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UMALUSI Accreditation Forum

Two Decades of Assuring Quality Education in South Africa



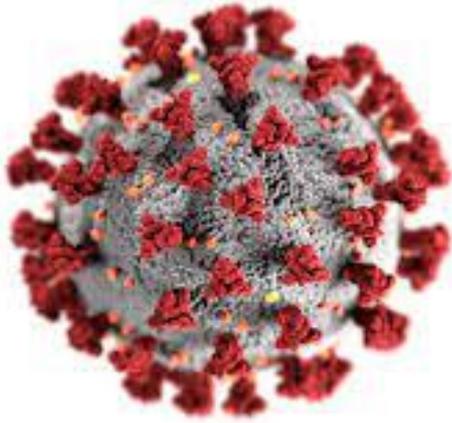
Topic: Capacitating and developing teachers post-Covid-19 crisis

Presentation Outline

1. **Introduction**
2. **Capacity and Staff Development imperatives**
3. **Theoretical Framework - Structure, Culture, Agency**
 - Key Questions
 - Deconstructing the 3 pillars
 - Key properties of the 3 pillars
4. **Introspection and Reflection on Structure, Culture, Agency - During and Post COVID-19 pandemic**
5. **Suggestions and Recommendations for Development**
 - Creating “reflective” spaces
 - Creating communities of practice
 - Creating opportunities for joint staff development programmes and sharing of resources with other schools/colleges
 - Building caring communities and enacting ethics of care, connection and collaboration
 - Conduct regular evaluative exercises and use feedback
 - Agency in leadership and teaching
 - Developing catch up Plans
 - Motivating staff
 - Effective communication
6. **Closing Remarks and Acknowledgements**
7. **References and Recommended Reading**
8. **Questions and comments**

Introduction

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



Emerging in a small city in a far-away world, Wuhan China, a small microorganism called coronavirus came to cause the biggest global disruption of all times.

We were all unprepared for the kind and magnitude of the disruption that would follow.

All countries, big and small; all schools, big and small; all leaders, whether great and known, were affected!

UNPREPARED

We have been presented with a new challenging context

But also an opportunity to imagine a new future

We need to be forever prepared, ready and vigilant

We need not fool ourselves that this was our last big crisis!



Introduction – Continued

South African Education System - challenges



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



- **The education system has had inherent systemic dysfunctions prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- **Emergent unique problems wrought by the pandemic have compounded the problems.**
- **Difficulties were experienced transitioning and adopting different ways of doing things.**
- **If the status quo persists post-pandemic, we shall remain unprepared, for future crises/threats and opportunities.**
- **Closing the gap caused by covid-19 in the last two years will be a tall order.**

Introduction – Continued

South African Education System - challenges



basic education

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- Teachers are “**corporate agents**” (Archer 2000). They are experts and ‘knowledgeable others’.
- They have a responsibility to turn the tide around; ensure continuity of teaching and learning; and guard quality of provision.
- However, we need to be sensitive to their needs.
- The never-ending quest to provide quality education, even in the midst of a deadly pandemic caused them much stress.
- Transition into a new, uncertain future should focus on their **welfare, morale/motivation, professional, personal needs**, as well as the **conditions** within which they must perform their duties.

Introduction – Continued



The **crisis** in education lives with us. **Transformation** of education has been **forever becoming** and **inequalities persist** in the system.

Our education system has been in a **life-long search** for **equity, social justice** and **equality of outcomes, etc.**



As we **slowly transition** back to the **pre-pandemic** school environment or a **new normal** post-pandemic, and set up or review structures for capacity and staff development for teachers, we should realise that there are **no “quick fix” solutions.**

HOW do we **capacitate** and **develop** teachers post-Covid-19 crisis or for future crises and threats to education?



Staff Development/Capacity Development



Building capacity of Staff is **critical** and **imperative**.

- **Improve staff performance** and **master areas of work** – teaching, learning facilitation, curriculum review, assessing learners, etc.
- Increase **employee engagement**.
- Boost **employee job satisfaction & morale**.
- Improve **skills-sets** and **knowledge**.

This can be done in various ways – formal staff dev, induction programmes, short courses, etc.

