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## Beyond the Competence Agenda and the Cause for Relevance in Education

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**Abstract:** In its inherent nature, education is envisaged to equip the learner with ideas to enhance creativity and upscale the skills to decipher and integrate fully to the intelligible and contingent world. The contemporary world has diverted attention towards aligning education to serve the competence agenda in form of economic commodity which can be bought or sold. Thus, the praxis of education is abstracted from the cause for relevance as defined by acquiring, inferring, and epitomizing in form of transfer to industry. It follows necessarily that education for its own sake is defied by commodification and commercialization. It is at this point that the concept of the cause for relevance in education is abrogated in education. This explains why this treatise draws attention to the question about how relevant is the cause of relevance in education against competence agenda? It is notable that competence agenda confuses education with training. Hence, the relevance cause in education can facilitate construal, customize, replicate or simulate education into precision, and attune the potentiality of the learner to new possibilities.

**Keywords:** Beyond, Competence Agenda, Education, Relevance Cause

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## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary society, the concept of 'competence agenda' has proliferated across the educational landscape with an aim of creating a link between the subject matter of education (Tan, 2019, p.20). Competence agenda is opposed to the potential of pragmatic relevance in education. It is extensively rigorous that a key focus of international debates on education has amplified its attention on competence agenda in terms of teaching and learning, curricula and assessment. This means that an attempt to translate the idea of competence agenda is perceived as a central objective of education, whereby the essence is assumed to insert and augment substance to the person of the learner and to intensify economic solidity (Brauer, 2021, p.1376). It is assumed that a competent learner in a specified domain has the proficiency of utilizing the subject of knowledge and skills of that domain to accomplish certain tasks and ends beyond the educational training. Therefore, according to the exponents of competence agenda, acquired expertise tends to contribute positively as per the inherent necessity. This opinion surmises that the idea of competence agenda is closely related to the notion of proficiency and mastery of content.

In the contrary, it is equally challenging to initiate debates and make reasonable conclusions about competence agenda because it is a concept that is subjectively interpreted (Bim-Bada, & Egorova, 2016, p.3389). There is certainty that competence agenda comprises of diverse meanings in terms of definitions, models and approaches within teaching, learning and assessment. Moreover, the term 'competence agenda' is often used interchangeably with other terms such as 'skill', 'outcomes', and 'behaviour', which dilutes its distinctiveness. On an equal measure, competence agenda can easily be viewed as a concept that is relevant only for vocational educational and training, even though this is not the case. This means that its applicability to education in general can often be overlooked. Hence, the implication is that the diversity of views

emanates from inadequate understanding of what competence means in contradistinction to the concept of relevance (Mwinzi, 2022b, p.345). It is from this backdrop that this treatise underscores that drawing out the significance of relevance from an overall perspective is necessary before making specific conclusions and resolutions about competence agenda in education theory, policy and practice (Shaked, 2019, p.19). An absence of a decisive understanding of overall competence may ensue towards the risk of generating education theories, policies and practices that are only an expression of superficial relativity to competence, ultimately limiting educational value in terms of relevance which means meaningfulness, responsiveness, and creativeness.

### Objectives

To designate the cause of competence agenda in education

To explicate the centrality of relevance in education

To substantiate the irrelevance of competence agenda in education

To propose an alternative trajectory of integrating relevance in education

### What is 'Competence Agenda' in Education?

The concept of 'competence' comprises of the expertise of adapting and contextually relating pertinent set of attributes such as knowledge, proficiencies, and psychosocial factors (e.g. beliefs, attitudes, values and motivations) that contribute towards consistently performing successfully within a specified domain (Ploum, Blok, Lans, & Omta, 2018, p.115). It is argued that the value of competence agenda in knowledge is to facilitate each learner with equal opportunity to master the necessary skills and become effective experts according to industrial expectations! Since there are diverse industries, it is obvious that competence is a multifaceted concept that combines several essential elements and as such extends beyond traditional education. The idea of 'competence agenda' in education integrates observable and measurable knowledge, skills,

abilities and personal attributes that are necessary for effective performance of an intelligible real-world task or activity (Glaesser, 2019, p. 82). It is notable that competence agenda draws attention to active and creative forms of teaching and learning under the parasol of instructional objectives. This treatise affirms that not everything in education is relevant but an attempt to make tenuous connections between the two realities requires deliberate strategies. Progressively, the constructs that fortify the competence agenda in education include adaptability, creativity, curiosity and objectivity. In an appellation of realizing the competence agenda, certain situations, teaching 'irrelevant' content occurs in preparation of perceived realization of adaptability, creativity, curiosity and objectivity which is devoid of relevance, coherence, and excellence (Mwinzi, 2022d, p.103).

