Sustaining Quality Teaching and Learning to Instil Good Discipline and Academic Performance

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This book is dedicated to you for your support, inspiration and encouragement in the form of prayers, financial and material support. We could not pull through without your ever nagging support. You and your wife (Ma Joana Abongdia) kept us going when all was gloomy. Thank you so much.

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has made huge strides towards improving the quality of education in people's lives. However, discipline and academic performance still lag behind due to the lack of quality teaching which also prevents the Department of Education (DoE) from accomplishing its objectives. Ironically, this takes place at a time when the government has resolved to prioritise education among other important developmental issues.

To this effect, this book explores how quality teaching and learning can ensure that discipline and academic performance prevail. It also shows that quality teaching and learning have the potential to determine discipline and academic performance, particularly now that other disciplinary measures have been seen to be ineffective. It is framed theoretically by the School Improvement theory supported by Radical Constructivism and Critical Realism.

The book shows that quality teaching and learning can free human potential and ensure that it is developed in line with democratic ideals and identifies the environment as playing an important role in ascertaining whether or not quality teaching and learning can determine discipline and academic performance in schools.

Keywords: School improvement, quality teaching, discipline, collaborative work, Social Constructivism, Critical Realism, academic performance, discipline

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PREFACE

This book presents an engaging as well as inspiring array of issues and insights drawn from the perspective of dialogic imagination aimed at quality teaching and learning experiences. The authors passionately uphold their belief that the prevalence of good discipline and good academic performance are mutually interrelated and if these two prevail in the ecosphere of any classroom, these can significantly enrich and enhance the quality of learning in any school settings. To this end, they argue that for the sake of promoting calculable efficiency and quality control measures, school teachers and students are forced to compete against each other for resources and power. As a result, they feel that schools often come to be seen as production units, curricula as production plans, students as raw materials, products or customers, and teachers as production managers or producers, all aimed at the asocial aim of commodifying knowledge (Lehtovaara in Kohonen et al., 2001: 145). In light of this, the book can convince its readership that classrooms should become convivial spaces rather than exploitative and extractive spaces if they need to be productive and proactive in the cause of teaching and learning.

Picking up on a well-nuanced stance, the authors offer a refreshing orientation of classroom learning and its far-reaching beneficial outcomes without which the prevalence of well-informed democracy citizenry and critical literacy will fail to prevail and deliver in South Africa. In order to advance the main thesis of the book, the authors avow their faith in dialogically imaginative learning environments. This, they affirm will help: encourage multiple representations of reality, avoid over-simplification to represent the complexity and diversity of the real world, view knowledge as 'constructed' not as 'given', and emphasize authentic activities and meaningful contexts. As a result of this envisaged shift of mind-set, the ecosphere of teaching and learning prevalent in the school classroom will be ideally placed to: focus on real world settings and non-linear instruction, provide stimulus for reflecting on experience, articulate context-bound characteristics of knowledge and acknowledge collaborative construction of knowledge through inter-personal associations/negotiations. In doing this, the book rejects the hegemony of acquisition metaphor (AM) in favour of participation metaphor (PM). PM

necessitates a shift in our focus from 'the structure of learning to learning use in context, and to the issues of affiliation and belonging' (Pavlenko, 2000). To learn then, as the book affirms, is how one learns to use it or to live in it like a bird in a nest. In this sense, a computational/container view of learning as prescribed by AM is not learning at all, and that is what this book furiously rejects.

As succinctly stated by the book, our preoccupation, with collecting evidence for learning has led us to view learning as 'a reaping or harvesting act'. In doing that, we have not paid any attention to 'the sowing' that precedes reaping in that our focus has been turned away from person, process, context and time in that our preoccupations have centered on reaping statistical analyses and numerical measures (Wittgenstein, 1980, Bakhurst, 1991). This helps explain to why and how we are constantly faced with the challenges of poor learning and ill-disciplined students in the classroom and the education malaise they underlie.