- The need for **individual schools** to analyse own contexts if they are to provide appropriate capacity development.
- Focus should be on **enhancing** the **agency** of the teachers.
- Consideration should be given to **structural, cultural** and **contextual enablers** and **constraints** in the system, in schools and even in the classrooms.
- Structures, Culture (s), Context (s), and stakeholder agency are all **important**.

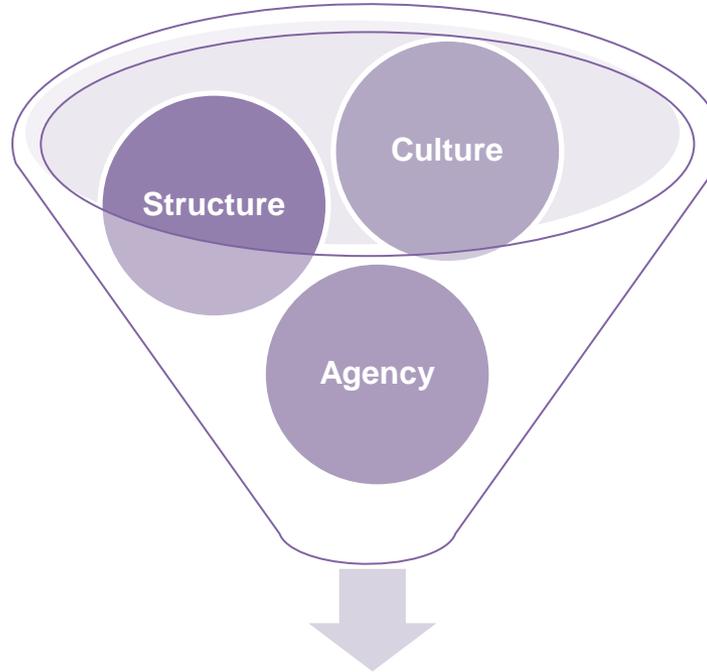
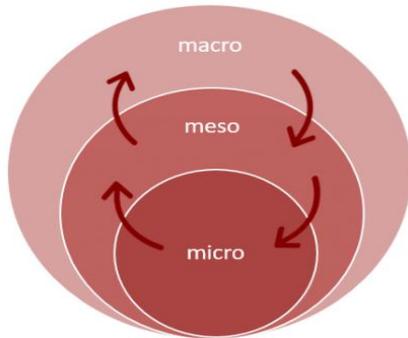
Theoretical Framework

Socialist Framework of Structure, Culture, Agency



The socialist framework of **Margaret Archer (1996, 2000)** of Structure, Culture, and Agency used as an analytical lens in this presentation.

The framework is **applicable** at every level of the education system



Understand the **Interplay** between available structures, prevailing culture (s) and the ability of agents (people) in the education system



Framework provides an opportunity to identify **'enablers'** and **'constraints'** for change



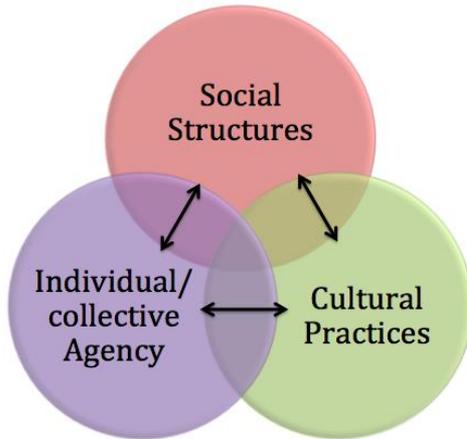
OUR REALITY...

We are being held ransom by **old structures, traditions** and **lack of agency** to adopt different ways of "knowing and doing"

Structure, Culture, Agency

Key questions

Socialist Framework



- Can we **identify** what they are?
- Did they **serve** us during the pandemic? Did they **prepare** us for the pandemic?
- Are these **servicing** us well today?
- What can we **change/improve**?
- What can we **condone**?
- How can each principal/teacher/learner **use** their agency to **change** debilitating context (s) and structures.