The necessity of coalescing competence agenda is to initiate symmetrical resolve of the contiguous incompatibilities that tend to daunt what is taught in education against existential competing demands. According to competence agenda, an individual learner is facilitated by a symmetrical resolve to think in an integrated cause that will circumvent spontaneous conclusions and identify the cognate (interconnections) attributes (Tan, 2019, p.22). In other words, in a intelligible and contingent world of interdependency and conflict, the competence agenda is perceived as an ideal trajectory to prepare the individual learner for the future, to learn to think and act in an integrated manner, while considering the consanguinity of attributes, and the proximity reflected within conflicting or discordant notions, as well as being familiar with coherent positions i.e. the capability to become systems thinkers. Hence, the capacity to move towards an eco-systemic change under the influence of competence agenda requires a complexity of transformative competencies that are convolutedly analogous (Giamellaro, 2017, p.4). These are developed in nature and thus learnable so that the aim of competence agenda emerges to be

transformative in terms of responding to the questions of novelty, change, diversity and ambiguity in education. In an equal measure, it is obvious that creativity, deciphering, and disentangling (parsing inferring construing) that require the ability to cogitate the potential corollaries, estimate risk and incentive, and accept accountability. In this case, an aspect of culpability synchronizes with intellectual maturity and adaptability.

Therefore, the propensity to cultivate the concept of competence agenda is sequentially learned through the process of reflection, anticipation and action. It follows necessarily that reflective trait is an affiliate of critical ambit or purview drawing from what is known or assumed to be, and looking at a situation from diverse perspectives. On the other hand, anticipation conscripts rational expertise defined by analytical or critical thinking, to foresee imminent possibilities, and estimate how the prospects may influence the future. Since reflection and anticipation are precursors to liable exertion, the competence agenda therefore encapsulates a complex reality whose role is to develop the inter-related proficiencies to enable the learner to engage with the intelligible world. As a new global framework, competence agenda anticipates the possibility of being actionable in terms of transformative competencies and other specific constructs (e.g. creativity, critical thinking, responsibility, resilience, collaboration) (Baloyannis, 2016, p.50).

This treatise focuses on competence agenda as endorsed in the demesne of skills at the expense of knowledge, attitudes, and values in the systems of education. The contemporary society assumes that reinforcing the competence agenda is a dynamic trajectory to facilitate an individual learner to thrive in a comprehensible world which is rapidly changing. Therefore, competence agenda is perceived to insert a transformational element into education identifying pedagogy, content, outcomes, and the learning environment where the learner has the dominant mecca (locus) in the entire teaching and learning settings. In essence, requires a shift from

teaching to learning, guided by purposeful innovative pedagogy which is participative, collective, and transdisciplinarity.

Thus, what is endorsed in competence agenda differs in its influential bands of magnitude as it may be reflected in a complexity continuum whereby, there is a changing educational landscape from knowledge and concepts to the level of having ability to go beyond learning core knowledge and concepts to using and applying (Mwinzi, 2012, p.95) i.e. be able to think critically and creatively in order to respond to complex issues. However, if the learner is expected to think critically whilst, pedagogical strategies are directed towards reading a comprehension, then instead of interrogating perspectives of authors, the learner is expected to understand a passage only, then that objective and pedagogical strategy are misaligned, hence learning is compromised. This means that the age of the learner is below the expected outcomes, the academic level of the teacher does not warrant them to train such proficiency, and the essence of training a learner below age level is unnecessary, extraneous, and irrelevant.

An alignment of prospectus, pedagogy, and assessment ratified by competence agenda assumes an understanding of the specific learning outcomes, but the deep level of cognizance of the modern skills is not there yet. What does thinking critically mean? What does the progress trajectory of critical thinking look like? What is the nature of grade level expectations that is informed by critical thinking? (Changwong, Sukkamart, & Sisan, 2018, p.39). Therefore, the possibility of negating the above answers, among many others, may cause existential stalemate or impasse towards an alignment of a system of education and the prerequisites of competence agenda. It is necessary to start from the basics and understand the envisaged proficiencies that tend to emanate from essential components, subcomponents, processes, and sub-processes involved in critical thinking and collaborative teaching and learning. Similarly, the focus of competence agenda resides on differentiating

the levels of skills. An apt example is the approach arising from the use learning progressions. As a slant, learning progressions is a pathway that describes how the learner typically acquires significant mastery of a particular learning domain, by capturing what the learner is able to do and authentically meeting the standards ratified by the tools of assessments—that is, a reflection of what the learner is expected to do in real-life situations. Conversely, the contemporary society is challenged by the growing complexity and uncertainty and as such, transfers of education is indispensable (Newell, 2005, p.276). Instead, it is obvious that the complexities of such challenges do not ratify any straightforward and linear deliberation processes, but rather, it necessitates creative and self-structured feat.

