is a predominantly black university whilst University B is mainly a white institution.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling was employed to identify eight students from each of the universities (Creswell, 2014;[17] Johnson & Christensen, 2012;[37] Patton, 2002).[56] American undergraduates in their junior and senior years, American graduate students, international students in junior and senior year, and international graduate students were purposively sampled for the study. The first author attended international students' events to recruit international students for the study. To recruit American students for the study, email addresses of students were requested from the registrar's office. Based on the sampling criteria, the researcher used excel spreadsheet to sort out the email addresses of international students.

3.3 Data Collection

Data collection commenced after ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Boards of the two universities (Roberts, 2010).[60] Face-to-face semi-structured interview guided by an interview protocol was used to garner information on the benefits of internationalization to students. Additionally, data were mined from documents such as study abroad flyers, *Year of flyers*, and websites of both universities (Ahwireng, 2020).[3]

Ethical Considerations

The study's procedures were approved by the institutional review boards of both universities (approval number: 13E154) (Roberts, 2010).[60] Subsequently, participants' consents were sought before the interview began. The researcher explained the purpose of the research to participants at the beginning of the interview and informed them of their right to discontinue the interview if necessary (Creswell, 2014).[17] Participants granted the researcher permission for the interviews to be audio recorded. Pseudonyms were assigned to each of the participants and the two research sites (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).[47]

3.4 Data analysis

Constant comparative method was employed to analyze data from the two universities. Interviews were transcribed and codes were generated from the transcripts (Creswell, 2014;[17] Glaser & Holton, 2004;[25] Patton, 2002;[54] Saldana, 2012).[63] Within-case analysis were conducted for each of the universities. The researcher started with open coding, by reading through the transcripts several times, and recorded words or phrases related to benefits of internationalizing higher education to students, on the margins of the transcript. Words or phrases noted in the margins served as preliminary codes (Glaser & Holton, 2004;[25] Johnson & Christensen, 2012;[37] Saldana, 2012).[63] Subsequently, relevant quotes were extracted from transcripts, internationalization documents, and online sources to support the codes to provide understanding of benefits students gained from internationalization of higher education. Subsequently, a master coding list was developed. Responses were sorted and grouped according to the research question with the help of the master coding list. The master coding list served as guided to fully code the transcript of each of the research participants as second and third inferences received attention in a response category. To do axial coding, categories from the transcript of each research participant were organized to ascertain the relationships among the categories (Saldana, 2012).[63] The researcher reviewed transcripts and compared it to the initial codes to help refine the codes into themes. After the within-case analysis of each of the institutions, the researcher commenced with cross-case analysis, a process peculiar to comparative analysis (Miles et al., 2014).[49] Miles et al. (2014)[49] argue that cross-case analysis is a good way to ensure transferability of findings from research to other contexts, thus, to transcend the particular to understand the general. Further, cross-case analysis yields in-depth "understanding and explanation as well as helps find contrarian cases to augment theory, generated via drawing similarities and differences across cases" (p. 101). Therefore, clustered matrix was adopted to unearth the similarities and differences in the benefits that students from each of the universities gained from internationalizing higher education.

To conduct analysis across University A and University B, the researcher depended on the cases for the individual universities to develop a conceptually clustered matrix. The clustered matrix helped to draw differences and similarities in responses from the research participants based on the research question. Six cell entries were created—themes, quotes, names, differences, similarities, and short narratives. The quotes provided explanations to internationalization practices, efforts, events, and initiatives at both universities that potentially benefited students. Similarly, the short narratives helped to avoid lumping together responses that convey different meanings (Miles et al., 2014).[49] Finally, results from the cross-case analysis were compared to the theoretical frameworks and relevant pre-

vious literature to highlight consistency and contradictory views (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).[37]

3.5 Credibility and trustworthiness

To ensure rigor in this study, member checking was adopted. Interview transcripts were emailed to the participants to authenticate the interview as well as elicit more insight and clarity to the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).[37] In addition, documents, interviews, and institutions' website searches were triangulated (Johnson & Christensen, 2012;[37] Yin, 2014)[71] to glean detailed information about the case understudy. Besides, each of the data collection tools compensated for the weaknesses of the other. Further, the researcher provided a detailed description of the study sites through audit trail. Audit trail enabled the researcher to present all the process undertaken during the research. These processes include the basis for selecting the participants, the site selected for the study, as well as the interview process (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).[37] This provides readers the opportunity to clearly follow the decision trail and judge the dependability of the research (Ahwireng, 2022;[2] Anney, 2014;[7] Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017;[52] Treharne & Riggs, 2014).[67]

3.6 Findings

This qualitative case study explored the benefits of internationalization to students' cosmopolitan competency from the perspectives of both domestic and international undergraduate and graduate students at two universities in the U.S. The study showed that students acquired bilingual or multilingual abilities, firsthand cultural knowledge, global knowledge, cultural nuances critical to showing respect to people from different cultures and geographical backgrounds, friendship and networking, personal growth, high tendency to develop empathy through university internationalization, and opportunity to taste food from different parts of the world.

3.7 Bilingual or Multilingual abilities

Websites of both universities led to findings that were in line with participant responses regarding opportunities available to students to learn foreign languages. For example, the department of Foreign Languages at University A offered languages such as—French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Italian, Latin, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi, Russian, and Turkish, whereas, the departments of Modern Languages and Linguistics at University B offered French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, and Portuguese. There was also a

general agreement among the respondents that having the opportunity to learn a foreign language is a bilingual or multilingual value addition. For example, Angela said, "I learned Chinese and Swahili at University B. I know how to say *akwaaba, wo hõ yɛ fɛ* in Twi from having a Ghanaian roommate." Similarly, Samuel said, "I am learning Spanish ... to be able to interact with my Hispanic friends and neighbors." Similarly, Jennifer mentioned that "I am learning Wolof because I have a scholarship from Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS)." Additionally, Cyril said,

I am learning Turkish ... I have a friend from Turkey, she used to teach me, but she graduated ... but she gave me the notes I need so I am building on.

Also, international students who are non-native speakers of English had the opportunity to become bilingual, because such group of international students are required to enroll in English as a Second Language (ESL). Students enrolled in English as a Second Language were required to regularly engage with native speakers of U.S American English. Acquisition of English language was clear in a statement from Kelsey of University A, "international students register for the program, and they are paired with an American student, and they meet five times during the semester to interact ..."

Both universities provided study abroad opportunities for students to travel to countries where they can communicate with native speakers to acquire a high level of proficiency. For example, Emily hinted that, "... I was able to [use my] Spanish … when I went on study abroad. Because we stayed in a particular housing situation where everyone in that area spoke Spanish."

Knowledge about different faiths, cultures, and countries

Firsthand knowledge about different religions, cultures, and countries emerged as a benefit of internationalization to students at both universities. International students had the permission to hold cross-cultural events to showcase their culture. Consequently, students acquired cultural traditions by attending cross-cultural events on campus. Knowledge of cultures gained through involvement in international and cross-cultural events was evident in a comment from Ellis of University A, "international students get the chance to celebrate their culture, at the same time, people who are not aware of that culture can immerse themselves in this new experience. …" Similarly, Angela of University B noted that, "at the Arabian Night, I [learned that] in Saudi Arabia, the culture is, boys dance with boys and girls dance with girls." Additionally, Brittney of Uni-

versity A explained that,

if I were in Korea, I would not have had this opportunity to see foreigners and be exposed to different cultures. [University A,] offers events like salsa, *Year of Ghana, Year of Japan,* and the *Breaking Barriers*. …

Olivia of University B emphasized that, "... to have people [at University B] to be able to immerse in a diversity of culture is [great]. …"

Also, Jennifer said, "there is French hour. Department of Linguistics have Swahili conversation hour, so learning a language does not just provide proficiency in a language, you learn culture too." Similarly, Andrew of University B commented that,

when you talk to an American professor ... he can raise his legs on the table. I asked the professor why are his legs on the table? … He [said] … it is a sign of relaxation. ... It is not disrespectful.