Given the nature of the issues and insights featured in the book, it is evident that the authors trust in the efficacy of dialogic imagination, which can prevail in the ecosphere of the school classroom as acts of semiotic mediation. In light of this, the book makes it doubly convincing that: human beings can create signs to direct/control their behavior instead of being controlled by their environment. In this respect, only human beings can use signs to initiate response/reaction or to refer to other human beings or objects (Wertsch, 1985a and b). When this is accomplished, the book believes that the school classroom will bear witness to abundant learning and growing through responding taking place in the school classroom. Rightly as the authors believe that if the students view their assignments as a sign, which can be interpreted and related to other signs, it would influence a multiple creation of texts besides contributing to a dialogic atmosphere in class thereby influencing a diversity of utterances/ interpretations. This will maximize the learning discipline of the classroom and help students live their classroom lives just as any well-informed citizenry would do in an emerging democracy that is the new South Africa.

Having taken a resistant stance against closure–focused learning practices and its prescriptions, the authors have invested the book with their unique sense of voice, agency and inter-subjectivity. Given this, the book will be a lamp to all those of us who are often stranded in a methodological wasteland for want of appropriate insights and guidance to fulfill our

professional obligations of teaching and learning. Having said that, it gives me immerse pleasure as well as pride to have been associated with this book and its authors via the preface I have been called upon to write.
Read on then!!!

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

1.1 Introduction and Background

Discipline and academic performance have deteriorated in most South African schools since the emergence of the democratic dispensation in 1994. According to Naidoo (2005), the democratic dispensation marked a shift from an authoritarian to a democratic rule and has been viewed by many, particularly the previously disadvantaged communities, as a source of meaningful reforms that could improve conditions in all spheres of life including schools and the society in general. However, these expectations have not been fulfilled two decades into the democratic dispensation, and such a vision of a new South Africa has become blurred and the people have started to lose hope.

In the sphere of education, learners become the obvious casualties as the quality of teaching and learning deteriorates and the value of education declines. Such a decline in the quality of education may result in schools finding it difficult to maintain discipline and acceptable standards of academic performance (Oliver, 2013). According to the ANC (1998), the decline in academic excellence is perpetuated by the lack of a work ethic among the teachers, probably because they have become alienated from the changes taking place in education. Yet, some scholars agree that quality teaching and learning can play a crucial role in determining discipline and academic performance in schools (McCaffrey et al., 2003). These scholars have reasons to have such a belief, since they have observed and witnessed quality teaching and learning playing a significant role in building and moulding a democratic and prosperous society (McCaffrey et al., 2003).

In view of this argumentation, Modisaotsile (2012) observes that there are many signs in the South African system of education that indicate that there is a crisis in education. Modisaotsile insists that while there were high rates of enrolment in schools each year, the output is increasingly poor. To this effect, she attributes the discrepancy to the poor quality of education in South Africa. Thus, she calls on the Department of Education (DoE) to place more emphasis on quality education (Modisaotsile, 2012).

In other words, more concentration needs to be focused on quality education if discipline and academic performance are to be enhanced in South African schools.

In light of this assertion, the study seeks to explore how quality teaching and learning can enhance discipline and academic performance in schools. It views quality teaching and learning as one of the most important school-based factors which can have a cumulative and long-lasting effect in education and therefore leading to the enhancement of discipline and academic performance (Rivers, 1999). However, it would be important to look closely at what the word 'quality' entails before defining quality teaching and learning as determinants of discipline and academic performance. According to Goe (2007), ''quality' is a contentious term which cannot be used as 'a-one-size-fits-all' kind of word. It can be used in a variety of occasions and for specific purposes. She goes further to state that "indicators of quality relevant to making initial hiring decisions may be different from the indicators used in granting tenure, rewarding excellent performance, or identifying and supporting struggling teachers" (Goe, 2007 p. 2).

In other words, the word 'quality' may be relevant in different contexts and at different points of teaching and learning. For instance, some scholars have focused only on quantifiable indicators of educational performance such as learner's test scores (Hightower et al., 2011). Contrarily, others believe that too much focus on learner testing as a proxy for judging teaching and learning can be misleading and potentially harmful (Ravitch, 2010). It is therefore not surprising for scholars such as Aspin et al. (1994) to seek less quantifiable measures in capturing behavioural, social and developmental impacts of teaching and learning because these measures may have much better impact than the more quantifiable ones, especially in the early-childhood arena (Hightower et al., 2011).