It is notable that understanding the complex world is necessary to achieve the fullness of competence agenda, including the capability to deal with uncertainties, trade-off risks, and the high velocity of global transformation. This will be the cause that the discourse on how to educate will shift from an input orientation, focusing on lists of essential educational content, to an outcome-based competence. Hence, it is possible to deduce that the competence agenda is instituted on pragmatic slants that are perceived to be functional in the material world and then attune what is learned to the facets of existential contingency in every situation – existentialism view (Glaesser, 2019, p.80). It is at this point where competence agenda allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that imbue empowerment to attest that the learner is fit-for-purpose. The object of ameliorating the learner to be fit-for-purpose is to enhance critical thinking, cognizance of complex systems, and abstracting the future scenarios.

### **What is 'Relevance' in Education?**

A philosophical purview of relevance in education is the assertion that meaningful teaching and learning reflects on the essentials founded on creating a connection between the learner, the subject matter, and the processes

of teaching and learning (Mwinzi, 2020, p.125). As such, relevance can be a motivational crutch, which may be a disservice to the learner. A pertinent question may arise as to whether there is any sufficient reason to convince the learner that whatever is taught and learned should be of immediate significance and relevance? Often is it vital to have the opportunity to learn the valuable strategies and emotional self-discipline needed to learn successfully in the absence of a motivational aid like relevance? It involves the capability of being conversant with the contingency of the learner both physical and mental in order to provide adequate learning support so as to enable the learner to become versatile (Castillo, 2013, p.124). It is equally relevant to argue that the 'what' precedes the 'how' i.e. the content preceding its application. As such, relevancy means using relatable subject content and patterns to connect the learner with the locality. Relevancy is important because it provides a realistic and grounded meaning by incorporating the real-world, local, or current in order to make the curriculum identify with the real world. Accordingly, the questions and philosophies which identify common elements in the curriculum vary teaching and learning slants are attuned to particular indigenous societies.

In this case, the significance of relevance is to facilitate the connections interlacing the subject, the learner, the community, the teaching philosophy, and the form of instructions and assessments. The essence is to ratify that pedagogy in indigenous societies is dynamic and culturally specific – rooted in specified dialectal perspectives and viewpoints. It involves identifying meaningful trajectory in an always changing world and proposing that germane contribution to educational theories, policies, and practices which reside in the so called 'ontological synchronization'—continuous attunement to the matters that are popular at hand, and the potential corollaries that may ensue in the future, including the nature of latent values and the parallel decisions that the society may prolong on education. Such coeval or synchronal influence of what is

popular and the potential corollaries may spiral on the penal and ethical obligation to the principles of actuality (Komasinski, & Ishimura, 2017, p.33). This explains why this article avers that relevance is necessarily designed to raise the awareness of proficiency prospects, and to demonstrate on how to navigate education and training pathways that lead to the visualized expertise. In philosophical reflections in education, the term 'relevance' is defined as coherence in a context if and only if it has some contextual effect in that context.

According to this paper, the issue is not so much about the nature of education, but how to acquire that education and how it can be used i.e. acquiring relevance in education according to its utility. As argued earlier, this requires more emphasis on developing a relevance paradigm and strategizing on how best education can be applied instead of focusing on mere teaching of content and emphasizing on the technical factor. This means that meaningful education extends to integrate a diversity of sources of information such that the fundamental educational issue is to colander or sieve the massive quantities of knowledge to evince only that which serves the facet of relevance (Akkerman, Bakker, & Penuel, 2021, p.416). Since education is dynamic, expanding, and constantly changing, the processes of teaching and learning should not be limited in developing the skills and utilizing the tools that facilitates industrial outcomes, but the propensity to think right in form of relevance to resolve prospective vicissitudes in order to abstract continuity is obligatory when supported with the right tools. The tools are anticipated to be relevant in order to make positive facilitation towards realization of relevance in education.

The tools that are being referred to in this particular context ought to be closely related to technological devices crafted and used to serve particular purposes or functions. A conventional view is that the concept of function has been orchestrated on durable materials that are properly shaped or structured. Thus, proficiency under the parasol of competence agenda has advanced

around the mastery of using specified tools as opposed to acquiring the capacity to be creative and innovative according to precise existence (Changwong, Sukkamart, & Sisan, 2018, p.41). However, technological headway has slackened the connectivity between function, form, and matter, and increasingly assigned greater proclivity to function. The implication is that from the context of modern science, current technology has wedged an emergent antithesis of matter, as a means of serving the functions typified on a proliferating universality of devices or technological systems. The supremacy of technology has been highly ratified in contemporary societies by accentuating the trends further, but also dovetailing ambiguous shifts in education (Mwinzi, 2022a, p.106). Therefore, since relevance in education attunes to a philosophical line of thought, where a second-order character is involved, the learner is familiarized with symbols including symbolic representation, symbolic logic, and other symbol system that may exemplify a narrative of reality as well as subsequent construal applicable to diverse circumstances.

