

STATUS OF EXPERIENTIAL INTEGRITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

This research dealt with the status of experiential integrity in higher education where implications for educational transformation were set as reflections. It investigated the status of experiential exchange, and consistent utilization of experiential resources among the teaching staff of Adama Science and Technology University. In that, descriptive survey method was used for its viability in investigating status. Target of the research were purposively selected instructors in four schools of the university such being schools of Education Science and Technology Teacher Education, Business, Engineering and IT, and Natural Science (N=20). The purposes underlined were experiences in teaching and roles they had in their respective schools. The sample parameter held 10 expatriate and 10 domestic staffs, who were contacted through both closed and open-ended questionnaire. While open-ended questionnaire helped in-depth data gain, closed-ended questionnaire helped to make the data regulated in line with the guiding points. Focal points of the inquiry were teachers' experiential exchanges on planning, implementing, evaluating and improving educational activities and interactions in due accord. Data for the research were collected and interpreted on the basis of the respondents' consents after clear purpose-identification and discussion. Key findings were that, the staff had some kind of exchange in terms of planning (courses and outlines), informal discussions on implementation and evaluation of learning activities but had no research, project and wide-range exchanges besides the academic lines. Their experiences in touring and exchanging innovative models were also limited. By and large, the experiential exchanges between and within groups of the concerned staff were more informal than formal. That indicated the likely loss of experiential resources which may be exposed to wastage with the disappearance of the holding staff owing to retirement, death, transfer or any other form of migration. In so far as smooth educational transformation is realized through integrity among the academic taskforce, the researcher recommends concerned agents to pay keen attention to inter-staff and intra-staff experiential exchanges in terms of planned and productive integrity.

Key Terms: experiential integrity, educational transformation, higher education

Background , Objectives of the Research and Problem Statement

1.1 Background of the Research

In the process of education, human elements have the role of communicating, sharing, promoting; and, above all, of transforming experiences (Warier, 2003). Such a promotion is made possible when knowledge and experiences are converged, interpreted and used in a meaningful way (Kok, 2007). Reforms in education require respective higher institutions to design activities that match the real world tasks of professional development and productivity in diverse fields (Mohanty, 2007). Besides personal competencies, teachers in higher education need to act integrally in order to be actors working for changes and transformation in education (Dubois & Wilkerson, 2008).

Ethiopia, with its development and transformation plan, has entered the world championship in education whereby universities are increasingly acting to develop huge number of trained and educated human resources which could be the pillar for economic development. Studying experiential integrity was essential as a viable means of networking potentials in human elements and creating consistent means of domestic knowledge resources with minimum of indifference and wastage.

Hence, this study was conducted to explicate the status of experiential integrity among teaching staff in higher education, based on the investigation of interactions and exchanges among diverse teaching staff in Adama Science and Technology University which was chosen for its familiarity and economic handling of data.

1.2 Research Objectives

The research aimed at explicating the status of experiential exchange and collaborative interactions among teaching staff to the grand, the specific aims being to identify status of experiential integrity; to verify mechanisms used for experiential exchange and integration; and to ascertain the transformative status of such an integrity.

1.3. Problem Statement and Basic Questions

As important as the availability of human resources in education is the extent to which respective institutions practically integrate and use experiences gained from the existing diverse staff. It is obvious that, teaching and learning do not take place in a vacuum. It is grounded on the active and hospital roles of the teacher, the students and the experiential contexts. In that, circle individualistic competencies or one-shot interchanges alone may not guarantee the development of large scale reforms in teaching and learning. the implication goes for sure that, making integrated use of experiences is vital since it builds co-planning, co-acting and reciprocal exchange which, all together, brings about concerted success in goal-achievement. Ethiopian higher education has had long history of involving diverse staff in teaching-learning and research, and such an involvement is taken as the signifier of being transformative. Yet, the extent to which experiences are integrated and used in bringing about transformation in education is an issue of big concern that needs research and discussion. This issue of concern is not only with respect to teaching and learning but also the entire development in socio-economic realms to which education is responsive. Hence, the research underway was based on answering the succeeding questions. For the purpose of clarity, the research questions were divided into general and specific as follows: *To what status do diverse teaching staffs of Adama Science and Technology University integrate their experiences in the realm of planning, implementation, assessment, social interchanges, and problem-solving?* The specific questions were also stated as under:

- To what extent do the teaching staffs work collaboratively and interactively?
- What possibilities are there for such collaborations and interactions?
- What implications does this have for educational transformation?

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Experiential Integrity in Higher Education

Two of the greatest challenges higher educational institutions face today are those of harnessing the power of digital technology and responding to the information revolution (Mohanty, 2007). The opportunities and challenges technology presents are far greater than at any other time in the history of higher education. Regarding this, Evans (2003) asserts that, integrated network capabilities are essential for the development of distributed specialties, for which multifunctional and multifaceted team-working are a function.

