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ASSESSING SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATES RESOURCEFULNESS: CASE STUDY OF GRADUATES LIVING WITHIN LILONGWE CITY.

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ABSTRACT

Resourcefulness is the ability to deal with ambiguity effectively, and at the same time doing more with less. Resourcefulness is being more than bright – it is being skilled to

g skilled to recognize solutions in complicated problems without giving up while discovering new things along the way. Youth resourcefulness is one of the greatest assets in any nation. Youths are not just upcoming leaders; instead, they are the most significant investment for the development of any country. Youth serve as a good measure of the extent to which a country can reproduce. Their vitality, accountability, and capacity in society correlate positively with any country's development. Youths are significant in socio-economic and political development so much that any nation needs to consider the youth in their policy developments and education sectors. As a predominantly youth nation, Malawi must consider a purposeful, focused, well-articulated, and well resourceful national youth development policy to develop this country. The study aimed at investigating if secondary education produces resourcefulness in the youths. The data used qualitative and quantitative research methods and interviews with technical and vocational students subsample to test and analyze the study's hypotheses in Lilongwe District.

KEYWORDS : Collaboration, Differentiated Instruction, Gratification, Learned

INTRODUCTION

As of 2018, 51 percent of Malawi's population comprises youths under 18 years of age. This demands that youths be at the center of defining their future and fully engaged in achieving it. The country's economy will experience a substantial shift if the youth are empowered economically. Despite their significant percentage, the youths face challenges and barriers related to their age, such as experiences and skill abilities. These hinder their contribution to developmental, political, and economic status, consequently affecting the development and sustainability of the nation's economic development.

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) is a catalyst for socio-economic development and industrial growth by providing quality and relevant education (Malawi Education Sector Plan 2008-2018). The education sector envisages being a catalyst for industrial growth, socio-economic development, and an instrument for empowering the poor and the weak. In essence, the sector wishes to ensure better access and equity, relevance and quality, and good governance and management in all institutions, from primary education to higher education. The mission of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology is to provide quality and relevant education to the Malawian nation. Since close to half of the population is below 18, the education sector needs to invest more in the youthful population to achieve its vision and mission.

Literature Review

Secondary Education in Malawi

The current Education Sector Plan stipulates that MoEST seeks to focus on doubling enrolment, upgrading quality and relevance, and improving retention of girls in school. Quality and relevance were improved by a twin approach of improving teaching inputs through teacher training, motivation, inspection, supervision, curriculum, and assessment review. As the world is becoming more sophisticated, relevant education is one prerequisite to transform societies appropriately.

Secondary education is significant and necessary for attaining Malawi Development

Goals (MDGs). The importance of secondary education for social, economic, political, and transforming individuals, families, and communities in Malawi cannot be overemphasized. The world demands better skills and relevant education for the youths beyond general

education and information. The next generation's welfare depends on qualified and

resourceful human resources, which can make a difference in their professions.

The study sought to examine if secondary school graduates have learned resourcefulness. Furthermore, the study examined if the graduates acquire any role that early socialization plays in the skills they acquired. Students' resourcefulness could be a competitive advantage in any nation. The findings may help contribute to a debate on needed transformation to the secondary education processes necessary to produce graduates that find school-to-work transition not too stressful. Overall, in providing secondary education to an increasingly growing proportion of the age group, the Government of Malawi aims to produce graduates for life in the world of work and self-

employment.

Learned Resourcefulness in Secondary School Graduates

Students' years in secondary school mainly cover the adolescent stage in life, i.e., the age group 13-19. Wyatt & Carlo (2002) contends that an adolescent has to adapt to changes happening to them at a personal level as on the other hand, they question their identity and the society to shape their character and value system. During this period, the transition from childhood to adulthood is taking place. Therefore, adolescence is characterized by physical, cognitive, and social transformations (Erden & Ummeet (2014)).

The resourcefulness skills developed and employed to navigate life situations are generally learned in informal ways, mainly beginning in early childhood. Therefore, it is essential to encourage students to have a chance to brainstorm, investigate, and discover procedures on their own if their needs are to be met. This builds resourcefulness. Part of building resourcefulness is by providing the students with problem-solving tools in different situations of learning. Instead of delivering an educational lecture, students need to be challenged to practice resourcefulness skills. Knowing how to get the information and the desired results, being organized, and having trusted systems is resourceful. Students need to be challenged to discover different ways of getting things done but still having the desired results. They need to propose a solution apart from what is already provided for not reinventing the wheel. Resourcefulness requires creativity and persistence to make it a point to develop and practice the skills acquired.