Similarly, Scot from University B said, "in America people can address their elders by their first names. That does not mean they do not respect but that shows how relaxed the American culture is." Further, because both schools recruit international students, students who take classes with international students get the opportunity to gain some cultural knowledge from their international colleagues. For instance, Stephen said that "real intercultural learning is during break time, there was a guy from Jordan, me, and a guy from Ghana ... those moments are when I really pick up little bit [of cultural and international information". Also, professors engaged international students in the classroom to provide students with firsthand knowledge about other countries. This was obvious in a comment from Jacob of University A,

When we were talking about South Africa in my International Relation Introduction to Africa class, there was a girl from South Africa ... One of our presentations was on FIFA and their influence on the economy and the politics of South Africa ... because she is a South African, she gave a firsthand account of the situation.

Also, acquisition of religious knowledge from internationalization became apparent, because international students had the freedom to practice their religions. For example, Cyril of University A said,

I never interacted with Christians. I never understood their beliefs. But at [University A] I engage in conversations with Christians. … I find a lot of similarities between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

Similarly, Senousi of University B noted that,

during Ramadan, Muslim students are not eating or drinking, by mid-afternoon they [are hungry] … My teacher told the Muslim students [to] explain Ramadan to the us. We said, we will not snack in class...

4. Job opportunities

Through the personal interactions in class and at events, students agreed that knowledge about and sensitivity to different cultures and religious practices are pivotal to opening job opportunities. This perspective was highlighted in a comment from Samuel of University A,

If you do not educate yourself on different practices of different places you may do business with … say a Japanese and you might offend him if you do not study his business card in front of him if [he] gives you his business card.

Also, Spencer of University A, pointed out that,
whether students will seek employment outside of the U.S or not, at some point students will interact with someone from another culture, be it a teacher who teaches a couple of immigrant students in his/her class.

Similarly, Angela of University B commented that,
If you want to work in a company, they will have offices in different countries, so you are expected to be able to adapt to [the cultures] ... so exposure [and] understanding of different cultures is helpful.

Elimination of stereotypes

There was consensus among respondents from both institutions that elimination of stereotypes were moral imperatives derived from internationalization. Lois of University A intimated that, "I had stereotype about Nigerians. [I] got closer to Nigerians to know that not all Nigerians are the same. Similarly, Jennifer of University B reported that,

we talked about some African societies and how [there was lack of] democracy. ... You need to understand the culture—how … they regard the elderly ... it was easier for me to judge them but now I do not.

Expansion of geographical knowledge

Expansion of students' geographical knowledge was highlighted as a benefit of internationalization to students. The cultural events held by the different nationals represented on campus and flags of different countries hanging at strategic places on both campuses, exposed students to different countries. Kelsey of University A noted that "through the Political Science and International Affairs

program, students garnered knowledge about the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and their relationships with the U.S." Also, Jennifer of University B mentioned that "flags of different countries on campus, might motivate students to google this later... [For instance,] the Arabian Night exposed students to where … Arabs are from."

Opportunity to sample food from different parts of the world

Respondents from both universities agreed that because food formed part of the cross-cultural events that are held on campus, students got the opportunity to sample food from different parts of the world. For instance, Kelsey also said, "I learned about Jamaican ... cuisine by tasting it." Jacob of University B too indicated that "being able to sample all these different foods … and ask someone how you made this? where is it from?"

Similarly, Ellis of University B stated that, "nine out of ten people will tell you they want to go to international events for food."

Global perspectives

Respondents agreed that students at University A and University B gained global perspectives through internationalization. For example, through study abroad programs, students got the opportunity to garner global perspectives. For example, Scot, from University A mentioned that "some Americans went to Brazil; one went to Japan. Another person went to Spain. We got different perspectives [from the stories they shared]. It was very interesting." Also, Jennifer of University B indicated that

I think that my experience in Senegal helped me to understand and conceptualize a lot of my courses, especially, African Politics in African Studies versus [learning about African Politics] in the abstract." American students are used to this lens of viewing Africa through the invisible child saying everybody needs to save these African children. In America I can be the intermediary to start this dialogue about ... hey! Wait, there are other stories about Africa that you do not hear.

Additionally, students gleaned global perspectives from anecdotes shared by international students in class, assignments about a different country in relation to class topics, Global Studies Certificate, and Area Studies Programs. For instance, Nicole of University A mentioned that,

I kind of understand the perspectives of Japanese on World War I and II better from listening to Japanese whose parents have lived through it than gaining it from a professor sitting in class.

Similarly, Scot of University B said,

there are international students and Americans in my program. ... We share information [about our countries] in class that are related to class topics. … In our Phonology class … one of my … Turkish classmate did Kazakh for his project. ...

Equally, Stephen of University B noted that, this semester [in one of my] classes, there is a Yemen, Jordanian, American, and Ghanaian. [So] in that class a student may say … in my country we do this.

Additionally, findings showed that international and domestic faculty on campus contributed to students' global learning because faculty shared anecdotes about their countries, travel experience, and research findings with students. For instance, Olivia of University B said, "Dr. Riverson, is an American. He specializes in Nigeria, so he talks about his Nigerian experiences. Also, Angela of University B mentioned that "my professor is from Turkey, he always shares his experience working in Puerto Rico and going to industries and trying to improve their system." Similarly, Scot of University B said, "I remember one of my professors shared his experience living and teaching in Italy with us."

In addition, students gained global perspectives through Area Studies Programs such as African Studies, Southeast Asian Studies, and Latin American Studies African and African Diaspora Studies, and Asia Studies which are offered at both study sites. For example, Kelsey of University A said, "I believe that my bachelor's degree in International Affairs had been helpful by giving me knowledge of how to analyze international issues." Also, Olivia of University B

commented that,

[In] my History of Africa class, we read a text written by *Ibn Battuta in black Africa* … and in another class, we read a novel by Chimamanda Adichie, she is a Nigerian author.

Reviews from course syllabi revealed that students in the African Studies program read the following novels authored by Africans—*Half of a Yellow Sun, Things Fall Apart, Wretched of the Earth, The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, and *Our Ways of Dying*.

Also, students garnered global perspectives through

international forums held on campus. This finding was obvious in a statement from Kelsey of University A said,

"I have been to several [lectures] that have speakers that … come from different cultures to campus ... to talk to students about what is happening in different parts of the world.

Stephen of University B too said that "last year I went to a forum on the Khmer Rouge Cambodia. Another talk presented by a lady from the Middle East." Similarly, Nicholas of University B said, "the human rights lecture that I attended, I learned global things about women ... and the perspective for that is different from my country."

Behavioral adjustment through encounter with people with different religious practices

Respondents from both schools agreed students acquired cross-cultural and interfaith knowledge through interactions with friends and involvement in cross-cultural events. For example, Emily said,

I learned religiously appropriate dressing when I studied abroad in predominantly Muslim societies. Likewise, having interacted with students from Saudi Arabia, I learned that if you are a woman and you go there you must be covered. You cannot wear jeans.