Education, as the grandest human attribute and instrument of social change, requires transformation of experiential partnership which is of paramount importance to the staff and the institutions (Kozma, 2010). Packer (2004) states certain factors that are related to experiential integrity and partnership such being personal goals, capability beliefs, context analysis and situational incentives. Experiential integrity pertaining to education, as a transformative and change-oriented business, must be shaped in line with socio-economic changes (Kozma, 2010). Such changes are manifest in terms of task teams, flexible work arrangements and development of follow-up schemes.

Changes in education are effected in people's cognitive and experiential gains (Goel & Goel, 2005), and the overall development is affected by the quality and motivation associated with human skills. Quality and motivation are, in turn, affected by the extent to which people gainfully exchange experiences. It is to such an affective reflection that Mohanty (2007) traces teaching in higher education in relation to philosophical and sociological trends, and the challenges in leading and illuminating the change dimensions. The creation of "Knowledge Society", earmarked in Swamy (2002), is also indicative of the need to build a society rather than educating a person as an individual pursuant. In the writer's very words, the 20th Century marks development in social, political and economic realms where overwhelming advancements and changes are observed to come in the realms of creating and building the knowledge society.

Alstete (1996) asserts the demands on higher institutions of education in terms of responsiveness to changing needs of society, greater and consistent competition and reflective effects of education to the society. Ng (1997) states also that, organizations need creative modalities in terms of interactive and productive aspects. Skills in global leadership in terms of innovative pedagogy (Brown & Atkins, 1988) and outreach experiences (Ashcroft & Foreman-Pack, 1994) are also expected to further solidification and solidarity in education in the footprints of global educational change dimensions.

2.2 Importance of Teachers' Experiential Integrity

According to McClure (2008), school leaders who foster collaboration among novice and veteran teachers can improve teacher retention and teacher satisfaction. Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2003) characterize professional learning communities as groups of educators who work together to analyze and improve their classroom practice engaging in an ongoing cycle of questions that promote deep team learning. Wheelock (2000) states also that, collaboration helps teachers to question their activities in group circles, and the questions never remain mere. Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2003) assert also that, teachers' having different levels of qualification and expertise in teaching make higher educational institutions look for some means of enabling their staff to get engaged on tasks interactively and learn from one another.

2.3 Problems in Experiential Integrity

There are identifiable challenges on illuminating the path for experiential integrity. Both identification of problems and seeking sound methods of facing the challenges are traced in this part of the review. Pampering to the past experiences of quantitative shortages come qualitative snares on higher educational institutions in the world, and more specifically on those in developing countries (Aarts, 2012). The most perplexing feature tangling higher education today is failure to be in the pipeline of innovative pedagogy where problem-based and project-based learning are a matter of urge rather than preference.

Methodology of The Research

This research took a descriptive survey method, whereby primary sources of data were used for the realization of the study. Respondents were twenty purposively selected teachers in selected schools (Business, Education, Engineering and Natural Science) of Adama Science and Technology University. The purpose of selecting the destined respondents was their experiences in teaching. In the collection of data, closed ended questionnaire was employed which addressed five key issues such being planning, implementation, assessment, social interchange, and problem-solving.

Each key issue embraced sub-issues which stood to elaborate the necessary details (to the manageable scope) thereby serving as important hooks for drawing experiential data at ease. Both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires were used to collect data provided that, contacting the respondents through interview was not convenient. Since reference was made to a homogeneous group, data collection took place at each staff venue. Data were also rechecked for consistency, and verified for validity, in line with the preselected questionnaire guides. In the analysis, reference was made to percentage for its convenience to display data for direct implications.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

This part of the research dealt with the presentation and discussion of major findings. The presentation had its onset with the arrangements of key experiential focuses such as planning, implementation, assessment, social interchange and problem-solving.

4.1 Experiential Integrity on Planning

Teachers' experiential integrity on planning was based on the treatment of the following tabulated points to which the staff reacted in due accord:

No.	Points of Focus	Indicators					
		Most		Average		Least	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
4.1.1	Planning intents	2	10%	3	15%	15	75%
4.1.2	Planning tasks of focus	3	15%	4	25%	13	65%
4.1.3	Planning resources and means	-	-	2	10%	18	90%
4.1.4	Planning assessment modes	3	15%	1	5%	16	80%
4.1.5	Devising feedback loops	-	-	-	-	20	100%

Table 4.1 *Experiential Integrity Index on Planning in Teaching-Learning*

From the data provided to 4.1 above, it could be clear that, three-fourth of the target teachers' experiences denoted the least integrity on making collaborative decisions on intents. Various theoretical assertions support however that, every instructional decision and activity chain must start with the formulation and clear statement of objectives (Dick, Carey & Carey, 2005).