### **POLARITY OF COMPETENCE AGENDA IN EDUCATION**

A cause of polarity is that the competence agenda does not suit subject stratum where it is difficult to prescribe specific competencies or where new skills and new knowledge need to be rapidly accommodated. Hence, it takes an objectivistic slant towards teaching and learning, but yet with marginal attention to the specifics. Hence, competence agenda necessitates abstruse multifarious, and indefinite assessment scenarios (as per individual learner), and that transcends unassertive transfer of education to fit in diverse ambit of precise proficiencies. It is obvious that competence agenda cannot serve as the blueprint for the future of education. In the contrary, competence agenda can only demonstrate mastery of a specific skill to attune to definite criteria (Ploum, Blok, Lans, & Omta, 2018, p.114). The idea of competence agenda in education may apply to

an adult learner, but not the learner who is at the grade level of education. In other words, the adult learner takes the cause of training not education parse. It is at this point that in a competence-based society, particular emphasis is placed on the utility of education for commercial purposes. As a result, education is confused with training whereby the latter is considered to introduce certain type of skills as a form of immediate practical education, hence, translating to a strong relationship between education and training. An antithesis is that alienation between education and training is an inconsistency which poses a potential culpability, even in terms of economic development.

While relevance can be a powerful tool for increasing situational foci of the learner, it is equally fundamental that relevance has a decisive role when designing instruction or a meaningful measure of whether a learning experience is effective or not. It is the view of this treatise that relevance in education does not depend on acclamation in terms of who passes or fails in assessment, which is a common scenario in competence agenda. Instead, relevance is attuned to proper documentation which is mandatory for eminence purposes. In reality, the idea of 'competence agenda' tries to align learning with the requirements of industries relatively along the line of fixed set of ensuing skills from acquired education. However, a pertinent concern is about which industry and should all the learners at all levels of education train to serve that specific industry? It is impossible to find the boundaries by following any pathway, so deep and immeasurable is its existence (Baloyannis, 2016, p.46). The implication is that competence agenda is a cause for confusion between education and training.

A supplemental bate is that designing activities and test items to realize competence agenda in terms of identified competencies and sub-competencies may deter the level of practicality (Tan, 2019, p.21). Since each individual learner tends to follow a certain trajectory, it is equally difficult to compel the teacher to develop diverse paces to cater for the person of each individual learner.

Consequently, competence agenda ignores the importance of social learning whereby the polarity of opinion only gets more pronounced when the focus shifts to the meaning of the ending, and ignores the process all together — approving the dictum that the end justifies the means instead of the view that the means justifies the end. Therefore, the cause for relevance in education which is perceived as ‘relativity to the matter at hand’ is retracted in the competence agenda.

As mentioned earlier, there is increasing emphasis from government and business entities on the expansion of competence agenda whilst, education is compelled to propagate this framework (Ploum, Blok, Lans, & Omta, 2018, p.115). In particular, skills that require manual dexterity are assertively endorsed in competence agenda. However, one feature of this trajectory is that relevance in education which is more crucial as opposed to the competence agenda is utterly omitted all together. It is almost impossible to acquire any competence that is devoid of convincing possibility of its educational relevance in terms of pragmatic demesne or the functional proportion oscillating through intellectual, conceptual, and performance purviews of education (Kaja, 2023, p.9). An example is that in the auto mechanics are now increasingly focused on diagnosis and problem-solving as the value component of vehicles becomes increasingly digital-based and components are replaced rather than repaired. It is inferred that a mechanic who focused on competence and snubbed the facet of relevance have failed and consequently become obsolete and redundant. The reason is that nature of the professionalism is equally changing, and in an equal measure, inter-personal proclivity is required especially for those who are in the front-line contact with the public. Hence, it may appear irrational to create an artificial boundary that snubs the concept of relevance in education in order to ratify the competence agenda. This justifies that relevance refers to integrating and contextualizing acquired education (Magnússon, Göransson, & Lindqvist, 2019, p.4).

An education which is defined by relevance is informed by positive motivate which recognizes prior knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. It is designed on objectivity or precision and it comprises of challenging topics, deep thinking and reflection. Further, relevance is guided by the component of focus where the aspects of the depth and quality of learning are at the fore as identified in contextualizing education. It is pertinent that relevance in education attunes to contextualization and applicability (Mwinzi, 2022e, p.298). Thus, the subject matter being learned may overlap in order to reinforce key concepts. Here, a philosophical element of coherence is upheld where there is sequential reflection using the logic of the subject content or academic disciplines in order to draw an enabling progression from basic to more complex stages and levels. Similarly, there is an element of alignment where there is congruence between what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is assessed including outcomes and actions that cannot always be measured using statistical tools e.g. reliable measurement is not always valid: the results might be reproducible, but may not necessarily be correct. Hence, an education which is guided by relevance embraces transferability whereby acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in one context can be transferred to others (Kroll, Mäkiö, & Assaad, 2016, p.158). Thus, where relevance is interleaved in education, the activities and processes are equally integrated, occur concurrently, and are contextualized in terms of sufficient quality and intensity.