For this reason, this study has located 'quality' which is associated with efficiency, effectiveness, choice, excellence, equity and social justice among other virtues that are designated as the aims of any system purporting to produce effective learning in schools (Aspin et al., 1994). Hence, it views quality teaching and learning as a process which constitutes a set of actions and activities that together improve learner outcomes (Hightower et al., 2011). Ngoqo (2006) unpacks this definition further when he postulates that, quality teaching and learning is a critical

informative influence for the purpose of developing and encouraging independent and critical thought, the capacity to question, enquire, reason, weigh evidence, form judgments, achieve understanding, recognize the provisional and incomplete nature of most human knowledge and the ability to communicate clearly.

Some scholars identify three main approaches to defining quality teaching and learning and the interplay between effective teaching and academic performance. These approaches are discussed in depth in Chapter 2 and include research that focuses on teacher qualifications, ways to influence the human capital pool and contextual factors that act as mediating influences (Hightower et al., 2011).

In this sense, teaching and learning are conceptualised in terms of designated levels of knowledge that provide the foundations for learners' socialisation as educated individuals endowed with the academic, personal, social and professional skills requisite for participation in society (Pasternak, 2013). In this way, teaching and learning should be seen as a process which can improve learner-behaviour to uplift their academic performance. This can be attributed to the fact that they represent a starting point for a person's integration into the society as well as for the construction of a society capable of significant achievements in the economic, cultural, industrial and defensive spheres (Pasternak, 2013).

Discipline and academic performance on the other hand, are perceived as related concepts which complement each other (Pasternak, 2013) and can assist in improving conditions in the lives of the South African communities (Kepe, 2014). This is a legitimate claim noting that learners find it hard to perform to the best of their ability in a situation where there is lack of discipline (Matsoga, 2003). For this reason, effective discipline becomes a prerequisite for the achievement of quality academic performance. In this regard, Putmnam et al. (2005) argue that effective discipline is crucial in ensuring academic success and a safe learning environment. Hence, adding quality teaching and learning into the fold can enhance discipline and academic performance. Furthermore, quality teaching and learning can also strengthen the relationship that exists with discipline and academic performance. In addition, it is capable of ensuring the provision of an education that contributes to learners' personal and social development as well as strengthening community and civil society's participation in improving the conditions in the schooling system. By so doing, it might help diminish violence and other manifestations of anti-

social values which are deeply rooted in the South African schooling system (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). It is within such thinking that the new democratic government strives to dismantle apartheid structures in education in order to establish a unified education system which is devoid of discrimination. This calls for the promotion and encouragement of high quality teaching and learning processes as a way to sustain discipline and academic performance.

To this effect, the South African School Act (SASA) was promulgated and publicised in order to advance this requirement. In the process, it gave rise to a number of learner rights with the intention of granting access to quality education to all, irrespective of their origin (DoE, 1996). It also provided for free and compulsory schooling to children between the ages of seven and fifteen as well as to schools categorised under quintiles 1 to 3 for the purpose of redressing the discrepancies and the uneven distribution experiences of the past. In addition, it also equipped every member of the society with basic quality education that could enable them to lead quality lives (DoE, 1996).

SASA also speaks to the code of conduct for both teachers and the learners to ensure that teaching and learning proceeds without disruptive behaviour and offences (ELRC, 2001). Above all, it provides for democratic school governance through School Governing Bodies (SGBs). In view of this, it allows for the SGBs and all the other stakeholders including the greater community (learners and parents), the departmental officials, teacher unions, the School Management Teams (SMTs), the teachers and learners to participate and contribute towards the transformative action in schools. In light of this, an indication of what each stakeholder stands for is given below.

The SGBs are a sequel to one of the important aspects of the struggle against apartheid (Department of Education, 2012). They have to be upheld as a means of maintaining accountability to local communities as well as that of assisting in instilling discipline and improving the quality of education in all schools. In addition, they ought to have the best interests of the school at heart and strive to ensure that the school develops in all its spheres.