Similarly, Jennifer said,

I decided to wear pant instead of shorts under warm conditions because I did not want to

unprofessionally present myself to my Senegalese male colleagues who are not used to

girls wearing shorts.

Empathy

Empathy emerged as a benefit of internationalization to students. This finding was crystallized in a comment from Angela from University A, "peer advisors read the gestures of international students to [reach an understanding] of what they are saying during orientation." Also, Olivia of University B observed that,

A lot of … Americans who work at university coffee shops, [if] the international student tries to order something, and their English is not perfect, or they have a strong accent with perfect English. You … can notice a lack of patience to understand. … I have … developed skills, patience, and desire to be understanding and I have

developed an ear for accents through interaction with international students.

Development of empathy through the curriculum was unique to students at University B. Students were presented with articles, books, and videos about political, economic, social, and cultural phenomenon to critique from a non-western perspective. For instance, Mavis said,

I read *Female ritual servitude: The trokosis in Ghana* about girls sold into slavery to atone for… their father for my EDCS 205 class. … I tried to put myself in the mindset of how that is fair. …"

Network and friendship

Formation of friendships at events and in classrooms emerged as a parallel benefit of internationalization at both universities. For example, Spencer said that "through the events, relationships are built ... you walk away with each other's phone numbers..." Angela too commented that "I had a Ghanaian roommate and [we keep in touch.] ... If I want to go to Ghana, I can contact her." Similarly, Scot said, "I talked to my Turkish professor, he said I might have the opportunity to teach in Turkey ... my Chinese friend told me [I] can go [to China and] teach Arabic." Also, Lois of University A indicated that

international students told me which classes to take. They told my brother and I about tuition waivers [for] international students. We applied and we got it. International students gave me the community and the courage ... to survive.

Professional and personal development

Professional and personal development emerged as one of the benefits of internationalization to students from both universities. Both study sites recruited international students and provided them with funding support to serve as Teaching/Research assistants or graduate associates, peer advisors. Students acquired teaching, research, and administrative skills as they work with professors and administrators. For example, Brittney of University A shared that "I am a student worker at Education Abroad Office. I learned how to organize events in a certain order." Similarly, Ellis of University B said, "... a better environment is created for international students to come and learn. They are given opportunity they might not have in their country."
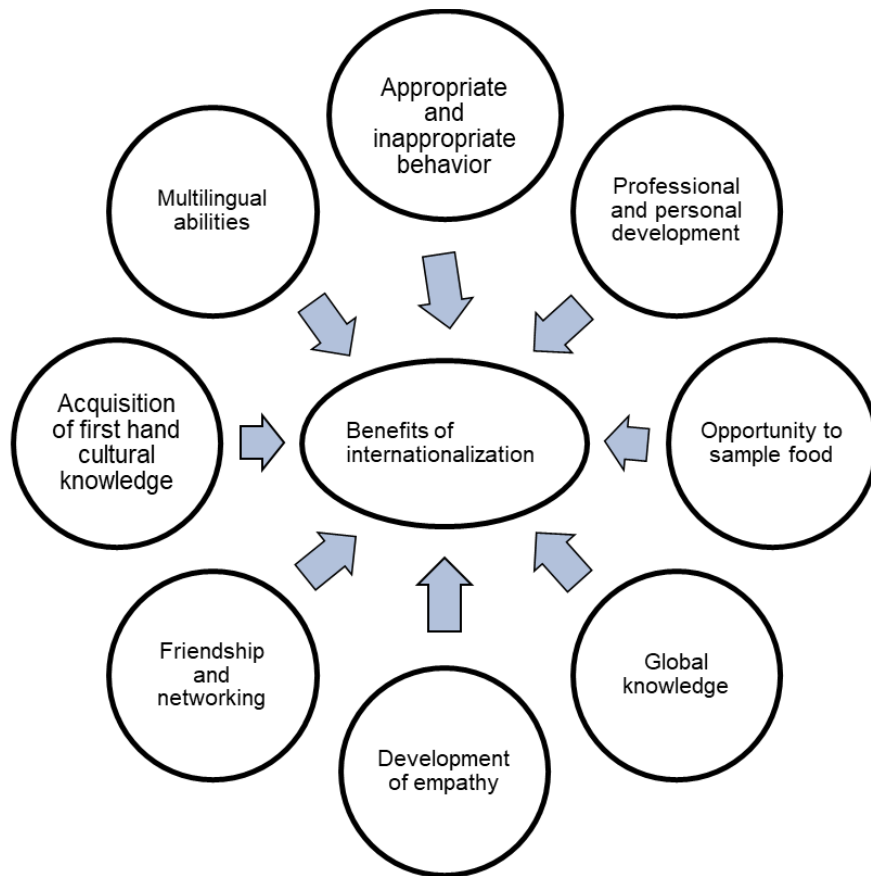
Figure 1. Benefits of internationalization to students.

Discussion

The current study explored benefits of internationalization to students' cosmopolitan competency. Findings from the present study revealed that students acquired Findings from this study revealed that students acquired bilingual or multilingual abilities, firsthand cultural knowledge, global knowledge, cultural nuances critical to showing respect to people from different cultures and geographical backgrounds, friendship and networking, personal growth, high tendency to develop empathy through university internationalization, and opportunity to taste food from different parts of the world.

Acquisition of multilingual abilities through the provision of foreign language opportunities such as foreign language courses, Rosetta Stones, language laboratories, foreign language conversation hour periods, Foreign Language and Area Studies Scholarship, study abroad, English as a Second Language (ESL) program at University A, and the University B Intensive English programs is consistent with previous studies (Jon, 2013).[38] Proficiency in a second language is critical to students' employability as Hénard, Diamond, and Roseveare (2012)[31] observed that multilingual skillset is increasingly becoming a preferred skill that some employers in the corporate and educational arenas look out for when hiring graduates. Attachment of foreign language learning to study abroad is pivotal to facilitate proficiency through immersion. Studies have revealed that institutions that provide opportunities for students whose lingua franca is not English to acquire English language proficiency, stand the chance of attracting international students as well as reap the economic and intercultural exchange benefits associated with international students' presence on campus (Altbach, 2010;[5] Hayle, 2008;[30] Özturgut, 2013).[55] Also, ability to communicate in a second language can help break barriers and provides entrée into a community, especially for research purposes, because research participants are more likely to open-up to foreign researchers who know their language (Ross, 2004).[61] Moreover, findings of this research aligns with previous studies that show "the use of language as another fundamental aspect of acquiring intercultural proficiency. Language is one of the key means by which cultural knowledge is shared and revealed" (Gopal, 2011, p. 376).[26]

Consistent with previous research, students gleaned international, intercultural, and inter-faith knowledge through curricular and co-curricular activities (Clark, Flaherty, Wright, & Millen, 2009;[16] Hayle, 2008;[30] Lee

et al., 2012;[44] Soria & Troisi, 2014).[64] Attainment of cultural and religious knowledge has the potential to help eliminate stereotypical and xenophobic tendencies that might exist among students and provides an "adaptive and comparative thinking lens through which to assess oneself to obtain self-awareness of one's own culture" (Deardorff, 2006, pp. 247-248).[19]

Findings indicated that students gained global perspectives related to teaching pedagogies through internationalization efforts such as study abroad and the shared knowledge and experiences of international students in class. Knowledge about different teaching pedagogy is critical to stimulating students' international comparative research desires to investigate best practices for teaching and learning. Acquisition of different pedagogies can be utilized to complement what students already know to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. Experiences and perspectives that study abroad returnees shared with their colleagues, served as a learning tool, to enhance the international perspectives of students who could not go on study abroad. Further, Gender and Women's Studies certificate programs increased students' global knowledge on gender and women's issues. However, a higher percentage of the content focused on women in North America. Consequently, imbalances in the content of the program in favor of American feminism did not provide opportunity for objective understanding of issues concerning women.