Regarding integrative organization of learning tasks and planning resources and means of lesson-delivery,, teachers' experiences indicated the least co-action, and that showed the likely effect of not having consensus on accomplishments. Coming to planning assessment modes, the highest number of responses tilted to the least. The respondents indicated their being individually acting in that realm as well. Regarding feedback scheme, the responses indicated no integrity at all which implied that, teachers hardly discussed on what type and how to give feedback to students, and how to develop their undertakings based on the feedback gained.

4.2 Experiential Integrity on Implementation

No.	Focal issues	Most		Average		Least	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
4.2.1	Team teaching	2	10%	3	15%	15	75%
4.2.2	Programmed discussion	4	20%	2	10%	14	70%
4.2.3	Innovative interchanges	-	-	3	15%	17	85%
4.2.4	Shared use of resources	6	30%	3	15%	11	55%
4.2.5	Comprehensive lesson handling	-	-	7	35%	13	65%

Table 4.2 *Experiential Integrity on Implementation*

From the table data above, it could be known that, the least involvement was manifest in terms of team-teaching, planned discussion on the improvement of programs, innovative experiential interchanges, sharing of resources, and comprehensive handling of lessons. In the researched case above, team situation was not yet worked on. Programmed discussion among teachers of different experiences was rated to have been used to the most next to resource sharing whereas comprehensive lesson-handling was rated the least used.

4.3 Experiential Integrity on Assessment

Regarding collaborative integrity on assessment, respondents to the research issue above had the following experiences, as set in the table.

No.	Focal points	Most		Average		Least	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
4.3.1	Producing valid assessment modes	2	10%	3	15%	15	75%
4.3.2	Making collaborative uses of assessment modes	-	-	3	15%	17	85%
4.3.3	Having cooperative roles in revisiting assessment modes	-	-	2	10%	18	90%
4.3.4	Collaborative improvement of assessment modes	-	-	1	5%	19	95%
4.3.5	Making modes lifelike by redeveloping			2	10%	18	90%

Table 4.3 *Teachers' Experiences on Developing, Using and Improving Assessment Models*

Teachers' reflections on producing valid assessment modes indicated (75%) the least involvement in collaborative production and use of assessment techniques. The implication is that, such a lessened integrity implies that, each teacher had his/her own mechanisms and that bore the feature of being all aloof to what was happening to the integral. Teachers' collaborations in revisiting assessment modes was also ascertained to have been worked on minimally.

Collaborative improvement of assessment modes was also earmarked as the least integrally dealt with. Making assessments as lifelike as possible was also traced as the least worked on. The other issue of experiential integrity was social interchange, for which the respondents' reactions went as under:

4.4 Experiential Integrity in Social Interchange

No.	Focal Points	Most		Average		Least	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
4.4.1	Touring programs	-	-	2	10%	16	80%
4.4.2	Research symposia	2	10%	2	10%	16	80%
4.4.3	Enrichment training	3	15%	3	15%	14	70%
4.4.4	Presenting model works	-	-	1	5%	19	95%
4.4.5	Fieldwork and visits	5	25%	2	10%	13	65%

Table 4.4 *Teachers' Experiences on Social Interchange*

As indicated in the above table (Table 4), touring experiences were worked on collaboratively to an average status as denoted by 10 percent of the responses, whereas it was stated to have been the least considered, as denoted in 80 percent of the responses. Besides stating touring to have been the least worked on, two of the twenty respondents, both inpatriate, denoted non-existence of inter-staff touring and social interchange.

The rate of touring was marked the least by the expatriate staff than the inpatriate (disparity not traced for focus), though case explication for the disparity is beyond the coverage of this research. Enrichment training was also the least worked on aspect, as indicated by 70 percent of the responses, and presenting model works was marked to be the least worked on as denoted by 95 percent of the responses. The implication is that, the target staff did not have uniting threads.

4.5 Experiential Integrity on Problem-Solving

Under this grand issue, five selected sub-issues were set for scrutiny, such being experiential integrity on academic, social, moral, technical and status-oriented issues. Academic issues were related to instructional aspects, social issues to group role-assumption, moral issues to ethicality, and technical issues to means of adjusting learning-teaching resources in collaboration. Issues related to status-quo addressed gaps in interaction backed-up by academic status to which teachers' reactions were looked into.