Rosenbaum (1990) terms learned resourcefulness as the behavioral and cognitive accomplishments to regulate an individual's internal responses. They include four components: controlling emotional response, problem-solving approaches, delaying instantaneous gratification, and controlling one's behavior. Miechenbaum (1977) argues that learned resourcefulness concerns specific cognitive and

behavioral skills an individual falls on to effectively cope with external stressors and achieve control over challenging life events. Miechenbaum (1977) proposes three-category skill sets: self-monitoring maladaptive thoughts, images, feelings, behaviors; problem-solving strategies; and emotion regulation and self-control. Rosenbaum (1990) agrees with Miechenbaum (1977) but includes a fourth dimension: the ability to delay immediate gratification. Rosenbaum (1990) states that if learned resourcefulness is tied with performance, people with high resourcefulness reduce the negative effect of stress on their performance. Consequently, under stressful conditions, those with high learned resourcefulness are more likely to do better than those with less learned resourcefulness.

Learned Resourcefulness and Environment

Erden & Ummet (2014), based on Rosenbaum (1990) and Jory (1998), mention the importance of the environment in influencing the youth to acquire resourcefulness to face compelling and stressful life stories. The immediate environment of the youth is the family. A family plays a critical role in developing learned resourcefulness because parents build planning, organizing, and decision-making skills in children. While children set their objectives and goals, they experiment and negotiate challenges and make meaningful connections between knowledge and goal achievement while in the family setup. Parents support children not by setting objectives and solving problems for them but by walking alongside them. By providing home environments that encourage children to plan, strategize, prioritize, set goals, seek resources, and monitor their progress, children become resourceful. Three core parental attitudes influence the development of learned resourcefulness in children and adolescents differently. The three attitudes are democratic, authoritarian, and protective-demanding parental attitudes. Positive, assuring, and democratic parental attitudes (also known as parenting style) dramatically contribute to adolescents demonstrating a great latitude of learned resourcefulness. On the other hand, parents who command protective and authoritarian attitudes prevent their

children from developing self-confidence and meeting their own needs. They constrain their children from building limitless personalities.

Learned Resourcefulness and Coping Strategies

When faced with stressful situations, the level of learned resourcefulness will determine the reactions. When people meet stressful life events or situations, they will often work to change the adverse effects such situations bring to their well-being. Differing coping mechanisms or strategies are employed. The transactional theory states that people use their cognitive and behavioral efforts to reduce, minimize, master, or tolerate their environment's internal and external demands when faced with challenges. High-learned resourcefulness people use self-confidence, optimism, and support-seeking coping mechanisms. In contrast, people with low-learned resourcefulness are powerless and submissive (Eroglu et al., 2014).

Pursuing a Youth-centric Approach

A youth-centric approach is a process that recognizes that the youths are meaningfully engaged. This approach uses the skills and leadership of young people with the power of adults to benefit society. While young people are the drivers of social change, adults are involved in their unique experiences, talents, and abilities. Malawi government must attend to the key challenges that block youth development and defend their welfare. The government needs to ensure the provision and availability of quality education, skills development, and work opportunities – allowing the youth to actively participate in decision-making and governance processes for their preferred future and desired goals.

Promoting Resourcefulness

The promotion of resourcefulness is one way of pursuing a youth-centric approach. The youth need to be engaged in solving problems that affect them at all levels. They should be involved in applying knowledge to solve problems and propose solutions to the same. The education sector should provide opportunities to the youth to connect problem-solving principles in various subject areas and real-world experiences because high grades and test scores are not reliable indicators of resourcefulness as some bright graduates have challenges to solve day to day problems. Being resourceful is more than having cognitive skills. It is the ability to process information passionately and

intellectually. This provides students with practice in generalizing and applying what they have learned in a variety of contexts. It also helps students to connect resourcefulness to all aspects of life.

Promote Problem-solving Processes

To reinforce resourcefulness, students need to review their thinking processes. This allows them to think of what they would do differently in the future because students learn better when knowledge merges with and develops from what they already know.