Additionally, anecdotes related to class topics shared by international faculty increased students' global knowledge and perspectives. Opportunity available for students to enroll in Area Studies programs such as African Studies, Southeast Asian Studies, Asia Studies, Latin American Studies, and African and African Diaspora Studies enhanced students' global knowledge and perspectives. Comprehension gained through the perspectives of authors from the respective regions of studies is pivotal to making students circumspective in their thoughts about Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Through guest lectures at international forums, students gained international knowledge about global problems. This strategy is critical to motivating students to get engaged and contribute their quota to their various fields through research, as traits that define global competence is to exhibit interpersonal skills in problem solving (Matherly and Nolting, 2007)[48] and the crave to make the world a better place and the desire to make the world a more sustainable place (Woolf, 2010)[70] because, the solution to world problems is not the responsibility of a few people or a country, collaborative efforts of globally competent citizenship is required (Zhao, 2010).[72] It is important to note that the guest lectures created the awareness of global issues, however, there

were no opportunities at either school for students to get involve. Unfortunately, this internationalization strategy perpetuates banking system of learning (Freire, 2008),[23] and falls short of Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton, and Hubbard (2008)[62] intercultural awareness definition that suggests community engagement. Consequently, there is an urgent need for administrators to connect international forum presentations with some student clubs and associations on campus for interested students to connect and get engaged in addressing global issues. Acquisition of empathy through internationalized curriculum and co-curricular activities emerging from the study confirmed Odgen, Streitwieser, and Crawford's (2014)[53] view that internationalization helps students to learn in a reflexive manner.

Consistent with Lambert and Usher (2013)[43] internationalization offers students the opportunity to establish friendships with peers from different cultures through formal and informal gatherings. Friendship and networking formed because of internationalization provide economic benefits as friends helped each other to secure jobs in other parts of the world, instead of relying on limited jobs in one's own country. Thus, the worries associated with unemployment after graduation will be minimized. Also, the fear of the unknown which is likely to deter graduates from accepting job offers outside their comfort zones is likely to reduce, because students can rely on friends' families for support while away from their home countries (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005).[58]

Engagement of international students in teaching, research, administrative, and leadership roles is critical to their future career development and growth (Jean Francois, 2010).[33] Opportunity granted to international students to come to the U.S for further studies provides a value addition to students' personal and professional growth. Knowledge and exposure that international students acquire while studying in the U.S helps students to be critical about decisions made by leadership in their various countries. This critical mindedness will help students to challenge any unpopular decisions taken by people in leadership positions that will be detrimental to the growth and development of the nation. Similarly, students' interpersonal skills gained through interactions with host citizens whilst on study abroad extends Jon's (2013)[38] view on acquisition of interpersonal growth through interaction with people from different nationalities. This finding provides administrators with strategies to hone students' development through internationalization at home and across borders.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Understanding students' perspectives on the benefits

of internationalizing higher education provides a leverage for university leadership to initiate policies and practices towards effective campus internationalization. Therefore, institutions of higher education should provide opportunities such as foreign language courses, Rosetta Stones, language laboratories, foreign language conversation hour sessions, English as a Second Language (ESL) or Intensive English Language program for students. Also, administrators and faculty are encouraged to provide a platform for study abroad returnees to share their experiences with their colleagues. International students' presence at U.S universities is critical to enriching students' global learning. Therefore, it is imperative for faculty to intentionally motivate and elicit international students' experiential learning in class discussions, assignments, and projects. Therefore, university administrators and faculty are encouraged to incorporate intercultural and interreligious perspectives into the curricula and co-curricular aspects of the institution to enhance students' international, intercultural, and inter-faith competences. Findings of this qualitative case study has expanded theoretical proposition on internationalization by highlighting the benefits of internationalization of higher education, however, findings cannot be generalized to the entire student body because of the small sample size (Yin, 2014).[71] Consequently, similar research that focuses on a non-Western context using a quantitative, or mixed methods approach will warrant generalization of the findings.

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ARTICLE

Rights-Based Education Programming: A Complimentary Approach for Addressing Poverty, Education Inequality, and Development in Zimbabwe

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2015 sought to eradicate major problems facing the globe. Member states ratifying these goals were tasked to formulate and institute policies aimed at addressing the global economic, political, social, and environmental challenges. Three major goals sought to address fundamental issues on poverty, universal education, and gender equality. The MDGs were succeeded by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are targeted to be achieved by 2030. The intersectionality of the development goals and education cannot be underestimated. Education has been identified as a key strategy for addressing poverty, hunger, and gender equality. Although several countries ratified the MDGs, most did not achieve the goals by 2015. A shift in policy is necessary to close the achievement gap and to help the efforts for achieving the 2030 SDGs. This paper addresses Zimbabwe's progress towards the SDGs. Progress on key indicators of quality education, poverty, and inequality of opportunities is presented. Finally, the paper suggests a rights-based education programming framework to help accelerate achievement of the SDGs.

1. Human Rights Based Education Programming in Zimbabwe

During the past two decades, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) whose overall aim was to address the global socio-economic challenges facing member states (United Nations, 2015).[31] Several countries adopted the conventions and worked towards addressing the goals. Chief amongst the goals was the need to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, and promote gender equality and women empowerment. These three goals are fundamental for ending acute poverty that is prevalent in most developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, any efforts to genuinely end poverty should encompass an inclusive economic growth that targets vulnerable populations like women, girls, and children (USAID, 2020).[38] Historically, women have been marginalized from economic activity, have less educational opportunities compared to men, and lower prospects for professional growth (Techane, 2017).[26] According to World Food Program (2020),[40] women

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and girls constitute over 60 percent of chronically hungry people globally. This gender gap in food insecurity is larger for women and girls who are poorer, less educated, unemployed, or marginalized (CARE, 2020).[5] According to a UN Women (2015),[36] women have less educational opportunities compared to men. Around 39% of rural girls attend secondary school in Sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 45% rural boys, 59% urban girls, and 60% urban boys (United Nations, 2015).[32] The same report indicates that perennial deficits in education among rural women poses long term effects for family well-being and poverty reduction. In most African communities, women play a crucial role of fending for the family and as such, they typically bear the brunt of most family problems. Therefore, addressing political, economic, and educational inequalities among women and girls can have a large multiplier effect in addressing poverty.