Like the SGB's, the greater community have to advocate and promote teachers and learners' welfare at all times. In this way, they would be supporting the school in making sure that learners observe and live up to the requirements and the rules and regulations of the school. In addition,

they are expected to display an active interest in the schooling process, thereby cultivating an open, healthy and co-operative relationship between themselves and the teachers – a recipe for harmonising the conditions at school and ensuring that quality teaching and learning become sustainable. The Departmental officials on their part are expected to establish programmes that can provide all the stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake and perform their functions effectively and efficiently.

Teachers' unions mainly exist for the welfare of their membership, making sure that they work under the best possible conditions. However, they also have a responsibility to ensure that their members render quality teaching and open spaces for learners to learn effectively. This is ideal for the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) which pledges to support every effort made towards improving quality teaching and learning. In addition, it also commits itself to consolidate the goal of quality public education for all and re-affirms its support for the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign in the belief that it (the union) also has the responsibility to fight for equal access education for all the South Africans, particularly the working class and the poor (SADTU, 2010). In its draft vision for 2030 and in line with the SASA, SADTU pledges to create a learning nation through classroom teaching, commitment and professionalization to improve educational outcomes of the nation. In the process, it strives to improve teaching and learning methods that would transform schools into centres of community education, social services and support. Moreover, SADTU aspires for a campaign towards the development and implementation of a national development trajectory for the next fifty years in order to promote a development oriented nation state (SADTU, 2010). Both the pledge and the draft vision by the South African Democratic Union are an indication of the mandate to transform education and to improve the quality of teaching and learning for better academic performance. It is also an indication that SADTU values the lives of the society and it is prepared to move out of its way to improve the conditions in daily lives.

The SMT (the principal, deputy principal and heads of departments) is standing in leadership positions at the school levels. They are required to be exemplary in performing their tasks. They ought to manage the school and the learning process to the best of their abilities. Furthermore, they are expected to support and develop staff members in achieving educational goals.

The teachers are the custodians of the pedagogic processes and are required to maintain and uphold high standards of professional ethics in assisting the learners in their education, problem solving, progress and looking after their over-all well-being.

The learners, on the other hand are objects of the teaching and learning process who have to accept that the main reason for being in schools is to learn and develop academically, socially and culturally. In the process, they have to adhere to school rules, and avoid engaging themselves in anti-social behaviours and activities that can be disruptive to the teaching and learning processes. They also need to participate in Learner Representative Councils (RCLs) to safeguard learner interests, while showing respect to other learners and never discriminating against any of them.

Efficiency in the performance of these tasks may assist in ensuring sustainable quality teaching and learning for the enhancement of discipline and academic performance in schools. On the contrary, failure by any of the stakeholders to perform these assigned tasks, may be detrimental to the efforts to improve the conditions and therefore render this well-intended effort unsuccessful.

In addition to the aspirations of SASA, Action Plan 2014 is a long-term and a comprehensive turnaround strategy to improve quality teaching and learning in schools (van Niekerk, 2012). It provides a vision on how young South Africans ought to receive quality education towards 2025. It further allows the monitoring of progress against a set of measurable indicators covering all aspects of basic education which include; teachers, infrastructure, school funding, learners' well-being, discipline and high quality academic performance. The action plan is grounded on the belief that the afore-mentioned stakeholders, particularly the SGBs, are the basis for ensuring that quality teaching and learning lead to discipline and academic performance in schools – leading to the creation of citizenry worthy of nation building (DoE, 2012).

Also of great importance in the transformative action by the ministry of education is the implementation of curricula with pre-determined outcomes. These curricula replace the segregationist and discriminatory apartheid system of education aimed at disempowering a majority of the South African society. The curricula comprise Curriculum 2005, the Revised National Curriculum Statement for General Education and Training and National Curriculum Statement as well as the present

Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) aimed at improving and strengthening curriculum implementation. As such, CAPS opens the "spaces in which citizens [the learners in particular] can practice democracy and exert some influence on South Africa's very ambitious project" of transforming the lives of the society (Heller, 2009 p.134).

