

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN SELECTED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING IN KENYA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE QUEST FOR TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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This study explored students' perception of how faculties are integrating social, economic, and environmental responsibilities in the classroom and out of classroom to equip learners with transformative knowledge so that they create a sustainable world for themselves and future generations. Respondents were 269 randomly selected students currently enrolled in various schools. They responded to a two-part questionnaire—the demographic profile and the social, economic, and environmental responsibility survey questionnaires. Data was analyzed using SPSS software version 20. Results revealed that lecturers' integration of social responsibility was rated relatively higher, followed by the economic responsibility, and the environmental responsibility being the lowest. Further, female students perceived higher integration of environmental responsibility than their male counterparts. Students' perception of integration of social, economic, and environmental responsibilities for transformative teaching/learning is varied across schools. However, out of the five schools, the integration of environmental responsibility is perceived to be lower than the social and economic responsibilities in three schools. Thus, schools need to devise strategies to promote and integrate transformative approaches to environmental issues, as environment is a home for all living and non-living things, and humans are responsible for taking care of it.

Keywords: Economic responsibility, environmental responsibility, integration, social responsibility, transformative learning, transformative teaching

Introduction

The main purpose of higher education is not to promote personal growth and development of learners alone but also to produce citizens who are responsible, sensitive and capable of contributing to social, economic and environmental transformation. Education system which does not address social transformation lacks vital element in its content. Thus, the need for transformative teaching and learning to promote innovation in the 21st century is important. Transformative teaching and learning have to embrace and inculcate in students the importance of social, economic, and environmental responsibility in order to produce responsible citizens. Thus, this study was to assess a selected institution of higher learning students' perceptions of the level of integration of social, economic and environmental responsibilities by their faculty in their classes in order to equip students with transformative teaching/learning skills so that they become socially, economically and environmentally sensitive and responsible citizens.

Review of Literature

According to Mezirow, as cited in Aguiar and Silva (2011), transformative learning is the development of an individual in quest of his independence and responsibility, where experience gains an ultimate role. The epistemology of transformative learning takes into consideration the learning methods of adults' self-concept rather than their way of acting upon the embraced and integrated beliefs, values, feelings and judgments of other people. The theory of transformative learning emphasizes the experience as a fundamental aspect and it should be connected with a critical reflection and a coherent dialogue (Closs & Antonello, 2010). Palmer and Zajonc (2010), stated that:

transformative learning rests on an enriched view of the human being, one that affirms our multidimensional nature and fundamental malleability. The methods by which we challenge our students, open them to change, will vary, but to be successful they should include cross-cultural studies in which worldviews radically



different from their own are encountered and appreciated. Or one can look back sympathetically at other historical periods and the surprisingly different treatment given to social issues or natural phenomena. Finally, cognitive science and psychology are also rich with empirical studies that awaken us to the unconscious cognitive or moral processes underlying our judgments and actions. (p. 107).

Transformative Teaching and Learning

The transformative teaching and learning requires learners to examine their relationship with themselves, the society, and the natural environment in order to be part of the globe and strive to solve its problems. It is an educational approach aimed at “developing ethical and moral sensibility, cultivating a recognition of interdependence and a re-connection with the natural and social world, and an emergent sense of social responsibility” (Parker & Wilding, 2012, pp. 2-3). According to Elizabeth as cited in Ettling (2006) transformative teaching/learning has a potential of revitalizing citizen action, particularly action toward a sustainable society, economy and environment

Transformative Teaching and Sustainability

According to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, “Transformation requires attacking the root causes that generate and reproduce economic, social, political and environmental problems and inequities, not merely their symptoms” (UNRISD, 2016, p. 31). The discussion of sustainability and transformative learning /teaching are incomplete without the discussions of social, economic and environmental responsibilities. Transformative teaching and learning engages the whole student in different ways of knowing and seeks to integrate social, economic, and environmental knowledge for sustainability. Such approach to learning leads students to investigate the interconnected nature of the world to discover these connections themselves with their faculty acting as facilitator, and consequently develop a habit of caring for them (Parker & Wilding, 2012).

According to Pachamama Alliance (2017) and Carroll (2014), social responsibility is an ethical theory, in which individuals are responsible for accomplishing their civic obligations in which the actions of an

individual must benefit the entire of humanity. Economic responsibility emphasizes that individuals and organizations conduct their business in an ethical and responsible ways (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2006; Carroll, 2014). Environmental responsibility emphasizes the moral relationship of humans to their both living and non-living environment.

