

Using Lesego Rampokoleng's Oeuvre to Address Self-Awareness and Talent Discovery among South African Unemployed Youth: A Case Study in Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

The problem this study examined was lack of interest among African youth in pursuing artistry disciplines due to minimal promotion of the discipline, its minimal role in self- and talent discovery initiatives. The artistry works of the South African artists such as Lesego Rampolokeng, who promotes self-awareness and Black consciousness are not promoted in the South African school curriculum and communities, and media is also silent about them. The primary objective of the study was to examine the views of student teachers and lectures on the works of Lesego Rampolokeng, and its contribution towards youth's self-awareness and talent discovery; and how African artistry can be used to promote youth that is self-propelled and self-actualised in their career life. The key findings of the study indicate that black consciousness lessons of Rampolokeng evoke student teachers' self-awareness and become self-propelled towards self-actualised career life. Furthermore, Rampolokeng is regarded as a role model whose works can be used to promote self- and talent discovery among South African youth. This study therefore, recommends that performing arts should be promoted in African communities and become a compulsory subject in the basic education. The study further proposes an increased exposure of African Performing Arts works in the South African school curriculum; and school Arts competition, as well as through increased number of Arts festival in South African communities.

Keywords: African Oeuvre, Black consciousness, Indigenous knowledge, Lesego Rampokoleng, Role modelling, Talent discovery

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1. Introduction

"The crisis of African youth is emblematic of the world's failure to address the multiple challenges of poverty in Africa. Human development, can contribute to changing attitudes towards African youth, and to building their capacity to create long-term holistic solutions to poverty across the continent. There is extensive evidence of the way young people's ingenuity, energy and resilience can be harnessed to generate real and positive change" (Lavender, 2018).

From this article, we are convinced that Lavender is an activist, who would like to make the world aware and to reflect on the poverty among the African youth, and blames the United Nations for failing to mitigate the poverty in Africa. South Africa is not an exceptional; as it has of 63% youth unemployment rate among youth for ages 15–24 (Statistics South Africa, 2021). The worrisome issue is that current unemployment rate stands at 34, 4% in the second quarter of 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Furthermore, Lavender (2018) has put the issue of youth unemployment, poverty and human development and emancipation in perspective; and how the energy that unemployed youth can be channelled. Lavender aligns

his contribution to critical and human capacity theories that stresses the principles of human capacitation and emancipation; and reflection in advancing social transformation and social justice.

In the United State, the federal law and state policies asserts that the Artistry and Arts are 'core subjects' that should be taught in all subjects because it can assist youth to develop artistry as a career (Arts Education Partnership, 2004). The involvement in the field can assist in developing self-awareness and talent discovery which in turn will address youth unemployment.

The problem this study examined was lack of interest among African youth in following artistry disciplines due to minimal promotion of the discipline, and this has negatively influenced its role in self-awareness and talent discovery initiatives (Nderu-Barrington, 2008). African school-going children and youth are discouraged to pursue Arts disciplines due to the fact that there is a minimal exposure to role models of African Artist such as Lesego Rampolokeng- a renowned African Artist and other prominent African artists. Artistry in South African Schools is not used to assist youth to emulate works of excellence such as Lesego Rampolokeng in order to address talent-discovery and self-awareness (Steward, 2018). Instead it is used for social cohesion and promoting culture.

The artistry works of the South African artists such as Lesego Rampolokeng, who promotes self-awareness and Black consciousness is not documented in the South African school curriculum and communities, although he has been in the industry before the dawn of democracy in 1994. Another important platform that should be promoting African arts is media, nonetheless, it is also silent about them. On the other hand, African communities are not aware, and therefore challenged by Lesego Rampolokeng oeuvres and contribution of other African Artists; the Department of Arts and Culture is not doing enough in promoting African Artistry. The valuable lessons that needs to be cascaded to African school-going children and youth, are not addressed. A lack of preservation and exposure of African Artists Oeuvre's in Arts and Culture has robbed African school going-children and youth of their interests in pursuing art as a career. Prevalence of indigenous knowledge of African Arts and role modelling are required in promoting self-awareness and talent discovery in schools and communities.

The current study will contribute to the body of knowledge on how arts and Lesego Rampolokeng's Oeuvre and other African Artistry in particular, can be used to address self-awareness and talent discovery among South African unemployed youth. This paper is significance in sensitizing African youth and students about the contribution of the artistry on students' self-discovery; and unveiling of talents among Africans school-going children and youth. Prevalence of indigenous knowledge that is a basis for the African Arts and role modelling is required in promoting self-awareness and talent discovery. Furthermore, this study offers alternative ways on how teacher education can contribute in promoting arts in schools and communities. In lieu of the above, the primary objective of this paper was to examine the views of student teachers and lectures on the works of Lesego Rampolokeng, and its contribution towards youth's self-awareness and talent discovery; and how African artistry can be used to promote youth that is self-propelled and self-actualised in their career life.

