Chapter 4

Policy and Practice Challenges for Equality in Information and Communication Technology Education:
Community Engagement With a Primary School

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of online learning is for learners to be able to access their learning material remotely and teachers to be able to facilitate learning and teaching with the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education. The research reported in this chapter introduced the limited use of ICT tools and resources for teaching and learning at a primary school based in Tsakane township and explored the policy and practice challenges for equality in terms of community engagement. The chapter will introduce the purpose of the research, as well as the objectives and research questions, and will then proceed to provide background in terms of a detailed literature review. This chapter will proceed to identify limitations and assumptions, outline the problem statement, as well as the research methodology used in the study, together with a discussion of the results collected towards solutions.

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) are broadly used in South Africa and also globally, for e.g. sustainable and inclusive quality education through research informed practice (Goosen, 2018a). Within the domain of schools, information and communications technology is described as the set of activities and operations that present access to information through telecommunications and networking. In the 21st century, township schools in South Africa have also increased opportunities to use ICTs in teacher training programs to improve and enhance the quality of teaching.

A primary school that is situated in Tsakane township in an eastern district of Gauteng province, South Africa has become a beacon of hope in the community for families, who cannot afford *inclusive* education for their children. In such a context, research on information systems and technology-supported teaching and learning are opening new worlds to learners with, for example, autism spectrum disorders (Goosen, 2019a; 2019c; 2020).

E-learning is also referred to as online learning, which includes learning at all levels, both formal and informal, with the use of information networks. The elements include e-portfolio's, Information Technology (IT) infrastructure, digital libraries and online learning object tools. The core ICTs that the school currently has are the learner profiler and Kip McGrath enrichment programs. All the elements implement the digital identity of users, and stakeholders are connected to education (Ratheeswari, 2018).

Most education-related research detail the execution and efficiency of ICTs in schools, with the rapid growth in ICT development having achieved numerous expansions in this century and affecting community engagement. A restructuring process involves the effective integration of ICTs and e-learning into the curriculum with the purpose of providing and assisting learners with knowledge of specified subject areas in an effort to improve and enhance significant learning (Moila & Makgato, 2014).

The South African national e-education policy (Department of Education, 2004) plays an effective and important part in the development of education improvement; South Africa has implemented its own structures that are focusing on the e-education policy. The policy and practice challenges related to equality in ICT use to improve and develop education at this primary school, in light of community engagement, had motivated this research.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to investigate and describe the lack of ICT infrastructure and online learning as part of the curriculum to facilitate teaching and learning at a primary school in Tsakane township. Since the school is still using the traditional system to facilitate learning and teaching, this study will explore the policy and practice challenges faced by this primary school in terms of community engagement and the impact on equality in education, due to not fully utilizing ICTs for learning and teaching purposes.

The purpose of the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative was implemented in order to identify education as an area of importance, as well as the need to develop positive and transformative impacts amongst teachers and learners in schools (Hooker, 2010). In the 21st century, it is a necessity for schools in townships to learn how to locate new information with the use of ICT tools and infrastructure. Learners need to learn how to think critically and analytically and show initiative to meet the demands of the world of technology that is moving very fast.

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