Transformative teaching/learning needs to promote environmental ethics, the moral relationship of humans to their environment. The discussion of transformative teaching/learning may not yield a good result if it does not address the modern world of eco-crises and depletion of natural resources due to irresponsible actions of human beings on the natural environment. Cooper and James (2005) believe that in the virtuous person’s life, humans’ actions and attitudes towards animals, and other non-human life could be significant constituents of social responsibility. Environmental crises such as climate change, acid, rain deterioration of ozone layer, acid rain, deforestation, erosion, the plight of endangered animals, ramifications of the population explosion, all are the adverse effects of human actions upon the natural world (Cooper & James, 2005). In general, the economic, social and environmental responsibilities are interrelated and have a significant impact on each other. Thus, transformative teaching/learning should motivate citizens in the direction of acting in a very responsible way to preserve life.

Methodology

The research method used in this study was a descriptive survey method in which a self-constructed survey questionnaire was administered to the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, demographic profile, and a 32 item questionnaire. The survey questionnaire measured the three areas of quest for transformative teaching and learning, namely integration of social, economic, and environmental responsibilities. After the questionnaire was developed, experts evaluated the items (questions) and confirmed that they are suitable for the proposed study. The instrument was validated using pilot data from 30 respondents. Reliability of the instrument was found to be statistically significant, the three subscales having alpha coefficient values over 0.87 which is sufficient for data analysis and interpretations of the results.

Sample

Respondents were university lecturers. Out of the 269 students in the selected institution of higher learning, selected randomly. The respondents were drawn from five schools from the first to the fourth year students. The questionnaires were distributed to the selected 300 sample of students out of which 269 returned the completed questionnaires (87% response rate). Respondents were asked, “To what extent do your lecturers integrate the following into their teaching in or out of classes? The items were rated using a 5-point scale from nothing (1) to a great deal (5). The higher scores indicate higher levels of agreement on the integration of

the transformative teaching/learning.

Findings

Using the SPSS for Windows version 20.0, statistical analysis of the data was done. The data were analyzed to explore two major questions concerning the integration of the social, economic, and environmental responsibility in teaching. in the quest of transformative teaching/learning. There were 136 males (50.6%) and 133 females (49.4%) drawn from five schools who participated in the study. They were from first to fourth year of their study.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	136	50.6
	Female	133	49.4
School	1	61	22.7
	2	36	13.4
	3	45	16.7
	4	64	23.8
	5	63	23.4
Year of study	1 st	73	27.1
	2 nd	48	17.8
	3 rd	67	24.9
	4 th	81	30.1

The integration of social responsibility. Fourteen items comprised this subscale. On the 5-point Likert scale the calculated means for the items of this subscale ranged from the highest “encourage students to be future generators of sustainable value for society” (M=4.2, SD = 0.9)” to the lowest “discuss ways of controlling terrorism and promoting social safety” (M= 2.8, SD = 1.2).

Students rated that lecturers can do quite a bit in seven items of the scale, some influence in six items, and very little in one item. The overall mean for this subscales was (M= 3.7, SD = 1.2) indicating that the students perceived that their lecturers can do some influence in integrating social responsibility in their

teaching.

The integration of economic responsibility. The subscale for economic responsibility consisted of nine items. On the 5-point Likert scale the calculated means for the items of this subscale ranged from the highest “encourage students to be future generators of sustainable value for economy” (M =3.8, SD = 1.2) to the lowest, “Promote research on sustainable economic value” (M =3.3, SD = 1.2). Except for one item which fell in quite a bit range, the all the items rated at some influence category. The overall mean for this subscales was (M= 3.5, SD = 1.2) indicating that the students perceived that their lecturers can do some influence in integrating economic responsibility in



their teaching.

The integration of environmental responsibility. The subscale for the integration of environmental responsibility asked how much the faculty can do to integrate environmental responsibility. Nine items comprised this subscale. On a Likert scale, the calculated means for the items of this subscale ranged from the highest, “promote environmental protection (climate change, soil erosion, deforestation, etc”

($M = 3.7$, $SD = 1.3$) to the lowest, “Encourage use of renewable resources” ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.3$). All items in this scale rated at “some influence” category. The overall mean for this subscales was ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.5$) indicating that the students perceived that their lecturers can do some influence in integrating the environmental responsibility in their teaching.