#### **ASCENDANCY OF RELEVANCE IN EDUCATION**

The inimitability of relevance remains as the only one and meaningful strait that can define and mediate education. However, it is conspicuous that contemporary society which is defined by competence agenda tends to ostracize the relevance of relevance in education to remain at the periphery or ebb (Hakimi, Eynon, & Murphy, 2021, p.679). Drawing attention towards training for industry is an option that channels and abates

education within the ambit of specialties, and hence by definition tends not to be multi-disciplinary. Therefore, it is logically irrelevant to make a distinction in favor of competence agenda as opposed to the question of relevance. Such incongruity entails an oversight of the real point about the kind of education needed in the contemporary society and during the digital era. The question of relevance transcends industrial skills to adapt digital intelligence, proclivity for lifelong learning, and axiological attitudes. Thus, it is not just industrial skills but ideas, attitudes, and values as well whose potential for practicality is irrefutable.

A pertinent question is; how relevant is relevance in education with special reference to teaching and learning? An effort to make teaching and learning to become more meaningful (under the influence of upsurge motivation and attention) is increasingly difficult. Similarly, engaging the learner is a universal leverage in education. In other words, the elevation of relevance in education is frequently linked with the popular idea of personalized learning. It is visualized as a means to affiliate the universal packaging of instructional content with learning activities that are meaningful and well connected to the learner leading to self-initiated commitment (Boon, Orozco, & Sivakumar, 2022, p.16). An effort to design personalized curriculum necessitates critical and creative thinking drawing attention to the limits and desirability of relevance in teaching and learning. It is relative to accentuate that relevance threads instruction and the person of the learner so that it is directly considered to be a universally a necessary strategy which is pragmatic and imperative.

Hence, an increasingly popular proposition is to ensure that education is informed by the idea of relevance. That is, design instruction that is more engaging including constructing learning experiences that cogitates on the being, existence, and the unique realities of the learner (Mwinzi, 2022d, p.104). An education which is formulated on the concept of relevance adapts to the teaching and learning where the content is more

pertinent to the learner in terms of value, utility, purpose and meaning. A philosophical ambit of relevance in education resides in functional inclusion of critical and creative thinking in teaching and learning in order to escalate creative innovation, combat potential disruption and withstand constant change. It is the ambiance of coherent feat that adaptability and learning agility are indispensable if education is defined by relevance. An inclusion of coherent feat as reflected in critical and creative thinking in the subject matter and the process of teaching and learning justifies the necessity of creativity and innovation in education which may apply in every industry (Kaja, 2023, p.12). On the other hand, relevance in education comprises of substance or matter and form, as opposed to accidents that relate to potency, motion, and act. As such, it is differentiated from notions, opinions, or beliefs based solely on imaginative perceptions. The gist of relevance in education is embedded on abstractions and generalizations based on logical reasoning and evidence to ensure clarity, transparency, collation, generality, and communicability.

In this case, it is imperative to note that relevance does not entail engaging, but inference. Accordingly, deprived pedagogy tends to sabotage the capacity of the learner to withstand the process and activities that define teaching and learning. It follows necessarily that transferring an inferior instructional experience into the context of the learner frustrates the relevance of relevance in education. In the contrary, the quality of instructional experience is not a priority in the competence agenda since the focus of the latter is either pass or fail, not the measure of the pass or failure (Melrose, 2017, p.188). The necessity of inserting relevance in education necessarily implies that learning itself is acceptable and the contrary is a misnomer. Thus, a learner is able to assimilate the substance of the subject matter with a reasonable degree of excellence which is otherwise repulsive or abhorrent in competence agenda.

The mind of the learner is highly context and cue-dependent, and this discourse

tends to demonstrate how difficult it is for humans to transfer principles or concepts outside existential contexts and circumstances (Majerova, 2021, p.229). In essence, there is consequence that if learning is aligned too closely to a few narrow and richly constructed contexts, the learner may find it difficult to transfer the education to novel settings or successfully tease out general ideas from the limited settings. Therefore, this treatise asserts that relevance in education parallels the intellect in order to generalize the task of teaching and learning for the teacher and the learner.

Instituting of education around the perspective of the learner in the context of competence agenda is likely to hamper the efforts to apply learned concepts to non-competent issues. This explains why the necessity of promoting long-term transferable education in form of relevance requires a deliberate effort to fuse the instructional content the environmental expanse for the learner, thereby introducing encrypting variability, and contending on the necessity of retrieving ideas across a diverse backdrops, cues, and supplemental realities.

Furthermore, while relevance is necessary to increase situational attentiveness and improve the attention of the learner meaningful education will always depend on motivation and is sustained by rational growth. At most, relevance should be a perpetual to enhance intrinsic adaptation and reasonable mastering of subject content by the learner as well as developing the capability of utilizing the content when required in the future.

