



PERSPECTIVES AND REALITIES OF EDUCATION: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

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How something appears is always a matter of perspective. So, what are the perspectives of education, in different countries, in the world? Further, what is this education that we refer to? What are citizen's perspectives of education? What is the validity of these perspectives? Who decides on the validity of these perspectives? What criteria are used to determine the validity of the perspectives of education? Whose perspective of education is being presented in the curriculum? In what context is or was this perspective of education developed/raised/shared?

The questions raised are probably conjuring up perspectives in your head with regard to education. So, what perspective/s do you have of education in your country, in the world? How did you come to have this/these perspective/s?

In unpacking the meaning of perspective, using Thesaurus, the terms given are all nouns, no verbs. The terms are opinion, views, perception, etc. Developing a perspective is certainly a staid process, as it is active and extends over a period of time (history). Moreover, it engages cognitive processes of thinking, certainly not in a vacuum, and in relation to particular settings/contexts, informed by emotions and actions (Uniyal, 2024). Perspective shapes everything we see and understand. In education, perspective may have a double meaning in that individuals may have a perspective, and it is also a lens that determines what we value, what we teach, how we teach, who succeeds, and what learning is for (Gür & Eser, 2023). The following discussion focuses on the former aspect of perspective.

Perspectives of Education, in a particular country may be presented by citizens. How may these perspectives be understood, challenged, accepted, extended, or refuted? An approach is to gather different perspectives, which involves actively seeking out, asking questions, and considering various viewpoints. Does this provide a balanced and critical understanding of the issues only, or also evidence and validity to the perspectives shared? Ultimately, a conclusion may be made as to the state of education in that country. As a researcher in education, seeking perspectives of education and asking early career teachers to share this is critical, as they are just starting out with three to 10 years in the field, hopefully many more beyond. Aspects of validity are intertwined with the responses that are shared, as there are common statements about education.

Perspectives of Education by teachers indicate the overall condition and status of the system in a country. Statements from teacher Noni, "significant and persistent challenges affect the quality and equity of teaching and learning across the country and disparities in educational conditions." Teacher Caitlin shared, "challenges include the unequal distribution of resources, with many schools also experiencing overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructure and limited access to textbooks, technology as well as basic facilities". Teacher Nobuhle shared, "deep inequalities shape how learners experience schooling on a daily basis. While some schools benefit from stable infrastructure and access to resources, many learners are taught in overcrowded classrooms with limited materials and uneven support." The overall status of inequality in resources (Ngobeni et al., 2023) is an unacceptable condition for any country and certainly more so for the teachers and learners, and ultimately how teaching and learning occur (Muyambi et al., 2024). Statements shared, "Teachers must work within the constraints of the

environments in which they teach ... influencing the extent to which meaningful teaching and learning can take place”. (Teacher Noni); “the curriculum is not always implemented effectively, due to time constraints, insufficient training, and possibly a lack of support within schools” (Teacher Caitlin); “Teachers are expected to implement curriculum reforms and inclusive practices while navigating large workloads, language barriers, and gaps in ongoing professional development” (Teacher Nobuhle). In any education system, the ‘holy trinity’, essential tripartite are the teachers, learners, and the context. The challenges of the context and teachers is not removed from what the learners experience, hence the following statements, “Large class sizes can make it difficult to support individual learner needs and to facilitate effective engagement during lessons...influence how learners engage with curriculum content”. (Teacher Noni).

Teacher Caitlin shared that “learner challenges also lead to poor academic results and high dropout rates as well. In addition, the relatively low minimum pass requirement of 30 percent raises concerns about the academic expectations and whether or not learners are being adequately prepared for further education and life beyond school”. Teacher Nobuhle shared “conditions, compounded by learning disruptions in recent years, have had a visible impact on learner engagement, literacy, and numeracy” (Mbanjwa, 2026).

Perspectives with statements from the teachers in the field provide the evidence for the conditions and status of education – the realities. In life, perspectives are valued, but they in themselves are not sufficient for informed decisions and actions. Delving deeper, unpacking and uncovering the status is good. And, should we stop there? As researchers and teachers – how do we see ourselves as ‘change agents’? Now that we have perspectives and evidence for these, questions of why to act are fruitless. In fact, the question to ask is: How should we act? Note the collective in the use of the word we.

Together with Communities, in enhancing Education.

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