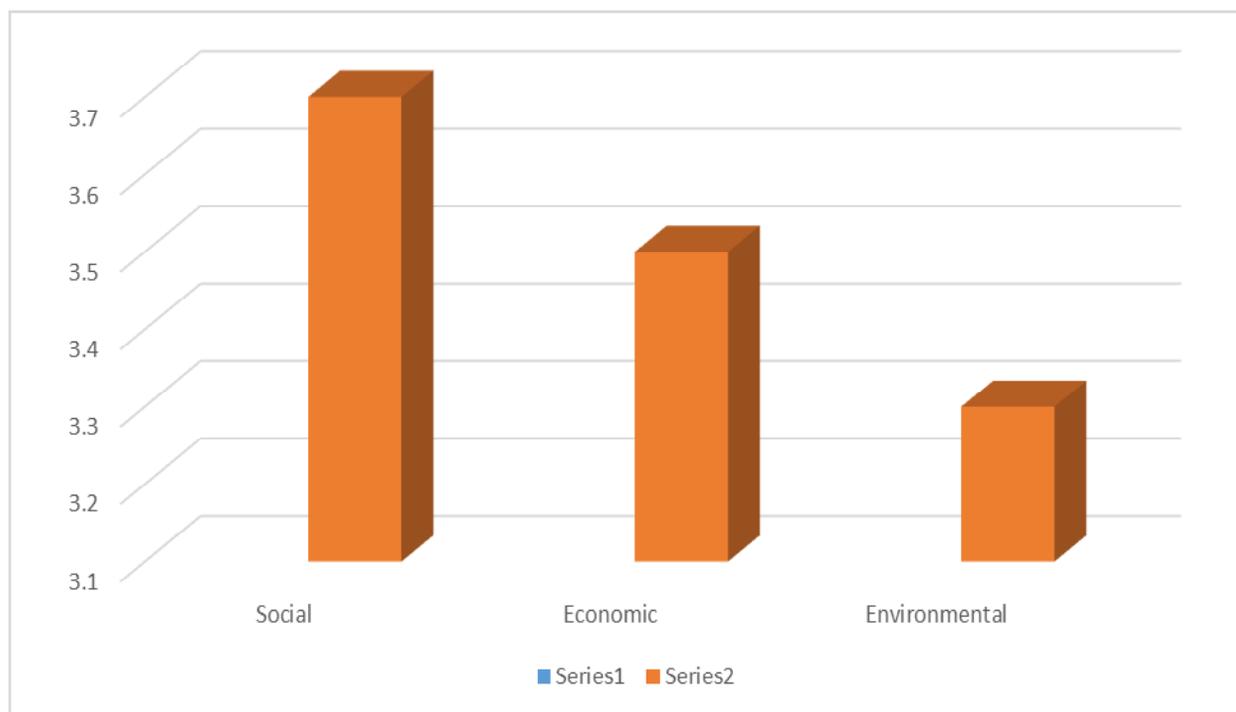


Figure 1. Comparison of the integration of social, economic, and environmental responsibility.

When gender of respondents was considered, there was no difference in perception between male and female students, both having ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 1.1$) in the integration of social responsibility, while in economic responsibility, the male students rated higher perception of integration ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.1$) than their female counterparts ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.2$). However, females rated higher perception of environmental integration ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.2$) than their male counterparts ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 1.3$).

In summary, the statistical analysis for the integration of social, economic and environmental responsibility in the quest for transformative teaching/learning indicated that lecturers' integration in social responsibility was rated relatively higher, followed by the economic responsibility, and the environmental responsibility being the lowest. Further, female students perceived higher integration of environmental responsibility than their male counterparts.