Transition



Capacity and Staff Development



At any given time, capacity and staff development can be **informed** by explicit consideration of:

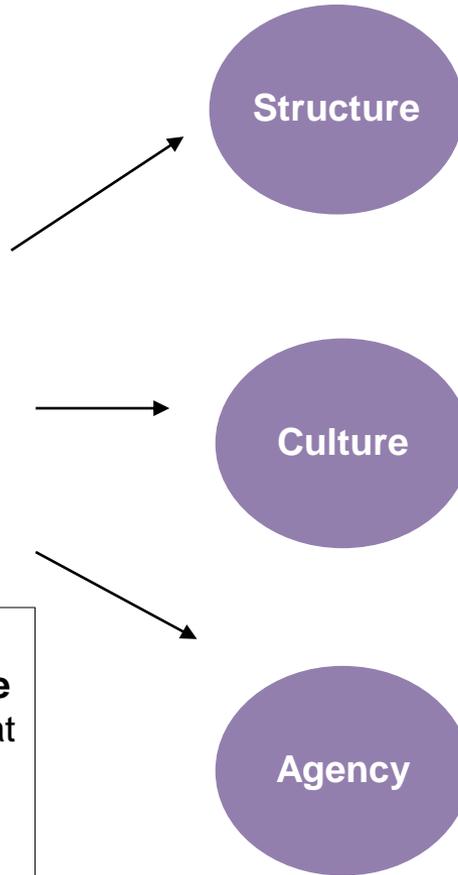
- systemic, structural and cultural **contexts as well as,**
- **agential capabilities** of various stakeholders in the schools/colleges and externally

This would further:

- **Explain the status quo and provide** explanations,
- **Erase any taken-for-granted reasons** about **varying performance** of schools/colleges and
- **Explain** why different schools and colleges responded to the Covid 19 **crisis in particular ways.**

Structure, Culture, Agency

Deconstructing the 3 pillars



Structures, Culture and Agents possess **distinctive powers** and **properties** that **enable** or **stifle/constrain** required **responses to change**.

Materiality of things, or **material interests** that lend themselves to physical, human and financial resources (Archer 1996).

Examples: Policies, plans, strategies, systems, funding and resources (human, physical, financial), positions, social formations (gender, race, class) etc.

Ideas, beliefs, theories, values, practices, ideologies and concepts **dominating** particular environments and **influencing the conduct of particular people** at particular times (Archer 1996).

Examples: Vision, mission, unwritten culture, rules and practices, espoused values, standards, performance indicators, etc.

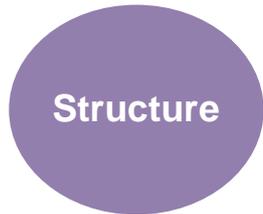
Agency is about agents/people.

Examples: Primary agents: with no properties and powers to change their contexts

Corporate agents: They possess **particular properties** and **power - skills, knowledge, attitudes to change their contexts**. These power and properties must be **activated**.

Structure, Culture, Agency

Key properties of the 3 pillars (According to Archer (1996, 2000))



- Temporal – time related
- Can be **modified** and **condoned** to change the underpinning beliefs of people who may have used them for their own interests
- Can be **reproduced**
- Can be **shaped** or **reshaped** through intentional or unintentionally efforts
- Structures can contribute to modifications or resistance in the culture when they present as enablers or constraints



- Can **impinge** upon people by framing situations in which they exist
- Emergent cultural properties can **empower** or **restrain** people's actions
- Have **influence** on the structures, as well as agential undertakings



- Corporate agents are groups of people with **clear intentionality** to re-shape or retain the status quo in their environment.
- They have a **clear agenda** about what they want, and
- They **organise** themselves to achieve what they want.
- They **possess** the required properties to embrace change and change/transform their circumstances.

Structure, Culture, Agency

During COVID-19 and Post-COVID-19 Pandemic



During the pandemic what **structural**, **cultural** and **agential** issues enabled or constrained the ability of schools and teachers to respond to change? What **shifts** had to be made?

Structure

- Strategies and set performance indicators
- **Continuity** and teaching and learning plans, including digital strategies
- Brick and mortar vs virtual spaces
- **Infrastructure** – fixed vs movable (Learning Management Systems, technology-enabled devices, data, Wi-Fi network, etc.)
- **Educational technology experts**
- **Staff development programs** – orientation to change and transformation, responsiveness, continuing development

Culture

- **Beliefs, common practices** and **conceptualization** of teaching, learning, and assessment
- In person**
- **face-to-face** teaching and learning
 - **assessment**
 - **communication**
- Set **espoused values** - curriculum vs enacted
- **Traditional** teaching practices
 - Assessing performance – performance indicators, standards – are they still **realistic/achievable** post COVID-19,
 - Vision and mission?
 - **Enabling or constraining?**

Agency

The **need** for skilling, upskilling and reskilling?