The study was driven by two research questions, namely:

- *Do you think Lesego Rampolokeng and other African Artists can be used as African icons to promote self-awareness and talent discovery among the African school-going children and youth? Motivate.*

- *How can Lesego Rampolokeng and other African artists promote self-awareness and self-propelled youth towards self-actualised career life?*
- *What are ways in which African Artistry can be promoted in communities and education as a self-awareness and talent discovery among school-going children and youth?*

2. Literature Review

2.1. Inflexible and non-responsive Arts and Culture's Curriculum

Less infiltration of local artist in South African Arts and Culture's curriculum, might be caused by the fact that education is a contested field. Secondly, that teachers and lecturers have not succeeded in challenging learners and students by acclaimed local, regional and internationally talented artists and poets such as Lesego Rampolokeng. Thirdly, learners and students have not yet opened themselves up to such local works of excellence. In other words there is a need for the dual interaction between the learners and teachers; student and lecturers as "agents of change" as informed by the black consciousness theories. Smith (2016) has put the decolonization of curriculum and African Philosophy status in perspective when explaining that:

"The inclusion of African epistemology into the curriculum and using African philosophy to inform curriculum is an attempt at correcting imbalances and unequal power relations...Africanisation and indigenous knowledge systems might not adequately address the desired change in curriculum". (Smith, 2016: 85-86).

Since the dawn of democratic South Africa in 1994, not enough meaningful change has taken place in the South African curriculum for Arts and Culture in basic and higher education. The Education system was not successful in using African philosophy and indigenous knowledge in the decolonization of school curriculum. The evolution of African Arts and Culture foundations is shaky and fable, because of the equal status of Africans with indigenous ethnic identity; without African intellectual identity. The Department of Basic Education was not successful in designing Arts and Culture's curriculum that is flexible and responsive to needs of beneficiaries, which are South African school-going children and youth. There is a need for the curriculum to include the past and the current African Artists in promoting self-awareness and talent-discovery. Furthermore, the promotion of African Artists can be used as the strategy to mitigate sky-rocketing youth unemployment in South Africa.

2.2. Decolonizing of the school Arts and Culture curriculum

Decolonisation of South African curriculum; and infusion of African pedagogy requires a deep examinations and reflections of the current colonised curriculum. A Conceptual framework is needed that should pay special focus on the following factors, namely,

- how to make the current curriculum flexible and responsive;
- quest for relevance;
- global competitiveness;
- its implication for the world of work; and
- promotion on citizenship and entrepreneurship

In support, Ngugi wa Thiongo's suggestion for curriculum decolonization factored in the principle of 'the quest for relevance' as a "denunciation" of inherited colonial curricula and instead of deciding on curriculum content and materials with relevance to its context (Smith,

2016: 11). A curriculum that lacks quest for relevance and comprehensiveness, exposes the curriculum to the risk of denouncement. As the strategy to reverse denouncement, there is a need for Arts and Culture programme designers to include an artist such as Lesego Rampokoleng and other current African artists. The works of the renowned African artist such as Lesego Rampolokeng are not formally endorsed in the curriculum for school going children and youth to emulate. Instead the current curriculum focuses on American, Eastern and Western heroes and heroines; with few Africans and South Africans in particular.

A democratic country, such as South Africa with the past history of colonialism, imperialism and apartheid; should refocus and re-imagine its Arts and Culture. Arts and Culture can be used for recollection, preservative and advancement of indigenous knowledge, and for rebuilding less contaminated African identity that was lost over the decades and centuries. The enforcement of Western, Eastern and American identities upon the Africans by the colonisers was associated with the achievement of their targets and objectives on their African invasion.

2.3. Lack of educational provisions degrades education of the South African black children

On the other hand, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) Report, reflects on multiple challenges faced by education fraternity, such as a lack of adequate school infrastructure and school resources and understaffing (Thaba-Nkadimene, 2020) are prevalent among public schools. Phakathi (2019, par1) has put it in perspectives when responding to the Department of Basic Education Report on Infrastructure that “substandard infrastructure and lack of basic services continue to be barriers to quality education”. Phakathi (2019, Par4) further reports that the Court ruling in 2018 in favour of the lobby group who required Court to order the DBE Minister, “Angie Motshekga to fix the loopholes in the legislation regarding the minimum standards for school infrastructure”. This is the clear indication that education is in crisis, and that the DBE is doing little to address the challenges that were caused and existed during apartheid era. In the same report a lack of competent and committed teachers was identified. This report is in line with Spaull (2013) who also found that teachers lack the required content and pedagogical knowledge.