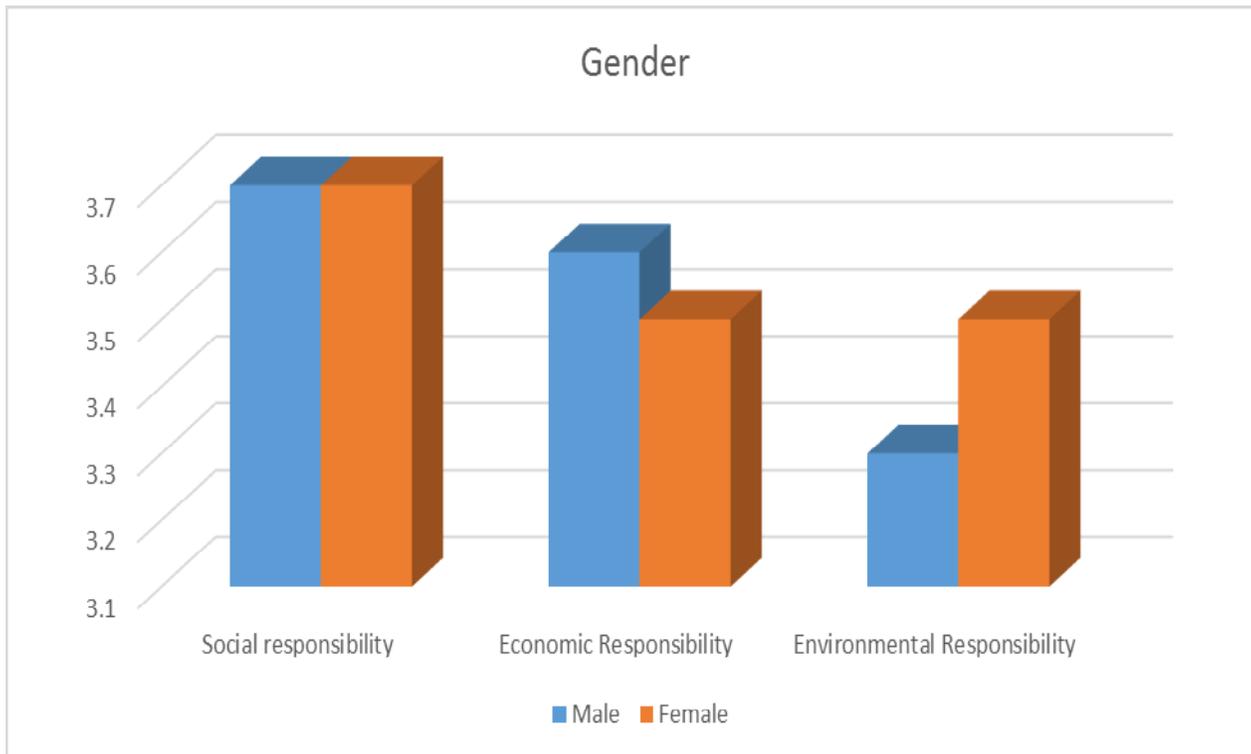


Figure 2. Comparison of the integration of social, economic, and environmental responsibility by gender.

Table 2

Comparison of the Integration of Social, Economic, and Environmental Responsibility by Gender

	Male		Female	
	M	SD	M	SD
Social responsibility	3.7	1.1	3.7	1.1
Economic Responsibility	3.6	1.1	3.5	1.2
Environmental Responsibility	3.3	1.3	3.5	2.2

When schools are considered the integration of social, economic, and environmental responsibility students reported the integration of social responsibility to be higher across all schools. The integration of economic responsibility is rated to be higher in the schools of business (M=3.6, SD=1.2) and school of science and technology (M=3.8, SD=1.1). School of science

and technology rated higher (M=3.6, SD=1.0) in the integration of environmental responsibility followed by the school of education (M=3.5, SD=1.2) whereas school of humanities and social sciences rated (M=2.9, SD=1.2) the lowest in the integration of environmental responsibility.