In order to discharge roles effectively:

- What **competencies** did teachers need? – skills, knowledge, attitudes
- What **new skills** did they develop during Covid-19?
- What must be **enhanced** and sharpened for future crises?

Structure, Culture, Agency

Post COVID-19



During the pandemic what **structural**, **cultural** and **agential** issues enabled or constrained the ability of schools and teachers to respond to change? What **shifts** had to be made?

Structure

- **Review existing plans and develop responsive strategies** for the unknown uncertain future - bring teachers on board so that they understand their roles as critical agents
- The crisis in infrastructure and resourcing at some schools should be a priority

Culture

- Culture takes **time** to change
- Adopt a culture of **continuous** review, monitoring and feedback
- A culture of **continuous evaluation** and **researching**
- **Review** your vision, mission and indicators?
- **Adopt** a culture of planning for the unknown (imperative for everyone)
- **Continuous analysis** of the environment (**SWOT**) at institutional and individual levels

Agency

- **Equip** agents with necessary skills.
- **Upskill** and **reskill** for the changed and changing context and knowledge
- **Agents** should equip themselves with necessary properties and exercise their agency
- **Encourage** a culture of “I can”
 - **Exercise** agency for positive disruption in changing contexts?
 - **Adopt new ways of knowing and doing?**

Reflection

How can principals and teachers use their agency?

1



Acknowledge the history and context of inequality/disparity

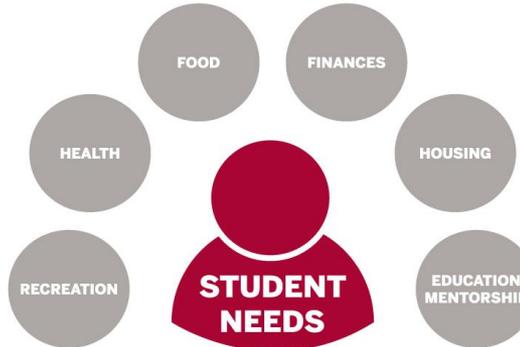
4



Recognise and understand how teachers were affected, professionally, personally, emotionally, psychologically during the crisis itself

2

Identify needs and challenges of learners during the COVID-19 pandemic and respond to these through enhancement of existing programs or development of appropriate capacity and development programmes that will respond to the changed context(s)



5

Pre-empt how another crisis might impact and compromise teaching and learning in future



3



Understand the needs of teachers holistically, pre-COVID-19, post-COVID-19 and future needs

6



Identify strategies not only for the immediate post-crisis, i.e. today, but for the future

Reflection

STRUCTURE, CULTURE, AGENCY

STRUCTURE (material
& social factors)

**Policy, Systems,
Continuity plans,
Infrastructure, Funding,
QP Units, Professional
bodies, Staff
Development
Programmes, Roles,
Education, Positions,
Data, Wifi Networks,
Internet-Enabled
devises, LMS**

**INTER
PLAY**

CULTURE

Ideas, discourses,
Knowledge, **Values,**
Concepts, Beliefs,
**Rules, Assumptions,
Practices, Attitudes,
Ideologies, Missions
and Visions**

AGENTS & AGENCY

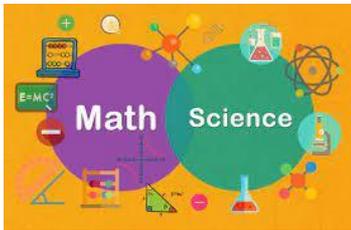
(Agents or people)
**Policy-makers,
Regulatory bodies,
Principals, Managers,
teachers, support
staff, Educational
technology specialists,
researchers, learners**

Suggestions and Recommendations

1. Creating “reflective” spaces

Action

- **Reflection** on personal experiences and challenges
- **Share stories and hold conversations about the struggles and possibilities** encountered during the pandemic and on commencing face-to-face/in class teaching and learning



Benefit

- Affords principals an opportunity to **listen, learn** and **acknowledge** the achievements and challenges of teachers, while **conceptualising** necessary changes to staff development programmes in collaboration with the teachers
- Lessons learned should be used to **rethink strategies** and ways of better preparing school/colleges for any form of crisis



In the case of practical subjects; How did teachers stay motivated and ensured that their learners were engaged?