In education, relevance is necessarily required to increase dedication to instructional details and collating subject matter in order to escalate academic feat (Hakimi, Eynon, & Murphy, 2021, p.675). This explains why every uses all the critical faculties to convince the learner that the ideas being taught are worth thinking about deeply valuable in all academic divides. In other words, it is apt to affirm that teaching is to a large extent the art of abstract persuasion. In essence, what is being taught to learn

effectively is crucial and all learning experiences ought to focus on that decisiveness. The concept of relevance ought to be accompanied by motivational principles applicable in every instructional divide in order to generate significant learner concentration and to construct a strong sense of making the subject matter relatable.

Accordingly, the erstwhile deliberation underlines that it is not sufficient just to teach and train on competence agenda, but it is equally important to improve on the ability to know how to find, analyze, organize and apply the subject matter within a diversity of trajectories including professional or individual, to be obliged, while being flexible, and adaptable. All this is needed to enhance awareness of new ventures and build-out in a given field, and the necessity to remain conversant within the relative fields afterwards. In this case, the learner ought to access appropriate and relevant content, understand how to find it, and identify opportunities to apply and practice what is learned. In essence, meaningful education is informed by the concept of relevance and thus, should combine the content in form of subject matter, proficiencies, and decisiveness or assertiveness (Kaja, 2023, p.1). An education which ratifies relevance transcends non-expertise ideas such as better internal communication, external networking, and rewards for collaboration and participation. It is glaring that education which is informed by the concept of relevance is the cause for creativity, invention, and innovation. Hence, an education which is defined by relevance is dynamic, changing, and constantly evolving focusing on the standards it requires. It follows necessarily that relevance in education is attuned to consistency, exactness, abstraction, evidence-based generality, pragmatic substantiation, rationalism and objectivity of thought. It is from this element of relevance in education that industries have ensued.

According to competence agenda framework, the assessment of the learner is individualized and therefore marred (impaired flubbed or snafued) with

subjectivity. As a result, the arrogated standardization is compromised whilst; objectivity is snubbed as well as besieged. The competence agenda fails to distinguish education from training. It is notable that education prepares the learner to attune towards professionalism, while training prepares the trainee to conform to the standards of a specified profession. Thus, according to competence agenda, training prepares the learner with access to contextually-specific content as it is applied at work. This assertion is ambiguous because it does not designate the alleged work. In other words, it is logical that all the learners cannot engage in one type of work neither can the teacher teach all professions to outfit (ensemble) all the learners. It is therefore blatant that the competence agenda framework and its corresponding response to the competencies that underpins international large-scale evaluation and standardized transnational assessments are restrained and isolated by technical purview of proficiencies perceived as meaningful instrument at the expense of relevance and situational applicability (Ploum, Blok, Lans, & Omta, 2018, p.120).

Hitherto, it is clear that challenging the competence agenda, this treatise proposes the necessity of attuning education to a relational model of which is defined by the concept of relevance. It is from the context relevance that education is considered to be essentially communal, situated within social practices, and manifested through tacit achievement. Thus, the notion of relevance in education is advocated and predicated on the virtue of humanity and demonstrated through appropriate judgment in average or normal settings. This erstwhile dialogue, affirms that the learner who embraces the aspect of relevance in education is able to navigate through the complexity and uncertainty of the world and thus, exercise adaptability in deciphering and relating acquired education using the facet of relevance (Glaesser, 2019, p.71). Hence, the capacity to decipher and relate the relevance of education involves actual participation in the contingent world in

terms of influencing human beings, impelling events, and modifying circumstances for the better. As such, the learner who embraces relevance in education has the propensity to frame a synchronizing or modulating strategy that identifies suitable schedules. It is at this level where the teacher is not only required to recognize individuality of the learner but also acknowledge the wider set of relationships that influence meaningful education.

A concept underlying the relevance framework in education is an ensemble, interactive, and reciprocal interfaces defined by connections between different learning experiences and probable opportunities. The aspect of relevance framework in education is expected to prepare the learner to cultivate creative thinking, attain new processes, new enterprises, innovation spirals, and new models. The relevance concept of education enables the learner to contrive activities and processes, construct a concrete foundation, and formulate a learning compass which comprises of a positive impact on surroundings, influences the future, understands the intentions of others, actions and feelings, and anticipates the potential consequences and upshots (Glaesser, 2019, p.73). The aim is to enable the learner to connect the dots from domain-specifics, and consequently realize transferability across education domains including the unknown and evolving circumstances. This is where the learner is able to navigate through uncertainty, across a wide variety of contexts, a reality that cannot be replaced or get compromised by competence agenda.

The relevance framework of education qualifies the learner to actively participate in all dimensions including in time (past, present, future), in social space (domestic, public, region, nation and world) and in digital space. In a world characterized by ambiguities, an education which is informed by the concept of relevance defines an imperative for the learner to learn how to reconcile situations blemished with tensions, dilemmas and trade-offs, in order to create a balance that integrates unity in diversity and continuity in variety (Mwinzi, 2022c, p.9). As a result, the learner is

able to engage with the natural world, to appreciate its fragility, complexity, and value.