However, the momentum with which these curricula changes have taken place leaves much to be desired. It points to the fact that the ministry of education has not succeeded in promoting the founding principles of democracy which seeks to stabilise people's livelihoods and harmonise their aspirations (Heller, 2009 p. 134). This study is nonetheless of the view that the situation can be stabilised with the scholarly contributions of this nature.

As such, the authors are of the view that discipline and academic performance can be determined by quality teaching in schools. In other words, if quality teaching and learning is of a high standard, discipline and academic performance would definitely be good. On the contrary, indiscipline and poor academic performance threaten to result in a situation where the quality of teaching and learning would deteriorate. In the two cases under review, both schools experience indiscipline.

1.2 Problem Statement

In spite of South Africa's achievements and intention to improve the conditions in schools, discipline and academic performance continue to deteriorate, two decades after the inception of the democratic dispensation (Kepe 2014). The deterioration seems to result from a lack of quality teaching and learning which is perpetuated by poor teacher training on the new curricula and the lack of teacher in-service training (Oliver, 2013). This is robbing the schools of vital knowledge, skills and the overall developments in education which could assist them to perform their duties diligently and efficiently. In this regard, it is needful to curb unwanted learner-behaviour which impacts negatively on academic performance.

What motivated these researchers is the fact that indiscipline is rampant among the two cases under investigation in this study. However, it appears to be under control in School A and the academic performance is of a higher standard. The opposite is true of School B; as a result, the academic performance is poor and of a low standard. The table below shows the academic performances of the two schools in the matriculation results during the past five years.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
School A	95.5	92.5	100	94.1	96.6
School B	17	42.9	37.9	57.1	38

Source: Department of Education 2016.

As argued above, these statistics bear testimony to the fact that the level of academic performance is closely linked to indiscipline. The assumption is that the lower the quality of teaching and learning, the poorer the discipline at the school.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Main Question

How can effective teaching and learning determine discipline and academic performance?

1.3.2 Sub-questions

- How do the SMTs and SGBs contribute to enhancement of quality teaching and learning?
- How are the Department officials helping to maintain quality teaching and learning in schools?
- What is the role of the teachers in the fostering of quality teaching and learning?
- Where do the learners fit-in into the enhancement of quality teaching and learning?
- What research-based quality teaching and learning mechanisms can enhance learner discipline and their academic performance?

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

Although the key terms to the study are discussed deeper in Chapter 2, introducing these in this chapter would prepare the reader towards what is to be expected in the study. These terms include quality teaching and learning, discipline, academic performance, learners-centred approach, prior knowledge, deep and surface learning, stakeholders and code of conduct.

1.4.1 Quality Teaching and Learning

Quality teaching and learning is a multi-dimensional and value-loaded concept which aims at improving and advancing the lives of the society. For the purposes of this study, it will be considered a critical informative influence for the purpose of developing and encouraging independent and critical thought, the capacity to question, enquire, reason, weigh evidence, form judgments, achieve understanding, recognize the provisional and incomplete nature of most human knowledge and the ability to communicate clearly (Ngoqo, 2006).

1.4.2 Discipline

It can be defined as any training intended to develop moral character or produce a pattern of behaviour. It is also thought to be a coercive mechanism by some people, while other people view it as a collaborative process of building consensus regarding accepted behaviour with institutions and society (Reyes, 2006). In the school environment, discipline may refer to the rules and regulations for the maintenance of order.

1.4.3 Academic Performance

It is the outcome of education — the extent to which a student/learner, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals (Ward, Stoker & Murray-Ward, 1996). It can also be defined as how well a learner meets the standards set out by the ministry of education or the institution itself (Bell, 2014).

1.4.4 Learners-centred Approach

This approach places much stronger emphasis on the role of the learner in the learning process; particularly the interaction between the teacher and learner and how the teacher responds to the learner's needs (Killen, 2009). The idea behind this approach is to allow the learners to discover the learning content on their own, with the teacher facilitating and guiding the learning process.