A wealth of lessons learned and good practices remains to be collected and documented for future reference.

Recommendations - Continued

2. Create communities of practice



Action

Schools that are performing well and that continued to do well amidst the pandemic, for various reasons, should work with those that struggled

Benefit

Open dialogues on how their colleagues **contextualised** teaching and learning during the crisis

An opportunity for **sharing knowledge** and **best practice**

Recommendations – Continued

3. Create opportunities for joint staff development programmes and share resources with other schools/colleges



4. Build caring communities and enact ethics of care, connection and collaboration



Acknowledge that our success and the success of our schools and colleges is **dependent** on our interconnectedness; on having a **moral obligation** to walk the journey of transforming the education system as a **community** and **not individually**

Recommendations – Continued

5. Agency in Leadership and teaching



Explore, embrace and incorporate various ways of knowing and doing, in leadership, teaching and learning, whilst upholding quality standards as best as possible within available constrained resources and new situations.

Employ **different strategies** - Exercise bold, but empathetic leadership

Encourage agility, adaptability, resilience and a **sense of urgency** and equip staff with the ability to **exercise individual and collective agency**,

These attributes were key to the success of many workplaces regardless of whether they were well-established or not.

6. Conduct regular evaluative exercises and use feedback



Regular **evaluative exercises** of own practice, including teaching and student learning and

Use feedback and **evaluative evidence** from learners and peers to improve practice and inform developmental programmes.

7. Developing Catch up Plans

Assist teachers in designing and building appropriate catch up plans and scaffolding activities to **bridge the gaps** caused by time lost due to the Lockdown during COVID-19.



Recommendations – Continued

8. Motivating Staff

“Believe you can and you’re halfway there.” – Theodore Roosevelt



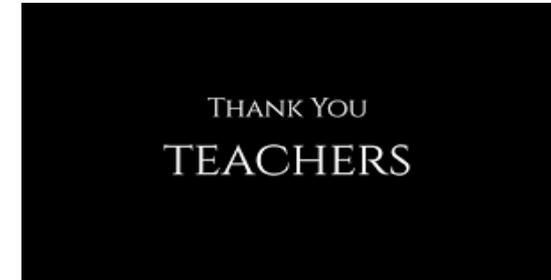
Acknowledgement of the difficulties, challenges, needs and experiences of staff during and post lockdown/currently.

Teachers worked under extreme conditions).



Encourage teachers to draw motivation from self-realisation and awareness.

That through their agency and competencies (**skills, knowledge and positive attitude**) they can still achieve their goals regardless of the many shortcomings they face in the current context



Continuous **affirmation** and **recognition** of the good efforts

As much as it is the principal’s role to motivate teachers, **intrinsic motivation** is very powerful. It accords teachers the opportunity to **exercise their agency** and a chance for self-realisation. It is longer lasting.

Recommendations – Continued

9. Effective communication



What is the importance of effective communication?

Effective communication is an essential tool in achieving productivity and **maintaining strong working relationships** at all levels of an organisation/school/college

What does effective communication entail?

Motivation presumes effective communication. It involves **sharing information** throughout the school/college. It entails **alerting staff and learners of challenges and listening to their plight**

How does effective communication look like?

It should be **clear, regular, open, two-way and always timely.**

It should be **informative and encouraging.**

Embrace **new and diverse ways and tools** for communicating.

Closing Remarks

Principals should exercise their agency and enable teachers to achieve as best as they can.

- Pay careful attention to the changes in the context and emerging needs and demands.
- Find new ways of doing things and encourage innovation and creativity.
- Where possible, find alternative resources.
- Remember that there are no ‘quick fixes’, but incremental gains are possible if you understand enablers and opportunities, constraints and weaknesses in your schools
- Reflect on and plan for future threats.
- Development programmes should be context-specific! We cant follow “**mill-like**” approaches.
- “One size fits all” approaches that give no cognisance to the structural, cultural and agential contexts and **diverse** needs of teachers will **not suffice**.

Closing Remarks

In order to **capacitate**, **develop** and **support** our teachers to thrive in crises/post



References & recommended reading

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Acknowledgement

Images used in this presentation have been drawn from the internet.

THANK YOU!

Questions