2.4. Lesego Rampolokeng’s Black Consciousness propaganda

Black Consciousness Theory emanates from the Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970 after the banning of “major anti-apartheid organizations in South Africa such as the African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress” (Hatfield, 2017: Par1). Black consciousness theory as explained by the black activist, Steve Biko, stressed the need for black South African to liberate themselves psychologically and become self-reliant in order to fundamentally change South Africa. It is an attitude of the mind and a way of life which integrates both “thinking and feelings”.

Black consciousness is aimed at uniting and strengthening black people to overcome feelings of inferiority, it encouraged feeling of pride among those who were discriminated on the grounds of race, and therefore unite all the oppressed people (Price, 1992:12). It is holistic in approach, because it integrates body soul and spirit.

The Black Consciousness Movement involves a critical reflection or looking back into the history as a key component to re-imagining the possibilities that exist for the present and the future (Naidoo, 2015 p 113). In the context of the study, students will be challenged to reflect on the heroes and heroines that contributed into the change from the apartheid system to a

democracy. It will also assist in creating black consciousness and a positive self-esteem and black consciousness and academic self-efficacy (Okech & Harrington, 2010).

Learning about the works of Lesego Rampolokeng is significant enough to be called a “paradigm shift” for young aspiring talented artists. Black consciousness theory argues that educators as classroom practitioners encounter a myriad of challenges in the classroom which revolves around a clash between the explicit aims of the state with the implicit mental models that they possess about teaching and learning (Njozela, 1997).

3. Research design

Interepretivist paradigm was used to illuminate youth’ views on the lessons from Lesego Rampolokeng artistic works. Interpretivism paradigm that informed the use of qualitative case study (Thahn and Thahn, 20150). Purposive sampling was used to select the ten pre-service-teachers to serve as the research participants who were doing Bachelor of Education, Level 3 in one University in South Africa. Furthermore, six lecturers who were purposively selected were interviewed on one-to-one basis, with the aim to examine their views on the works of Lesego Rampolokeng and other African artists, and their contribution towards students’ self-awareness and self- and talent discovery. Purposive sampling was used in order to protect the research participants’ identity, the participants were given pseudonyms, lecturing staff (LS1 up to LS6 and pre-service teachers PST1 up to PST10).

4. Results and Discussions

- *Do you think Lesego Rampolokeng and other African Artists can be used as African icons to promote self-awareness and talent discovery among the African school-going children and youth? Motivate.*
- *How can Lesego Rampolokeng and other African artists promote self-awareness and self-propelled youth towards self-actualised career life?*
- *What are ways in which African Artistry can be promoted in communities and education as a self-awareness and talent discovery among school-going children and youth?*
- PST 1: “People who are successful artists are role models to those who inspire to become the future artist.” PTS 9: “Rampolokeng grew up in the township and children can identify themselves with him”

4.1. Lesego Rampolokeng and other artists’ contribution in *promoting self-awareness, self-and talent discovery among the African school going children and youth*

The first research finding shows that Lesego Rampolokeng and other African artists have a huge contribution in *promoting self-awareness and talent discovery among the African school going children and youth*. This finding emanates from the research question, ‘Do you think Lesego Rampolokeng and other African Artists can be used as an African icons to promote self-awareness and talent discovery among the African school-going children and youth? Motivate’. Two sub-findings, emerged from this question research question, namely:

- Lesego Rampolokeng and other artists are an inspiration to youth; and that they can be used for self-awareness and talent discovery; and;

- Their works are the source of self-awareness and have become a bedrock for understanding the foundations and directions of the Black Consciousness and spell-out the role of all Africans in the Black Consciousness Movement and its activities.

The findings identify Lesego Rampolokeng and other artists as inspiration to the school-going children and youth; and that they can be used for self-awareness and talent discovery.

Lecturing staff explains that:

Lecturing staff, LS1, LS2, LS3 and 6 respectively, explained that:

'They look like us, they see things from our viewpoint, they come from our background and seeing them give us hope.

The fact that they grew up in the township and villages; they are available to be seen living around and with us, they are seen performing in schools, communities, festivals and media, they become crucial inspirations for children and youth.

People who are successful artists are role models to artists such as Lesego Rampolokeng, because they inspire them to become the future artist.'

