Constructivist-based blended learning environments in higher education: student and teacher variables in the Tanzanian context

Public defense to obtain the degree of DOCTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES of

Mr. Haruni Julius Machumu

which will take place on

Date: 20 September 2018, at 2:00-4:00 pm
Room:lokaal E.0.12
Brussels Humanities, Sciences & Engineering Campus (Etterbeek)

Jury:
INTERNAL:
Prof. dr. Dominique Verte (VUB, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences)
Prof. dr. Jo Tondeur (Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences)
Prof. dr. Koen DePryck (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences)

EXTERNAL:
Prof. dr. Holvoet Nathalie (University of Antwerp, Institute of Development Policy (IOB)
Prof. dr. Koenraad Stroeken (Ghent University, Faculty of Arts and Philosophy)

Promotors:
Prof. dr. Chang Zhu (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences)

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Summary

This PhD research aims to investigate students’ conceptions of constructivist learning, learning approaches, motivational factors, engagement strategies, and teachers’ beliefs, perceived roles, constructivist teaching practices and constructivist engagement practices in constructivist-based blended learning environments (CBLEs) in Tanzanian higher education institutions. The main research question is: what are the student and teacher variables influencing their constructivist conceptions, learning approaches, engagement activities, strategies and practices in CBLEs in the context of Tanzanian higher education institutions. The dissertation capitalises on the constructivist theory of knowledge and engagement learning theory which are bases of five sub-studies conducted to address the main research question. Study one examines students’ conceptions of learning approaches and their engagement in blended learning environments. Study two investigates the relationship between students’ conceptions of constructivist learning and their engagement activities in CBLEs. The third study investigates the relationship between students’ motivational factors to learn and their constructivist-based engagement in BLE courses. The fourth research examines the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and constructivist teaching practices in CBLE courses. Moreover, the final study investigates the relationship between teachers perceived roles and their constructivist engagement practices in CBLE courses. The PhD research used mixed-methods research design. The findings indicate that well-designed and supported CBLEs motivate students’ engagement in different learning activities. While the findings on teachers’ beliefs appear to influence their constructivist teaching practices, the findings further indicate that in CBLEs, supporting strategy is employed when teachers’ perceived roles found to be a ‘supporter’, ‘designer’ and ‘leader’. The PhD research results suggest that student and teacher variables are significant aspects regarding their engagement in teaching and learning activities, strategies and practices in CBLEs. The dissertation provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the knowledge base about instrumental variables employed in CBLEs in the Tanzanian context.

Curriculum Vitae

Haruni Julius Machumu (1979, Tarime, United Republic of Tanzania) joined Mzumbe University as Tutorial Assistant after his bachelor’s degree (Education in Arts) at the University of Dar Es Salaam. After a master dissertation at the University of Dodoma was promoted to the rank of Assistant Lecturer in 2011. In 2014 he started a VRLIOUS-IUC funded PhD project at the VUB in the department of educational sciences to work on ‘constructivist-based blended learning environments in Tanzanian higher education’, focusing on student and teacher multiple variables. He was also involved in two collaborative research projects. The first was in the area of mobile learning research focusing on its deployment in four Tanzanian higher learning institutions. The second was in the area of the community of inquiry in blended learning. He is (joint) first author of 7 papers and 2 co-authored papers in international peer-reviewed journals of which 7 (published), 2 (in press). He co-authored and contributed 7 papers in international conferences of which 5 (appeared in proceedings) and 2 (conference contributions). He has co-authored one book chapter (in production).