Data presentation and reflection ran as under:

No.	Focal Issues	Most		Average		Least	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
4.5.1	Integrity on solving academic problems	8	40%	5	25%	7	35 %
4.5.2	Integrity in solving social interaction problems	-	-	3	15%	17	85%
4.5.3	Integrity in solving disciplinary problems	7	35%	3	15%	10	50%
4.5.4	Integrity in solving technical problems	9	45%	4	20%	7	35%
4.5.5	Integrity in solving status-quo barriers.	-	-	-	-	20	100%

Table 4.5. Experiential Integrity on problem-solving

From the above table (Table 5), it could be inferred that, the staff integrity in solving social problems or interactive problems was indicated to have been the least worked on, and the least of all the least was witnessed in terms of solving status-quo barriers (barriers pertaining to academic ranks). The respondent teachers' experiences denoted (45%) the most partaking in terms of solving technical problems (such as supporting one another on using instructional technology or other complementary gadgets) and on solving academic problems (40%) which related to teachers' instructional roles in terms of subject-matter handling. But, even the so asserted integrity in the academic aspect was not explicated in terms of the teachers' subject-mastery, pedagogical competencies and psychological cope up since that was out of the catchment of this research.

Discussion of Major Findings

This research , reference to experiential integrity implied the wholeness of parts, the expectation being that, all teaching staff were not only birds of a feather but also threads of the same yarn, though not products of the same fabric. In this research, focus was made on integrity in terms of interaction, exchange and collaboration among the teaching staff in terms of sharing and building experiences in planning, implementing, assessing, communicating experiences and problem-solving. In this part, reflections gained from the data treated in the research were presented and discussed.

5.1 Regarding Integrity in Planning

For the purpose of clarity, reference on planning was made to academic core points, provided that, other alterations would become confounding. Accordingly, experiential explications were made on teachers' collaborations in terms of intents, tasks, resources and means of teaching and learning, assessment modes, and mechanisms of providing feedback for clients. In that, intents and tasks held the highest attention whereas feedback mechanism, resources and means held the least. The implication, by and large, was that though the staff had some bright starts with shared vision on intents and tasks, they did not keep tracking on integral path to the end.

5.2 Regarding Integrity in Implementation

Experiential explications regarding implementation were made on team teaching, resource sharing, programmed discussion, comprehensive lesson handling (diversification), and innovative exchanges. The teachers' responses denoted the most experienced ties in terms of resource sharing and discussion and the least in team teaching and innovative interchanges. Comprehensive lesson handling was not tried at all. So, teachers' experiential exchange and integrity were highly won by individualistic accomplishments except temporary physical contacts witnessed in resource-sharing and discussion.

5.3 Experiential Integrity on Assessment Techniques

Regarding interchanges on assessment, the extent to which the concerned teaching staff produced valid tools by exchanging experiences, made comprehensive use of the assessment tools and techniques, had cooperative roles in revisiting, redeveloping and improving assessment tools and techniques was looked into throughout. In that, producing assessment tools held the most part whereas revisiting, improving and redeveloping of assessment tools and techniques were those worked on to the least status consecutively.

5.4 Experiential Integrity on Social Interchange

Regarding social exchanges, reference was made to experiences pertaining to academic tours and internships, research seminars and discussion, enrichment training (inter-/intra-national), presenting model works at symposia, and practical field work and site visits in and out. The teachers' experiences indicated most practices in terms of field work visits, especially in the technology areas, whereas least practices were explicated in terms of presenting model works, research, and academic touring and internship.

5.5 Experiential Integrity on Problem-Solving

Issues under this sub-part were related to academic, social, disciplinary, technical and status-quo barriers in teaching and learning. while the concerned teachers witnessed to have had the most interaction and self-reliance in terms of academic, disciplinary and technical aspects, they indicated having the least participation in breaking problems of social interaction and of status-quo barriers.

Summary, Conclusion and Implication

6.1 Summary

The research underway was held to look into the status of experiential integrity in higher education, reference being to exchanges in planning, implementation, assessment, social involvement, and problem-solving. In that, improvement of assessment modes, planning and execution of feedback loops on two-way bases, presenting model works, researches and holding academic tours, and status-quo barriers and related roadblocks to social interaction still project out as the "raw" materials demanding untiring commitment and deep processing.

6.2 Conclusion

In this research, it was found out that, experiential integrity in higher education, as explicated from teachers' experiences in Adama Science and Technology University, had bright features in terms of having common goals, technical provisions, resource-sharing, producing and using similar assessment modes, holding field works and visits, and attempts made to alleviate academic and disciplinary problems.

6.3 Implications for Transformative Action in Higher Education

Though it becomes ecologically and individually sound to dedicate this research to Adama Science and Technology University, more viably to the target groups, the researcher believes that, some, if not all, of the above issues may have relatedness to practices and experiences among the teaching staff of the other universities. So, findings from this research could be indicative of the fact that, how higher educational institute handles, organizes, values and utilizes human experiences, and promotes integrity with diversity has a lot to do with transformative education now and in the prospect (Feinstein, 2008; Dede, 2007). Further research could also be held on the factors which hinder good communication among the staff in higher education for pragmatic effects to come in the transformative realms of education.

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