### **AN ALTERNATIVE TRAJECTORY OF INTEGRATING RELEVANCE IN EDUCATION**

In a competence-centered society, education that leads to innovation and commercial activity is now recognized as critical to vendible growth. A relative view is that there is a tendency to aver that this commercial form of education is different from relevance in education. In essence, this argument is both true and false depending on the vista of the frameworks. Although it is obvious that education is the driver of contemporary economies, it is controversial that there is perplexity between education and training (Glaesser, 2019, p.80). In principle, the relevance of education remains highly valued, nevertheless, in the ‘real’ world, all kinds of education are valued, depending on the context. Thus while beliefs about what constitutes ‘important’ education may be inconsistent, this does not mean that the nature of relevance in education is fluctuating. It is precise to intellectualize the role of relevance in the contemporary society. This treatise recognizes that it is not enough that every instruction need not be instantaneously relevant, but equally be relatable. That is, all instructions should be designed to direct the learner to assess how and where the subject matter will be functional. The teacher and the learner ought to exude passion with an aim of assisting the learner to identify with the ideas and imbue the dominant significance. This explains how the concept of relevance is relevant in education.

Accordingly, this treatise introduces the concept of polarity thinking which spirals around the ability to think and to respond more effectively where there is an upsurge of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) and rapid change (Cerya, Wahid, Maulidina, & Hildayati, 2021, p.290). Polarity thinking, also called dilemmas, tensions or paradoxes, is the existential differences between two alternatives that cannot be flouted without serious implications. This treatise draws attention to ‘competence

agenda’ and ‘relevance’ in education as significant terms that require abstraction by rational agents to explicate and propose alternative trajectory towards a meaningful approach of education. As such, polarity can also be described as a paradox, conundrum, or contradiction — is a dilemma that is ongoing, unsolvable, and contains seemingly opposing propositions. On the other hand, relevance draws attention to the process of learning unlike competence agenda whose focus is on the end-result or the upshots. It is notable that relevance leads towards the relations of significance. Understanding relevance in terms of both connection and significance is crucial to construct, identify, or evaluate the relevance depicted through vagueness and ambiguity (Cerya, Wahid, Maulidina, & Hildayati 2021, p.293). Whatever causality is, causal relations should be inferable in normal common sense settings.

In education, the term relevance typically refers to the teaching and learning confluences that are either directly applicable to the persona of individual learner or the learner’s ability to decipher the content of the subject matter to attune to numerous frameworks (subjective relevance) or that are allied to real-world issues, problems, and contexts (existential relevance). The personal ambit of relevance transpires when learning is connected to the realities including interests, aspirations, and life experiences of an individual learner.

It follows necessarily that once subjective relevance is fused into the instructional processes in order to intensify the inspiration of the learner. There is substantial engagement in what is taught, and even knowledge retention and recall. In an education framework, existential relevance enables the learner to create an incessant connection with the intelligible real-world issues, problems, and contexts outside of the learning institutions (Ren, 2018, p.127). The upshot is that existential relevance is largely projected to usher the learner into an encounter with what is practical and be attuned within suitable dispositions for didactic, professional, and public frameworks

without necessarily training for expectations of a precise industry such as Manufacturing, Mining, Construction, Transportation, Education, Arts, Insurance, Real Estate, Technology, Information, Life Sciences, Media, Retail Trade, Telecommunications, Agriculture, Automotive, Business, Engineering, Health, Financial Services, Accommodation, Food and Beverage Services, Retail, Administrative and Support Services. As with subjective relevance, advocates contend that existential relevance can improve engagement, motivation, and learning acquisition. Existential relevance may also intersect in a variety of ways with subjective relevance.

An excessive concentration on competence agenda for industry is a negation of consciousness that education is dynamic. An education which upholds relevance does not necessarily originate or end in the head of an individual learner, but certainly flows through, where it is interpreted and transformed (Erselcan, 2015, p.405). This explains why though the subject matter or the content is important, the processes and activity supersede i.e. (a) how to acquire subject matter and (b) what to do with the acquired subject matter, is even more imperative attuned to diverse circumstances. It is at this point where the relevance of education cannot subside or be flouted in any meaningful education practice. This treatise articulates that it is not essential to accelerate towards competence agenda with an aim of acquiring industrial skills without being conversant with the subject matter, and with limited capability of applying the proficiencies to various circumstances. The one who has content can change once the subject change, but the one who has the skill will become obsolete once the familiar skill is extraneous, because the new subject matter requires a different skill to function. An education which is formulated on relevance framework is resolved to assist the learner to attune to the following:

A learner ought to attune to systemic thinking proficiency which is the ability denoting the universals or universality in the real world (Mwinzi, 2022e, p.300). In this case,

it is estimated that the learner will be able to recognize and understand relationships, scrutinize multifaceted systems, identify the connectivity of potential systems within diverse domains and contradictory scales, as well as dealing with ambiguous and uncertain situations. Secondly, it is equally crucial that relevance in education is informed by anticipatory or deterrent proficiency which comprises of the potentiality to understand and evaluate numerous prospects in terms of what is possible, probable, and desirable and to be creative enough to use rational faculties guided by the precautionary principle. Thirdly, a learner ought to incorporate axiological expertise defined as normativity proficiency which means relating to an evaluative standard where the morality of certain activities and processes are judged as moral, necessary, or acceptable, and others as immoral, unnecessary, or proscribed. As a phenomenon among human beings, normativity adapts teleological ethics which focuses on morality in relation to the ends as well as the means, while in a similar strand, deontological ethics focuses on the allocated duty (Spahn, 2020 p.2). In this case, the learner is able to negotiate irrefutable standards, principles, and objectives in the ambiance of ambiguities and potential conflicts and trade-offs, uncertainties and contradictions. Fourthly, the learner should cultivate a strategic proficiency which is the flair aiming at creativity and innovation to resolute issues at the local level and further afield. Finally, relevance in education ratifies critical thinking proficiency whereby, the learner is facilitated to develop the ability to interrogation standards, practices and opinions in order to differentiate values, perspectives, and perceptions at a universal domain. In the contrary, the capacity to enhance relevance in education is at the periphery, and the downside is that there is an acute lack of reasoning and critical thinking abilities. Nevertheless, the essence of critical thinking is to utilize logical abstractions in order to examine premises, diagnose fallacies, spot, and formulate conclusions (Mwinzi, 2022e, p.298). The current focus in many countries is

to encourage competence agenda that relates to acquisition of static dispositions in form of skills. Furthermore, it at this level that relevance in education shapes the learner to adopt and respond as per environmental and contextual mechanisms guided by necessary support and avenues. Hence, this treatise affirms that the concept of relevance cannot be vetoed in education theory, policy and practice. It is, therefore, essential that the learner should be prepared to think through the maze of contradictories and ambiguous scenarios. The learner requires familiarity with the fundamental ability to determine how to navigate the contours using logical inference and agility or dexterity (Mwinzi, 2022e, p.301).

### CONCLUSION

In summary, it is popular that competence agenda is surmised and also arrogated as the hallmark of education. The idea of competence agenda relate to acquired skills for the demands of the industry. This proposition of escalating competence agenda is assumed to apply to every learner from the grade school all the way to the tertiary level. It follows necessarily that the idea of attuning education towards competence agenda to serve the industry is about the commercialization or commodification of education. Accordingly, the concept of competence agenda in education can be conversed and defied. In other words, education is defined not through what it is, but through what it can do. It is not related to the relevance that the learner can acquire from the academic options. Therefore, the capacity to own, buy and sell has contributed, in major ways, to the upsurge of proficiencies framed on the idea of competence agenda. As such, it is easy to detect paradoxes protruding because competence agenda is not properly informed by philosophical constructs. In its antithesis, the essence of competence agenda in education does not transcends direct experience to penetrate the stratum of reflection, analysis, and validations. Accordingly, relevance in education transcends trifling conventions, perceptions,

and assumptions of mundane experience parallel to the subject domain. This is a missing relativity in the case of competence agenda because education is essentially a rhetorical activity, whose persuading power is designed to conform to the common form of familiarity of the intelligible world.

Conversely, it is obvious that competence agenda has exhibited significant flaws that daunt its stability against relevance in education. This indicates that there are some flaws which spell out drawbacks regarding existential gap to be bridged. The focus of this treatise is to establish how relevant is the cause of relevance in education against competence agenda? In this treatise, the cause for relevance in education as opposed to competence agenda as contingent to previous discourses. Having the relevance component makes the learner to acquire, to infer and epitomize education in form of transfer. The competence agenda does not possess any substratum for epitomizing education, and it is at this juncture where negative impasses in the restructure and application of education either transpire, occur, or reside. This explains why what is expected of a learner here and now, is not an alignment to the industry which may not exist at all, but ability to identify the relevance of what is learned and to attune it to the potentiality of the learner.

It is notable that the cause for relevance will introduce sufficient flexibility in terms of content (what is taught), process (how it is taught), and products (what the learner can do or produce to show what is learned) (Wians, 2008, p.55) as well as being able to attune it to other possibilities. Hence, this treatise underlines that relevance in education is devised by rationality which designates that it can be traced and verified. Similarly, the cause for relevance in education is also supported by collation which means that the relevant factor of education can consistently be represented in some form using symbols that facilitate construal. In similar vein, an education which is customized on the cause for relevance can be replicated or simulated into precision. This erstwhile stance

affirms that it is necessary to draw out the eminence of the cause for relevance in education which emanates from the contingent world and gloss it with its processes and versatility.

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