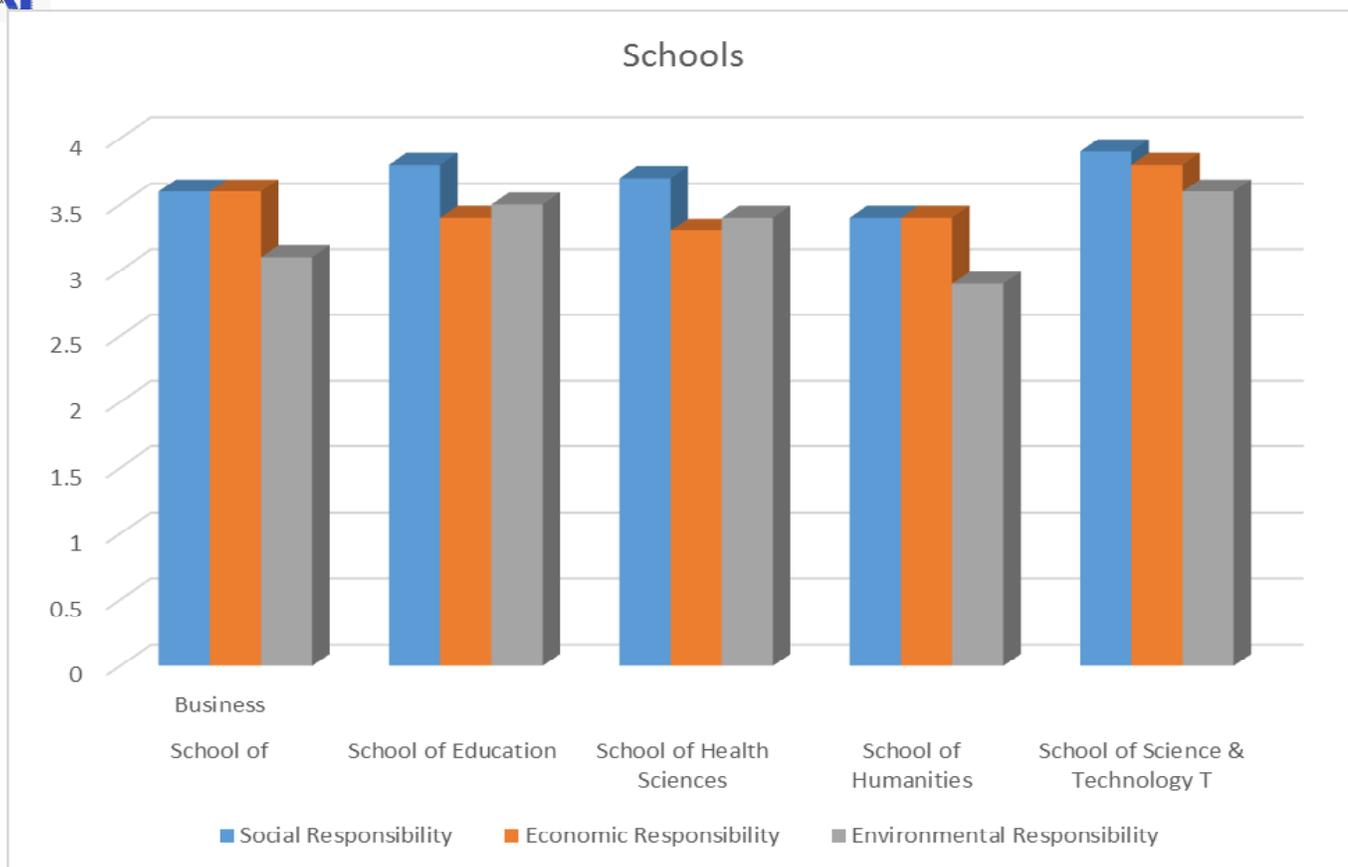


Figure 3. Comparison of the integration of social, economic, and environmental responsibility by schools.

Table 3

Comparison of the Integration of Social, Economic, and Environmental Responsibility by Schools

	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	M	SD								
Social Responsibility	3.6	1.1	3.8	1.0	3.7	1.5	3.4	1.1	3.9	1.0
Economic Responsibility	3.6	1.2	3.4	1.2	3.3	1.2	3.4	1.1	3.8	1.1
Environmental Responsibility	3.1	1.3	3.5	1.2	3.4	1.2	2.9	1.3	3.6	1.9

Implications and Conclusions

The present study has contributed to the understanding of the importance of the integration of social, economic, and environmental responsibility in the quest of transformative teaching/learning. This is an area that had not been addressed adequately in previous studies. The study revealed that although majority of the lecturers rated to believe they can do quite a bit in the areas of social responsibility, the economic and environmental responsibility rated low. That means,

there is a misbalance in the integration of the three variables of the study. The findings also revealed that females than males rated higher in the ethics of care and social, economic, and environmental responsibility. This finding may not be surprising because naturally females are caring than males. The ethics of care and social responsibility seems to be integrated across all schools, with a slight higher integration in the school of business followed by the school of science and technology. School of humanities rated the lowest in all the three subscales. In contrary to previous

studies (Cornelius, Wallace, & Tassabehji, 2007) that indicated ethics education has been integrated across the curriculum, the results of the present study suggest that the integration of economic and environmental responsibility is not adequately integrated in all schools.

In order to provide a transformative experience to their learners, institutions of higher learning need to recognize the importance of a balanced integration of social, economic, and environmental responsibility in their teaching. In general, the integration of environmental responsibility was rated lower than the social and economic responsibility in all schools. This finding is especially disturbing because environmental responsibility seems to be ignored, yet environment is a home for life. Thus, institutions need to devise strategies of promoting and the integration of environmental responsibility into their curricular activities in order to promote transformative knowledge.

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