Women also face a plethora of other socio-related challenges like gender-based violence, poor maternal health, and debilitating effects of climate change (Head et al., 2014).[15] According to World Health Organization (WHO), around 44% of African women have experienced some form of gender-based violence and sexual assault by 2020, yet most such cases go unreported. Although some African countries have strong legal frameworks on paper to address gender-based violence, most frameworks do not prove effective (OECD, 2014),[23] and as such, women subjected to these forms of abuse often choose to not report the cases. The rampant climate change also continues to cause numerous problems in African states (Serdeczny et al., 2017).[25] For example, agricultural production in Zimbabwe has consistently gone down during the past two decades as a result of the perennial droughts and erratic rain seasons. Because Zimbabwe's economy is mostly agricultural-based, most families relying on agriculture (e.g., subsistence farming) have been subjected to extreme poverty. Women and children are most affected as they typically rely on farming for labor (Chidhakwa et al., 2020).[6]

In order to address this and other dimensions of poverty in Africa, it is imperative to address any structural or institutional barriers to education, economic empowerment, and social protections particularly amongst women. This paper describes a rights-based framework for addressing inequalities in educational opportunities in Zimbabwe. Education plays a crucial role in ending poverty and in the accomplishment of most developmental goals. For example, a higher educational qualification is associated with increased job opportunities (Ali & Jalal, 2018).[1] Education also empowers individuals to know and advocate for their rights (Bernardi & Plavgo, 2019).[3] Although several

African countries made a big effort in increasing access to primary and secondary education during the past two decades, this has not correlated with quality education, which explains why most countries still suffer massive unemployment rates despite high literacy rates (Kapel, 2021).[19] Furthermore, some educational practices in Zimbabwe are restrictive as they limit individuals from making choices regarding their educational and career goals. Most African countries adopted education and curriculum systems from their colonial masters, yet the circumstances unique to them do not sufficiently warrant western models of education. In Zimbabwe, for example, the model for enrolling high school graduates into university is based on the points systems, meaning students have to attain a certain number of points at A level in order to be admitted into a program of their choice in university. The majority of students enrolling into college end up settling for courses that are not their first choice because of the restrictive enrollment method. Furthermore, this enrollment system is biased against girls because generally, girls attain lower points at A Level compared to boys. This trend, however, stems from a cultural system that works at the disadvantage of girls. On average, girls devote less time to their studies compared to boys since they participate in more household chores compared to boys (Baten et al., 2021).[2]

2. Role of Education in Driving Development

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the great engine of personal development" (Nel & Mabhena, 2021).[22] It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the song of a mineworker can become the head of the mind, that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another". In other words, education can be a catalyst for change. Education empowers its citizens to take ownership of their future by ensuring the well-being of others. Moreover, it prepares citizens to contribute to the intellectual, social, and economic well-being of a country through innovation, critical thinking, compassion, and self-reflection.

It becomes imperative that educators and lawmakers ensure that education is free, accessible, and inclusive to all citizens. Providing education that embraces diversity of perspectives, equity in access to information, and inclusion of accessible delivery modalities can eliminate barriers that impede personal development. Thus, it allows educators to promote practical knowledge and skills to all citizens regardless of their race, gender identity, language, creed, national origin, etc. This equity driven approach to education allows educators to share comprehensive

knowledge and empower citizens to continue growing and developing.

Burns, Crow, and Becker (2015)[4] argued that collaboration is the driving force of student development. Collaboration "…brings together groups of people who have different ideas, approaches, experiences, and areas of expertise [that] creates a fertile environment for generating new concepts and methods" (p. 1). Collaboration provides a space where educators are able to share their thoughts and experiences in a way that ensures education is diverse, equitable, and inclusive for all citizens. This approach works best when there is representation from historically marginalized groups. The representatives are not there to speak on behalf of all members of a marginalized group; rather they are able to give a voice to a group or groups that historically have been silenced.

3. Economic, Political, and Social Empowerment Through Education

Furthermore, education is the driving force for economic, political, and social empowerment. Education provides citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to the economic, political, and social empowerment of a country. The essence of education is to provide diverse, equitable, and inclusive opportunities for learning that benefit all citizens. Putnam (2001)[24] noted that countries need a collective network to ensure the public good. Therefore, we will use Putnam's (2001)[24] social capital theory to explore how education empowers economic, political, and social development.

4. Economic Impact of Education

Education can have far-reaching economic implications ranging from developing business to arts. The global economy increases the demand for countries to produce a workforce that can meet their economic needs. Education is essential to the economic development of countries. Putnam (2001)[24] described that this process is achieved through social capital. Social capital is a set of norms and customs grounded in trust for the mutual benefit of all (Putnam, 2001).[24] Education can be an avenue for providing training opportunities to boost all economic development. Therefore, to achieve this goal, it is essential to have a diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment that is committed to mutual economic development. The workforce needs a diverse set of skills to ensure the country's economic needs are being met.

Creating opportunities for fair and inclusive education affords citizens great financial and human capital. Increased financial and human capital affords citizens more access and opportunities to education and resources that further empowers economic development. Citizens who have access to equitable education may engage in more innovative approaches that provide a collective benefit to those in their communities furthering social capital for the community, thereby benefiting the financial and human capital of the individuals in the community.

5. Political and Social Impact of Education

Enriched social capital provides a voice for disenfranchised and marginalized groups (Putnam, 2001).[24] Education is an opportunity to provide citizens with social engagement opportunities that further the economic interest of countries. Social engagement empowers citizens to partake in civic responsibilities such as voting, community building, etc. through utilizing critical thinking. Education provides its citizens with the knowledge and skills to further their civic responsibilities by bringing their communities together to address inequities.

These efforts result in communities being represented by people committed to their needs, plight, and activism. The power of social capital brings together a unified approach by giving voice to the silenced and ensuring fair engagements for all. Education is at the core of addressing this problem. Education can empower citizens to come together in unity to push for laws and human rights. There are many instances in history from various nations where leaders used laws or force to eliminate the social capital of its citizens. Therefore, educators are at the forefront of this continual drive for political empowerment through diverse, equitable, and inclusive education. The power of education is a reciprocal process by which we give citizens the knowledge and skills to acquire social, financial, and human capital while giving them opportunities to achieve those capitals.

5.1 UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development succeeded the MDGs in 2015 and consists of 17 strategic goals collectively aimed at achieving global sustainable development by 2030. When these were developed, the ultimate consensus among stakeholders was that any development efforts that did not promote women empowerment and gender equality would not result to the realization of the MDGs, and as such, gender equality was mainstreamed throughout the entire SDGs framework (Institute for Sustainable Development; IISD, 2021).[17] The forum also emphasized the critical role of education towards the realization of all the other 16 SDGs, and more

importantly, the promotion of rule of law. As a result, UN-ESCO actively promotes Global Citizenship Education (GCE) as a complementary approach to SDGs (UNSCO, 2015).[35] According to UNESCO, GCE is a form of civic education that involves both "curricular learning and practical experience" aimed at empowering all learners with skills to address global issues of social, political, economic, or environmental nature. This, combined with a more rights-oriented programming is likely to result in significant reduction in poverty and global development.

The core principles guiding the SDGs include universality, leaving no one behind, interconnectedness and indivisibility, inclusiveness, and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Key goals include no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, and gender equality (United Nations, 2020).[34] Zimbabwe partners with the UN to achieve its SDGs through a partnership known as Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF), which comprises of six result areas: (a) social services and protection, (b) poverty reduction and value addition, (c) food and nutrition, (d) gender equality, (e) HIV and AIDS, and (f) Public Administration and Governance.