It inspires youth and makes them work hard towards their future career. Youth exposure to arts works, starts to realize the possibilities of unleashing and unveiling their inner potentials and talents. This helps them in discovering and shaping their talents in arts and other disciplines.

In support, the pre-service teachers, ST1, ST3 and ST7 highlight that:

'Lesego can be an inspiration to South African youth in learning about their own roots.

Lesego has proven Africans and Black people in particular, that pursuing one's dreams is important. He entered into the arts career that many are scared of failure, but through perseverance he succeeded.

Rampolokeng and other African artists' successes are inspiration to the African youth and all Africans. Their works can be a driving force among students and learners in discovering their own talents.

Lecturing staff and pre-service teachers are in agreement that Lesego Rampolokeng and other artists can have great contribution in promoting self-awareness and talent discovery among the African school going children and youth. The findings indicates that apart from being local; are inspiration to children, youth and general public.

The second sub-finding is that Lesego Rampolokeng and other African artists' works are the source of self-awareness and have become a bedrock for understanding the foundations and directions of the Black Consciousness and spell-out the role of all Africans in the Black Consciousness Movement and its activities. The research participants outlined different ways in which the works of Lesego Rampolokeng and other Africans are promoting self-awareness and black consciousness. Lecturing staff (LS6; and LS5) have put in perspective when they highlight that:

Lesego Rampolokeng and other African artists' works promote self-awareness and black consciousness. I think they can be used in schools and communities to highlight the circumstances and levels of the oppression, and suggest ways to address the situation the Africans found themselves as a result of colonisation.

Arts be integrated in the school curriculum. Education Ministry should ensure that Designed Arts Curriculum is implemented without further delay; Arts Centres should be made available and active in rural and urban communities.

Apart from inspiration derived from local African artists, that promotes self and talent discovery, self-awareness and black consciousness were also found to be promoted by the works of these artists.

4.2. Suggestions on how African Artistry can be promoted in South African education sector and communities

The research finding indicates suggestions on how Lesego Rampolokeng and other African artists can promote self-awareness and self-propelled youth towards self-actualised career life. This finding is derived from the research question, 'how can Lesego Rampolokeng and other African artists promote self-awareness and self-propelled youth towards self-actualised career life?' Lecturing staff (TS3 and TS8) stresses that:

Exposure to African Artistry has potential to influence African youth in the discovery of their self-and talent discovery. Furthermore, this exposure improves on youth's self-esteem and start to realise that they do not need to expect work from others, but they can make life out of their talents and other potentials they have.

Arts and Culture subject requires attention from the Ministry of Education and teacher education centres, because this subject is not adequately taught in schools. The placement of Arts and Culture teachers should be done with caution, where only teachers who are not qualified to teach such subjects are placed. There are few teacher education programmes in South Africa that has Arts and Culture stream. Many teachers who teach this subject, are not qualified to teach it.

On the other hand, pre-service teachers (PT3, PT 5, PT 6 and PT 8) have stressed that:

Schools needs road show and talent discovery days where local talents are invited.

Speeches and drama need to be organised in schools, to help unleash the talent of the school-going and youths in primary and secondary schools.

Arts be integrated in the curriculum of all school subjects.

Arts Centers and libraries should promote African Artistry, and be made available and active in rural and urban communities.

The research findings indicate a need for promotion of African Artistry in the education sector and communities in South Africa. This finding is derived from the research question, 'how can the education sector and communities promote African Artistry?'

PST4 stresses that:

"Arts be integrated in the school curriculum. Education Ministry should ensure that Designed Arts Curriculum is implemented without delay."

The above response supports literature which argues for quest for relevance and curriculum that is relevant and responsive. Such a curriculum will promote self-awareness and talent – discovery. This will indirectly affect and support black consciousness. Youth and learners will be interested to pursue artistry careers when they are presented with the works of icons such as Lesego Rampolokeng.

5. Conclusion

The solutions to the multiple challenges of poverty in South Africa requires a myriad of solutions in the education system. The arts education curriculum and artistry can go a long way towards encouraging youth to emulate the works of role models such as Lesego Ramolokeng. Perceptions of youth can be predicted to be an important element for decision – makers, the Youth International Study (Arts Education partnership, 2004) supports the view that Artistry Education should be prioritised among youth because it contribute to learner resilience, cognitive development and self- awareness.

The study confirms that Lesego Rampolokeng artistry has a positive influence on African youth since he is perceived as their role model and he will also assist them to discover their talents by being exposed to his oeuvres.

Lastly, Lesego Rampolokeng is an inspiration and role model to African youth and his artistry has influence on youth's talent discovery and self – awareness.

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