1.4.5 Prior Knowledge

This refers to the knowledge the learner brings from home or from out of the classroom. It is also called experiential knowledge which is based on the learner's world view.

1.4.6 Deep and Surface Learning

Deep and surface learning describes what learners do in the teaching and learning situation and why they do what they do (Biggs, 1987). The basic distinction between the two approaches is vast. The deep learning approach is aimed towards understanding while the surface approach aims at reproducing the learned material in tests and examinations, without really committing anything to understanding.

1.4.7 Stakeholders

The term refers to the people who display interest or concern and are committed and willing to assist in the development and sustenance of quality education (Chambers-Macmillan, 1996).

1.4.8 Code of Conduct

This is a written statement of rules and principles concerning discipline in schools (SASA, 1996. Section 8 (1). It explains the kind of behaviour educators expect from learners, and the standard of behaviour a school has to maintain.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A democratic state requires the teachers to teach and learners to learn. Learners need to be prepared to work hard and accept the authority of their teachers if they want to succeed in life. Discipline and academic performance have deteriorated in many schools resulting in poor quality of teaching and academic performance (Kepe, 2014). A number of strategies used to curb this problem have yielded none of the desired results (Ngoqo, 2016). Instead, indiscipline keeps escalating, while academic performance continues to deteriorate. For this reason, the study seeks to explore the extent to which quality teaching and learning can turn things around to improve learners' discipline and academic performance. In light of this, it would examine the contribution scholars have made towards the prospects of quality teaching and learning being determinants of discipline and academic performance in schools.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the School Improvement Theory with the intention to improve conditions in the society by introducing educational reforms as a means towards economic growth, transformation and prominence regionally and internationally (James, 2008). Apart from this, school improvement lies at the heart of systemic transformative action. It is based, among other educational imperatives, on a simple, yet profoundly important assumption that to improve discipline and academic performance on a broad scale, teaching and learning must also improve on a similar and corresponding scale.

In other words, for a school to improve its condition, discipline and academic performance must be embedded and be deeply influenced by quality teaching and learning. This is echoed in the South African's Schools Act (SASA) which states that discipline must be maintained in school and classroom situations if the education of learners is to flourish without any disruptive behaviour or offences (Republic of South Africa,

1996a). Darling-Hammond (1996) amplifies this when he argues that discipline can have a positive impact on academic performance.

It must be added that for discipline to thrive in schools, quality teaching and learning must prevail. Based on this, quality teaching and learning can debar the learners from engaging in wayward activities. To this effect, Purkey and Smith (1983) argue that the school has an influence on learner achievement. The school in this sense refers to both the building structure and the activities taking place there: teaching and learning to be precise. No wonder that Hargreaves (1994) views the school as a critical site of change, particularly the classroom and the teacher.

To this effect, the school displays the impact of the School Improvement Theory, which assumes that for a school to function efficiently and improve its quality, it should have stakeholders who share a common mission of improving the conditions in that school. A school of this nature might be able to improve teaching and learning since the stakeholders are strongly engaged in collaborative work and collective responsibility towards quality education. In addition, they are also involved in provisioning adequate resources which would allow learners to acquire timely and accurate information about the progress of the schools, particularly on teaching and learning processes (Bryk & Schneider, 1966).

In line with the foregoing debates, this study is aware that improvement is a process that connects both the researchers' and the participants' actions to the instructional core. The core being the intersection of content, teacher knowledge and skill as well as learner engagement in the process of teaching and learning. To succeed in this process, a collaborative effort against indiscipline and poor academic performance is required from all the stakeholders. This is echoed in the quotation that follows:

> Good to great comes by a cumulative process – step by step, action by action, decision by decision, turn upon turn of the flywheel – that adds up to sustained and spectacular results… It is a quiet, deliberate process of figuring out what needs to be done to create the best future results and then taking those steps one way or the other (Collins, 2001 p.204).

The above quotation highlights that the stakeholders need to support each other and also ensure that relational trust exists between them if they are to be successful in improving the conditions in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 1966). This appears convincing because among its principles, the School Improvement Theory intends to give rise to improved conditions in