5.2 Zimbabwe Progress on the SDGs

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

According to the United Nations, poverty is defined as the lack of stable income and resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods, and may manifest in hunger, malnutrition, limited access to educations, and social discrimination (United Nations, 2015).[31] Zimbabwe has experienced massive poverty since 1992 following the first major drought post-independence in 1992 and the failed Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAP) implemented during the same year (Kawewe & Dibie, 2000).[20] Succeeding years were followed by accelerated rates of economic shrinkage and political instability, which unfortunately Zimbabwe has not been able to fully recover from. Being an agricultural driven economy, massive decline in production of major crops worsened poverty across the nation, particularly following the 1999 fast track land reform program (Hove & Gwiza, 2012).[16] Several industries spanning across tertiary, manufacturing, education, and healthcare all suffered massive decline because of the demise of the agricultural sector. Since 2000, Zimbabwe experienced a more severe economic meltdown and has not recovered since then.

Women and children have disproportionately suffered acute poverty relative to any other group. According to 2019 national government statistics report, approximate-ly 50% of children under 15 years of age experienced extreme poverty during past 3 years prior (ZIMSTAT, 2019).[44] Prevalence in rural areas was greater (76.3%) compared to urban centers (20%), and the report notes that children in rural areas are more than twice as likely to be poor compared to children in urban areas. Poverty amongst people with disabilities was also acutely higher (i.e., 74.1%) compared to people with no disabilities (69.5%) in 2019. In both urban and rural households, odds of poverty were highly associated with a lower education level of the household head. That is, households in which parent(s) had a tertiary education qualification were less likely to experience poverty compared to families in which household head had lower to no education (ZIMSTAT, 2019).[42] During the same year, rural and urban children not enrolled in school accounted for 12.3% and 9.1% respectively. According to the statistics, household and individual poverty rates have not improved in Zimbabwe since 2011. As of 2017, around 60% of Zimbabwean households were in poverty, whereas 21.9% were in extreme poverty. On an individual basis, 70.5% of the national population were in poverty, whereas 29.3% were in extreme poverty (ZIMSTAT, 2017).[43] See tables 1, 2, and 3 for more information regarding poverty dimensions in Zimbabwe.

Table 1. *Household and Individual Poverty Prevalence*

	Poverty	Extreme Poverty	Poverty	Extreme Poverty
PICES 2017				
Rural	76.9	31.9	86	40.9
Urban	30.4	3.3	37	4.4
Zimbabwe	60.6	21.9	70.5	29.3
PICES 2011/12				
Rural	76	22.9	84.3	30.4
Urban	38.2	4	46.5	5.6
Zimbabwe	62.2	16.2	72.3	22.5
PICES 2001				
Rural	73	42.3	82.4	52.4
Urban	33.8	10.5	42.3	14.5
Zimbabwe	60.6	32.2	70.9	41.5
PICES 1995				
Rural	76.2	50.4	86.4	62.8
Urban	41.1	10.2	53.4	15
Zimbabwe	63.3	35.7	75.6	47.2

Source: PICES 2017, PICES 2011, ICES 2001 and ICES 1995

According to the Food Aid Organization (FAO: 2021),[10] the humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe has reached an alarming level and requires urgent action. The report notes severe food insecurity worsened by the global

Covid-19 pandemic and perennial droughts. The production of staple crops in Zimbabwe dropped sharply between 2016 and 2019, mostly as a result of massive drought between those years. This resulted in hunger worsening during that same period, with statistics showing a sharp increase in the Global Hunger Index from about 16.5% in 2014 to 44.4% in 2019 (ZIMSTAT, 2019).[44] According to the Zimbabwe Humanitarian Response Plan (ZHRP, 2021),[41] around 7 million people (i.e., approximately 50% of total population) needed urgent humanitarian assistance in 2020, and over 4.3 million people in rural areas (i.e., about 40%) and 2.2 million people in urban centers (about 20%) were experiencing acute food shortages. Women have been the most affected. According to the PICES Data (ZIMSTAT, 2019),[44] 19% of female-headed households experienced multi-dimensional poverty (hunger, malnutrition, unemployment) compared to 13% male headed households.

Goal 2: Inclusive and equitable quality education

To achieve inclusive and equitable quality education, the UN SDGs consist of 10 targets and indicators covering primary and secondary school completion, quality ECD, equal access to affordable and quality vocational and tertiary education, access to relevant skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship, and provision of equal access to quality inclusive education. Zimbabwe does not currently have data on some of the indicators (UN, 2020). In 2019, the school going population constituted about 37.3% (i.e., 5.6 million) of the total population, of which 50.05% were females (GoZ, 2020).[13] Between 2014 and 2019, early childhood development index increased from 59.2% to 68.1% for males and 64.3% to 73.3% for females. When broken down between urban and rural population, the same indicators increased from 64.2% to 75.9% for urban population and 61% to 68.9% for rural population.

In terms of school enrollment, enrollment rates across all four education domains (i.e., ECD, Primary, Lower Secondary, and upper secondary) have been consistently high during the last 10 years (GoZ, 2020).[13] On the other hand, completion rates decrease with progression into higher grades. Between 2014 and 2018, completion rates averaged 75-92% for ECD, 77-79% for primary, 63-67% for lower secondary, and 10-14% for upper secondary levels respectively (see table 4).

Table 2. *Malnutrition Indicators, Children Under Five*

	1988	1994	1999	2005/06	2010/11	2015	2019
Stunting	31	29	34	35	32	27	23.5
Underweight	8	11	10	13	10	8	9.7
Overweight	5	7	10	8	6	6	2.5
Wasting	3	6	8	7	3	3	2.9

Table 3. *Global Hunger Index (GHI) for Zimbabwe*

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
GHI	21	20.9	17.7	17.2	16.5	16.5	30.8	28.8	33.8	32.9	34.4

Table 4. *School Completion Rates*

	ECD			Primary			Lower Secondary			Upper Secondary		
Year	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
2014	75.67	75.06	75.36	76.73	77.78	77.25	66.08	62.28	64.19	12.54	9.44	10.96
2015	84.45	83.61	84.03	78.71	80.78	79.73	67.27	64.08	65.68	14.33	10.83	12.54
2016	90.17	89.82	90	78.88	80.24	79.56	66.79	64.53	65.67	14.53	11.18	12.82
2017	94.12	93.25	93.68	77.74	79.83	78.78	68.06	66.65	67.35	16.61	13.29	14.92
2018	92.68	91.91	92.29	76.2	78.96	77.57	64.76	61.47	63.12	16.04	13.88	14.94

Indicator 4.a.1 assesses country performance in terms of availability of basic infrastructure that is essential to facilitate learning. Between 2016 and 2018, the proportion of schools without electricity was stagnant at averages ranging between 45.04 to 52.59 for primary schools and 28.53 to 40.6% for secondary schools (GoZ, 2020).[13] Most schools had access to basic water during that same period, with figures ranging from 95 to 98.58% for both primary and secondary schools. ICT remains relatively short. The proportion of schools without computers dropped significantly from 81.46% to 47.01% for primary schools and 50.31% to 28.32% for secondary schools during that same period (See table 5).

5.3 National Policies and Strategies Addressing Poverty and Education

In 2016, the government of Zimbabwe launched the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy policy, which was anchored on seven key pillars: (a) Agricultural productivity, (b) growth and rural food security; (c) social sectors, private sectors, (d) infrastructure and climate change; (e) environment and climate change; (f) gender women and youth empowerment; and (g) strengthening governance

and institutional capacity. In 2018, government adopted the Transitional stabilization program (GoZ, 2021).[14]

The entire background described above is illustrative of a deviation from the MDG. A holistic approach to addressing poverty in necessary, but this may be difficult particularly given the decade long poor state of economic performance. If Zimbabwe is to strategically address worsening poverty and make sure to attain its 2030 Millennium goals, it may consider addressing education access and equality. This paper describes a rights-based framework for addressing education inequalities that may apply to Zimbabwe.