Promote Collaboration and Independence

Collaboration and independence are both required for resourcefulness. Distinguishing and deciding the best-accomplished tasks alone from those that benefit teamwork is a critical factor for students to accomplish. When students participate in planning classroom assignments, they understand and evaluate what produces good outcomes. Resourcefulness becomes part of the students' lives when the information is tailored to their cognitive needs.

Promote Positive Skepticism

Resourcefulness is about being able to look at multiple solutions for a single problem. It requires some skepticism and evidence before declaring a claim as authentic. This creates an atmosphere for students to be analytical in their problem solving. Modeling positive skepticism is to model creativity in students. Creativity is increased if what students learn is fundamental to their competencies and abilities. If this is attached to a principle or theory, and if what they have studied has multiple applications, positive skepticism is promoted.

Promote Differentiated Instruction

One of the values of promoting differentiated instruction is the teacher's capability to inspire students to work at their own stride. Teachers can observe the preparation, organizing, and problem-solving in the classroom rather than giving homework to students. This allows teachers to check when students reach an impasse that gets in the way of accomplishing goals. The teacher's guidance and support can foster students' ability to learn from their planning and organizational challenges because they learn better when they work with others. Students ask questions, reflect on their lessons, and how

they learnt. Differentiated instruction provides an opportunity for students to learn better when they are given feedback and are allowed to analyse their training.

Promote Innovation

The education system needs to be re-designed to promote science, technology, and innovation to respond to the youth's present and future skills needs. Science, technology, and innovation in learning environments do not necessarily entail a direct change in pedagogical vision or teaching practices. The mere placing of computers, video projectors, and the internet in classrooms does not mark the ultimate attainment of teaching innovation. For this reason, it is important to connect this concept to a learning theory and clarify the role of technology to create effective human capital. Students must come out of the learning environment as problem solvers, producers of

information, and innovators.

Methodology

Data were obtained from a random sample of 49 currently university enrolled students through a self-assessment type of questionnaire. The questionnaire had three parts as follows:

- **Personal Information Sheet:** this section covered the demographic description of the sample subjects with a focus on age, gender, and education qualification of parents;
- **Parental Attitude Scale (PAS)** adapted from Rosenbaum (1980) used 7 points

Likert scale to explore the three categories of common parental attitude; and

- **Learned Resourcefulness Scale (LRS)** was adapted from Rosenbaum (1980)

used 5 points Likert scale to explore four categories of learned resourcefulness.

Characteristics of the Sample

55% of respondents were females, and 45% were males. The modal age group was 18-35 years. 61.8% of respondents reported that at least one of the parents or grown-ups they lived with possessed a university degree.

Learned Resourcefulness of Adolescents

The table below is a summary of frequencies of various learned resourcefulness attributes as self-reported by the sampled students:

Table 1: Frequencies of self-reported learned resourcefulness attributes possessed by respondents

Attribute	n (sum of strongly agree and agree responses)	Frequency (%)
Self-confidence/positive expression of attitude and behavior	39	79.5
Support-seeking disposition	30	61.2
Problem-solving strategies	37	75.5
Emotion regulation and self-control/discipline	32	65.3
Self-efficacy/self-concept	36	73.4

The majority of respondents reported their perception of learned resourcefulness attributes. The perception of possession of learned resourcefulness may be quite high because the sample came from

students who had navigated through life challenges of high school and were now enrolled in a university.

Examining Relationship Between Parental Education Background And Learned Resourcefulness

A total of 36.7% of respondents had at least one of their parents or grown-up adult who had a university degree. While the study did not examine the role of parenting style in shaping or enhancing learned resourcefulness, parents' education has positively shaped learned resourcefulness. In comparison, 83.3% of the respondents who had at least one parent with a university degree demonstrated a range of learned resourcefulness compared to 73.3% of respondents who did not have any parent or grown-up with a university degree. In support of other authors, it can be concluded that indeed there is a relationship between parent's education and the level and type of learned resourcefulness in adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Adolescents' life experiences offer them the opportunities to hone their learned resourcefulness mostly through informal means. However, certain external factors contribute to determining the type and level of learned resourcefulness skills they acquire. Parenting attitudes contribute significantly to the acquisition of these skills. It is known that the education of the parent or any grown-up they live with contributes significantly. Some resourcefulness training targeted at particular groups of people facing specific stressful situations has reinforced learned resourcefulness. Incorporating lessons being learned in such circumstances into formal high school education may enhance the acquisition of learned resourcefulness in adolescents improving how they cope with stressful situations ever-present in an ever-changing world.

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