6. Overview of Zimbabwe Education System

Zimbabwe is a developing country located in South-Eastern Africa. With a population of about 15 million, the majority of the population is below 24 years of age (CIA Factbook, 2021).[8] Zimbabwe has one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, with over 86% of the population is able to read and write (CIA Factbook, 2021).[8] Following attainment of independence, Zimbabwe inherited the British educational system. To redress the inequalities that existed in the education system, the government embarked

Table 5. *Schools With Access to Basic Facilities*

	Primary		Secondary	
Year	*Schools with water source (%)*	*Schools without water source (%)*	*Schools with water source (%)*	*Schools without water source (%)*
2016	98.16	1.84	98.34	1.66
2017	95.79	4.21	95.8	4.2
2018	98.58	1.42	97.49	2.51
	Schools with electricity (%)	*Schools without electricity (%)*	*Schools with electricity (%)*	*Schools without electricity (%)*
2016	53.33	46.67	59.4	40.6
2017	47.41	52.59	68.9	31.1
2018	54.96	45.04	59.4	28.53
	Schools with computers (%)	*Schools without computers (%)*	*Schools with computers (%)*	*Schools without computers (%)*
2016	18.54	81.46	46.69	50.31
2017	24.5	75.5	51.8	48.2
2018	52.99	47.01	71.68	28.32

Table 6. *Proportion of Teachers with at Least A Minimum Organized Teacher Training*

Level	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Pre-primary	32.7	39.9	50.5	52.9	58.5
Primary	89.2	93.9	97.2	97.4	97.1
Secondary	74.2	76.1	80.1	83.7	85.5

on massive educational reforms, which were grounded in the principle of 'Education for all'. The government-built schools in marginalized rural areas and disadvantaged urban centers, which were traditionally inhabited by blacks (Kanyongo, 2005).[18] Local communities were mobilized to provide resources (i.e., labor and other necessary resources) to enhance the success of making accessibility to education a reality.

The education system consists of primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Primary education consists of seven years of schooling with the curriculum focused on four subjects (i.e., English, Mathematics, Science, Ndebele/ Shona, General paper). Students are tested in their 7th year in the objects mentioned above before they progress to secondary school. Secondary education consists of six years with four years of ordinary level and two years of advanced level. The ordinary level curriculum is focused on core subjects (i.e., Mathematics, English, Science, Shona or Ndebele, Geography, and History). Progression to advanced level is based on the students' performance on ordinary level exams. Students who choose not to proceed to advanced level after ordinary level may choose to attend teacher's training college, technical college, agricultural college, polytechnic, and nursing training college. Students who progress to advanced level major in a minimum of three subjects. The three subjects the students focus on usually determine the degree plan they will do in university.

Tertiary education in Zimbabwe covers all post-secondary education institutions (i.e., university, teacher training programs etc.). The model for enrolling secondary school graduates into university is based on the points systems, meaning students must attain a certain number of points at advanced-level in order to be admitted into a program of their choice in university. It is important to note that some students enrolling into college end up settling for courses that are not their first choice because of the restrictive enrollment method.

Although Zimbabwe has made significant progress in ensuring education for all, it is important to note that the education system is still biased against girls. This contradicts the aims of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989, and also against a backdrop of calls from other right based agencies to ensure equal educational access for girls. According to the UNCRC, children should be protected, and their rights should be met. As previously discussed, in Zimbabwe girls are unlikely to have the same educational opportunities compared to boys. This gap might stem from a cultural system that again, works at the disadvantage of girls.

Research has shown that on average, girls devote less time to their studies compared to boys since they participate in more household chores compared to boys (Dzimiri et al., 2017[9]; Gordon, 1998[12]).

6.1 Rights-Based Education Framework

Rights based programming (RBP) is a conceptual framework for program planning centered on promotion of human rights in all aspects of development. It seeks to address inequalities, injustices, and all forms of oppression in all development programming efforts (UNICEF, 2007).[30] A human rights-centered approach to development therefore seeks to ensure that all global citizens achieve their desired development in the full realization of their rights (i.e., political, economic, social, and universal rights). In education, RBP entails the realization of one's educational goals whilst attaining all other freedoms enshrined in the UN human rights codes. Education has been recognized as a basic human right in several human rights treaties like Universal Declaration on Human Rights (Global Citizenship Commission, 2016)[11] and UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC; UNICEF, 2007).[30] Realization of this right is guided by the principles of free, compulsory, and universal primary education, available and accessible secondary and tertiary education, professional training opportunities, equal and quality education through minimum standards, quality teaching and access to facilitative resources, and freedom of choice (UNESCO, 2020).[33] However, the basic, fundamental right to primary and secondary education is still far from being achieved in some countries. According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS: UNESCO, 2015),[28] around 258 million children and youth were out of school globally as of 2018. Sub Saharan Africa represents the largest proportion of the data across all domains of primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary enrollments.

The Dakar Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum reaffirmed a global vision for Education for All (UN 2000),[37] emphasizing the crucial role of rights-based programming in all education programs as the single most important factor in ensuring that all nations achieve their national goals on educating their citizens. Since then, several rights-based programming frameworks have since been developed. Fundamentally, all rights-based approaches should have in common, key principles on human rights, which include (a) universality and inalienability, (b) indivisibility, (c) interdependence and interrelatedness, (d) equality and non-discrimination, (e) participation and inclusion, and (f) empowerment. In this paper, the proposed RBA addresses four fundamental aspects: (a) availability, (b) accessibility, (c) acceptability,

and (d) adaptability.

6.2 Availability and Accessibility

The first key objective of a rights-based education program requires availability and accessibility of free and compulsory primary education. Availability entails the obligation to ensure free and compulsory education for all children, whereas accessibility entails the elimination of all forms of discrimination or barriers to access, and prioritization of vulnerable and marginalized children (Tomasevski, 2004).[27] The UN CRC asserts education as a basic human right, and further emphasizes the government's obligation to ensure that every citizen attains at least the basic education free of charge, and all potential barriers to access to be removed. Although several countries in Africa have made efforts to increase education availability, access continues to lag behind particularly for historically marginalized or disadvantaged children (Wodon & Alasuutari 2018).[39] As shown on the SDG progress description in the section above, many girls and children with disabilities have limited access to education compared to any other group of students. The most common barrier is lack of financial resources to pay tuition. Achieving universal primary education requires full government subsidization of primary education. In Zimbabwe, this has not been the case. Primary education is currently not free, and as a result many students do not go to school. In rural areas, families that are financially constrained usually make a choice for who can attend school between girls and boys. In most cases, families chose to send boys to school, and girls are often given in to arranged marriages at very young ages (Dzimiri et al., 2017).[9]

There seems to be a misplacement of priorities by the government given disproportionate budget allocations to industries that the incumbent government deems crucial to its needs. Unfortunately, education is not treated as a top priority sector, and as a result has perennially been underfunded. Underfunding the education sector usually results in a plethora of problems like teachers' industrial actions, teachers' migration to other countries in search of better working conditions, and the poor infrastructure particularly in remote schools. To fill this gap, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Zimbabwe have opened channels for donations into education, particularly targeting schools in remote areas that are most in need. However, their contributions fall far short of what is needed to close the gap. The government has been making promises for free primary education for over two decades, but until now, this has not come to fruition.

In order to address education availability challenges in Zimbabwe, government should consider expanding investment into education infrastructure, professional development, and teacher remuneration to prevent losing talented educators. Building more schools in remote areas will not only increase education availability in these areas; it can also facilitate economic growth through employment creation in the various sectors involved in the construction. According to recent statistics by Building Schools for Africa organization (2022), the average cost of constructing a single elementary school consisting of 3 fully equipped classrooms in Zimbabwe is around $30,000. Considering how low this cost is relative to annual government revenue, a mass investment of $100 million can result in massive construction of schools around the country, particularly in areas most in need, and potentially a ripple effect in related industries involved in the construction. Revising working conditions for teachers is vital to prevent teacher turnover and brain drain. Not only would this entail increasing teacher salaries; it can also include increasing professional development facilities and programs for educators. Numerous studies have documented a gap in teacher professional development in Zimbabwe, particularly in areas of special and inclusive education (Chitiyo et al., 2017).[7] Addressing these limitations can help address education availability to vulnerable populations like girls and children with disabilities.

Access is not merely limited to the ability to get to schools; instead, it entails removing any form of barriers, either physical or institutional, that hinder learning. Examples of these include long prohibitive distances to school, unavailability of transport, absence of assistive resources or technologies, or laws and practices that limit students' ability to learn. As indicated in the statistics presented above, enrollment rates in rural schools are significantly lower than in urban schools in Zimbabwe. This is partly a result of several factors like long distances to schools, financial challenges, poverty or hunger, and shortage of learning materials in rural schools. In some remote areas, students have to walk long distances to get to school such that by the time they get there, they are physically and mentally exhausted and are therefore unable to learn effectively. Girls are particularly disadvantaged. Walking longer distances and attending to household chores at the same time can be tiring. Rural girls often spend more time attending to manual household tasks that include laundry, cleaning, and cooking. In addition, rural girls walk long distances to fetch firewood and water. By the time they have to go to school, they are physically and mentally exhausted, thereby impeding their ability to learn.

Government and societal pressure groups can advocate for girls' rights to education and educate communities about gender equality, gender roles, and the importance of

investing into girl child education (May, 2004).[21] The traditional cultural notion about gender roles has in the past caused severe oppression (e.g., gender-based violence) and alienation of women from important decision-making authority (Gordon, 1998).[12] A whole change in culture and perception in this regard can help address education and economic inequalities against women. Humanitarian organizations concerned with women's affairs like Musasa Project have been very vocal in advocacy efforts, calling for women's protections against gender-based violence and alienation from economic activity and decision-making authority. Through the ministry of women's affairs, government can also create programs that are particularly aimed at enhancing education attainment and success among girls.

The government should outlaw institutionalized denial of access to education. These include charging high tuition for elementary and secondary schools, turning back students because they do not have uniforms or other required equipment, or turning back students because they arrive late to school. In order to ensure that girls have access to their desired programs of study at tertiary level, government can also consider scrapping or adjusting the point-based system to access tertiary education.

6.3 Acceptable Education

The second dimension, acceptability, entails provision of quality and relevant education. This includes several other dimensions like availability of well-trained teachers and learning resources, a broad, relevant, and inclusive curriculum covering essential and relevant skills, a child-friendly, safe, and healthy environment (UNICEF, 2007).[30] Teacher training is key in ensuring that teachers are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills to facilitate learning. More importantly, teachers teaching students with special needs require specialized training in the unique need areas. In Zimbabwe, most teachers receive general education training but end up teaching students with special needs. Research has shown that most teachers feel under-trained or under-equipped to deal with special needs education (Chitiyo et al., 2017).[7] Expanding teacher training in this area can ensure that teachers are well-equipped to address the educational needs of students with disabilities. Teacher training institutions may need to create specialized degrees in Special Needs Education.

Quality education also requires a highly motivated workforce. During the past two decades, teachers in Zimbabwe have numerously engaged in industrial actions or migrated to other countries due to poor working conditions including low salaries and lack of teaching resources. Again, rural schools are usually most affected by the losing talented educators. The first necessary step for government, therefore, is to create conducive working conditions for teachers. These include providing quality training and continuous professional development, sustainable remuneration, and quality teaching resources. Zimbabwe government needs to revise budget allocations to the education sector to ensure that teachers are well paid, and schools equipped with necessary learning resources. When teachers are well trained and paid, they are likely to be more motivated to offer their best services.

An education curriculum outlines the academic or behavioral knowledge skills that an education program seeks to address. Curricula can include both theory and practical skills that learners are intended to learn. For a long time now, the Zimbabwe education curricula have been based more on theory than practical knowledge skills. Furthermore, pedagogical methods used in schools are based more on drill instruction, which is aimed at memorization of taught concepts rather than practical skills infusion. This presents a problem when students are faced with situations that require creative and critical problem solving. Currently, Zimbabwe has one of the highest literacy rates in southern eastern Africa, and yet the highest rates of unemployment as well. If learners are educated with practical and entrepreneurial skills, they can create employment opportunities and don't have to depend on job seeking. Education curriculums should address a broad range of skills including cognitive, academic, social, and technical skills that prepare students to face and make good decisions when faced with real life situations or challenges.

A curriculum that is human rights oriented also promotes development of children's personalities, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. Drill based curriculum methods typically used in Zimbabwean schools are more focused on theoretical knowledge, and therefore do not promote development of students' attributes in the previously mentioned capacities. As a result, most students graduating with high scores fail to demonstrate those skills when faced with real life situations. Furthermore, a human rights-based curriculum promotes respect for children, their parents', and others' cultural identity, languages, and values. Traditionally, parents have been excluded from curriculum development processes denoting educational goals for children, yet sometimes parents know their children's educational traits or aspirations better. Including parents in these processes facilitates the identification of all potentially helpful attributes that are more apparent at home compared to school.

Finally, in Zimbabwe, most students are ignorant about the constitution and processes of law creation. The constitution has never been part of an education curriculum,

yet it forms the most fundamental tool for human rights within a nation. An ignorance about the law and constitution results in a civic society that is easily gullible or weak to advocate for its rights. In most rural areas, where literacy rates are lower compared to urban centers, citizens are easily misinformed about political interests, and can be tricked into vote buying, exchanging their votes for grocery items. Women are most vulnerable to this form of abuse since they typically are responsible for fending for the family. Introducing the constitution into the curriculum can help create citizens that are more informed and wiser enough to protect their rights.

7. Conclusion

The intersectionality of poverty and education is paramount in understanding ways to end poverty and increase economic growth. Economic inequalities between women and men can perpetuate poverty. Economic development efforts that marginalize vulnerable or minoritized groups like women, children and individuals with disabilities can only exacerbate poverty and inequalities. Including these groups into development programming efforts can help to end poverty. Improving education access, attainment, and equality among vulnerable groups can help to end poverty as it results to increased access to employment opportunities, a more responsible citizens, and prevention of abuse of power and authority. The human rights-based framework for education programming presented in this paper can help address inequalities in education since it is centered on ensuring citizens' realization of their rights. A rights-based education programming policy specifies all important aspects of human rights centered education, which include availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability. In order to increase impact, implementation of this approach requires the active participation of all stakeholders to education, including government, schools, private and public sector businesses, parents and guardians, with each stakeholder making sure they fulfill their specified obligations. Furthermore, the program requires continuous monitoring and evaluation, making timely amendments where deviations occur. The UNESCO provides several resources for guiding implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of a rights-based education program.

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